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Bats fall silent as Rock losing streak hits season-high four games

By Phil Swartzlander
Rocket Assistant Sports Editor

Up and down. Up and down. That is how the SRU baseball team has been playing through its first 21 games this season, a rollercoaster ride that has seen its highs and lows.

But after winning seven straight games, the Rock baseball team has fallen into a four-game losing streak after getting swept in a doubleheader at Ashland (Ohio) University on Wednesday by 6-1 and 5-0 scores.

In the two losses, offense was hard to come by, as the Rock generated only one run

on five hits. In the second game, Ashland was one inning away from throwing a no-hitter, but pinch hitter Anthony Heaps pounded out an infield single to break it up.

Ashland is considered a Division II powerhouse and is currently ranked 30th in the Collegiate Baseball Newspaper's national poll.

"Ashland is a very good team, as good as any team in the PSAC," Rock Head Coach Jeff Messer said. "And they threw their two best guys at us and were able to keep us off balance."

In game one of the doubleheader, leadoff hitter and junior shortstop Rich

Michalek had two hits and scored the Rock's only run when sophomore catcher Matt Adams lifted a sacrifice fly.

Adams was named this week's PSAC-West Player of the Week on Monday.

Sophomore pitcher Sean Holliday gave up six runs on eight hits and took the loss to fall to 2-2 on the year.

In game two, the Rock was in the contest, trailing by one going into the fourth inning when Ashland scored four runs on three hits in an inning that featured two hit batsmen and a walk.

"We got into some trouble with our walks, but overall we pitched well," Messer said.

Sophomore pitcher Vince Lloyd (1-1) gave up five runs, only three of which were earned, on four hits. Control was a factor for Lloyd, who surrendered five walks, two hit batsmen and a wild pitch.

The dual defeats dropped the Rock to 12-9 on the year.

"It was just one of those days. Nothing was falling for us," Messer said. "And when you face a team like Ashland, you better come to play, and we didn't do that. We didn't have our 'A'



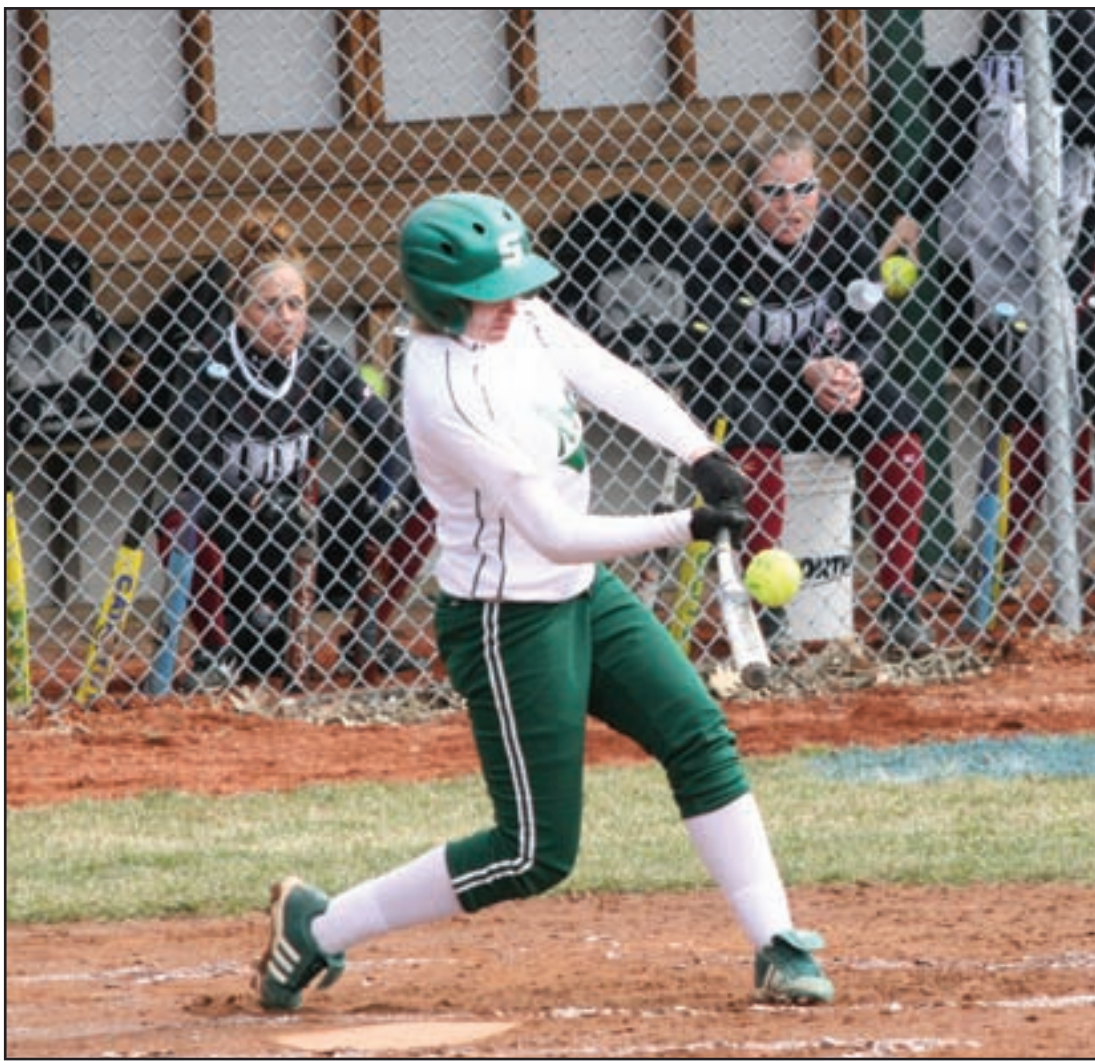
NATE DAYMUT/THE ROCKET

The Rock's Sean Holliday delivers a pitch during last Tuesday's game against Gannon University. Holliday, a sophomore, is currently 2-2 with a 9.72 ERA in four games this season. The Rock is currently 12-9 on the year after doubleheader losses to Ashland and Shippensburg.

