



May 17, 2021

By Dennis Garcia
SportsTone.net

When the Mid-Piedmont Conference baseball season began, there was an instant sense of urgency with the participating teams. With only two playoff teams allotted the league due to the reduced state playoff format, there were going to be very talented teams that missed out on the playoffs.

With five of the seven teams halfway through the conference season, there hasn't been much decided as the top contenders continue to battle for one of the top two spots.

Williams is 4-0, but the Bulldogs have yet to play any serious contender as they have two-game series remaining with Southwestern Randolph, Asheboro, Southeast Guilford and Southern Alamance.

SWR is 5-1, including a split with Southern Alamance, meaning the Cougars must still play Asheboro and Southeast Guilford.

The Blue Comets (4-2) just finished off a sweep of Eastern Guilford after having split a pair of series with Southern Alamance and Southeast Guilford. AHS will play Southern Guilford and then Williams before a gigantic two-game set with the Cougars on June 1 and June 4.

SEG is 3-1 after sweeping Southern Alamance this past week. The Falcons still have a series remaining with Williams and then SWR after playing Eastern Guilford and Southern Guilford.

Southern Alamance, which is 2-4 right now, certainly has the capability of winning every game it plays, which means the second half of the MPC season is going to be just as wild as the first half.

"One thing that stinks is our conference is pretty competitive and there is going to be a pretty good team or two that doesn't even get in the playoffs," SWR coach Ethan Marsh said. "That's not preferable. But that's the way it is and everyone knew that coming in."

Despite the change in playoff format, Marsh has taken his usual approach to each game.

"I haven't taken it any differently than I normally do," Marsh said, adding he realizes the importance of every conference game. "If you handle your business and win the game, then you will be there at the end. I try not to look at who we're playing, just win that day."

"For us, I talk to our kids every day about winning every day, even if it's practice or whatever," Marsh added. "You have to find a way to win that game. And it is one game at a time because when you start looking ahead, that's when bad things happen."

SWR will meet Williams in a pair of games this week.

The Blue Comets opened the season with series splits with Southeast Guilford and Southern Alamance. AHS meets Southern Guilford this week in a pair of contests.

"With only two teams making the playoffs and only playing 14 games, you have to treat every game like it's a playoff game," AHS coach Brett Hoogkamp said. "With our conference being as hard as it is, you have to throw your best out there every time you play."

One rule adapted this year concerns the way teams will break ties in the standings. If two teams are tied and they split their series, then whichever team won the first game of the series will win the tiebreaker.

"If you have a three-way tie for second, they start looking at who beat who the first time they played," Hoogkamp said. "Obviously the first game in a series is huge. Dropping one conference game is a big deal."

This year, perhaps more than most, coaches are eagerly searching how other teams in the conference have done.

"It matters that you take care of business, but you can't help but look and see what other people are doing and hoping this happens or that happens," Hoogkamp said. "Four or five teams are still in contention. It's tough right now."

So strap yourself in and enjoy the roller coaster ride that is the Mid-Piedmont Conference baseball season.