PSAC West Division Standings

	PSAC	Overall
1. IUP	3-1	22-8
2. California	3-1	13-8
3. Slippery Rock	2-2	12-9
4. Shippensburg	2-2	20-13
5. Clarion	1-3	7-7
6. Lock Haven	1-3	10-18

SEE ADAMS PAGE C-2



CHAD LEADER/THE ROCKET

Freshman Jessica Ellebruch singles in the Rock's 9-4 loss to Indiana University of Pennsylvania on Sunday. Ellebruch was 1-for-3 in game one of the doubleheader loss. On the season, Ellebruch is hitting .389 with one double and nine RBIs.

Errors, poor pitching plague Rock in back-to-back sweeps

By Brandon Fox
Rocket Sports Editor

Just when things were starting to look good for Head Coach Vashion Johnson and the SRU softball squad, they got a cold.

A cold in the form of Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference rivals Lock Haven and Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

The Rock (14-6 overall, 0-4 PSAC) suffered back-to-back doubleheader defeats last week, putting a sudden halt to what had been the team's best start since 1980.

Johnson's squad lost its PSAC-opening doubleheader to national power Lock Haven on March 29. The Bald Eagles (23-5, 4-0), who came into the weekend ranked fourth in the country, manhandled the Rock to the tune of back-to-back shutout losses by 6-0 and 8-0 scores.

Lock Haven sent All-American pitcher Kristin Erb (18-5) to the mound in both contests. Erb didn't disappoint as she allowed the Rock just seven hits over the two games, extending her consecutive scoreless streak to 42 innings in the process.

Rock senior Stacey Rhoades had a pair of singles in game one while freshman Jessica Ellebruch, sophomore Jessica Kortz and

freshman Jordan Zeunges had one hit each.

Rock starter Lisa Getgen allowed six runs, five of them earned, on 16 hits while striking out two.

In game two, Erb was once again dominant form, holding the Rock to just two hits while striking out six. Erb took a no-hitter into the fifth inning before Kortz broke it up with a leadoff single.

The only other Rock base hit came from Zeunges, who slapped a one-out double in the sixth.

Game two starter Sheree Horvath was tagged for eight runs on 15 hits.

On Sunday, the Rock had its home opener against rival IUP, dropping the games by scores of 9-4 and 6-3. The Rock dug itself an early hole, falling behind 4-0 after the IUP half of the first.

"Our pitching just wasn't there these last four games," Johnson said. "We need more than one strikeout per game from our pitchers if we want to be successful."

The Rock began to chip away at the IUP lead after Shardea Croes' leadoff homerun in the bottom of the third. Kortz then made

SEE RHOADES PAGE C-3

Hansen wins pole vault at University of Maryland Invitational

By Terry Rodgers
Rocket Contributor

The SRU track and field team was spread out over the weekend but received a strong showing from some familiar names.

At the Maryland Invitational in College Park, Md., Jennifer Hansen claimed the top prize in the pole vault with a leap of 12 feet 6 inches, which landed her a provisional berth in the NCAA Division II national competition.

Hansen was battling an illness all week and said she did not feel as though she performed to her full potential.

She also said the weather was also

a factor over the weekend.

"It's hard to have record-breaking performances when it is 45 (degrees) and windy," Hansen said via e-mail. "I was using shorter poles than normal because of the cold (and illness)."

Hansen has had continued success in national competitions, earning a second-place finish last May at the NCAA Division II national championships and finishing as the second runner-up at the indoor national championships in Mankato, Minn., on March 15.

Along with Hansen, two other Rock athletes made their mark at the Maryland Invitational.

Chris Warning, a sophomore discus thrower and last year's

conference champion, won his signature event with a throw of 150 feet, 6 inches, while Nate Hardic, a junior whose specialty is the javelin, won his event with a toss of 192 feet, 1 inch.

At the Maryland event, SRU was without 15 of its student athletes, who had been suspended for the invitational after a team member posted photos of a drinking party that occurred during a team trip to San Diego in mid-March.

The Rock representatives at the Raleigh Relays in Raleigh, N.C., were not to be forgotten, as three athletes earned provisional spots in the NCAA's.

The Raleigh Relays were primarily

for Rock distance runners. At the event, the distance races take place at night. Rock Head Coach John Papa said that this involves significantly better conditions for distance runners.

Jeff Weiss and Pat Reagan each fared well in the 5,000-meter run, placing 11th and 17th, respectively.

Weiss turned in a time of 14:12.44 and Reagan finished at 14:25.53. Both earned a provisional spot in the NCAA Division II national championships.

On the women's side, Jen Harpp turned in an NCAA provisional qualifying time of 17:31.56 in the 5,000-meter run at Raleigh.

The remainder of the team that

was unable to make the trips to either Raleigh or Maryland due to class schedules competed in the Western PA Championships in Pittsburgh.

The men's team took home a 12th-place finish, while the women's squad finished 13th at the event held at Carnegie Mellon University.

Serena Bond captured first place in the triple jump to help lead the Rock.

"We are back at full strength this week, so we are very excited," Papa said.

The Rock outdoor team is back in action tomorrow at N. Kerr Thompson Stadium as it hosts the PSAC West Challenge.