Former Calhoun Great Grace Baalman Prepares For Her Senior Season At Kentucky

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LEXINGTON, Ky. - In her three years playing for the University of Kentucky, former Hardin Calhoun pitching ace Grace Baalman has established herself as one of the key pitchers for the Wildcats, and she's ready for her senior season to get underway, which will be on Feb. 12-13 in a three-game series at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

Her 2020 season was cut short after the NCAA canceled the entire spring sporting season due to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with Baalman only making eight

appearances during the season, starting two games, and throwing one complete game as she went 3-2 on the season with a 3.54 ERA. Baalman gave up 26 hits and 23 runs, 15 earned, in 29.2 innings pitched, walking 23 batters while striking out 31, while allowing five home runs. Her opponents had a .241 batting average against her in the shortened 2020 season.

Her season highlights included an opening day two-hitter in a win over Texas State, struck out a career-high 11 batters and hitting her first collegiate home run against Arizona State, and closed put a win against Minnesota with 2.2 scoreless innings in the pitcher's circle. She got her final win of the season in a 10-9 thriller over Georgia Tech.

Grace is one of the most memorable area athletes of the last decade. She was valedictorian of her high school, and was a volleyball, basketball and softball star. She also was a member of the marching band in what little free time that was left. She was All-State in basketball, all-conference in volleyball and led Calhoun to two straight softball championships. She recorded the state single-season strikeout record with a total of 589. She was named a MaxPrep All-American in softball in 2016. Calhoun also captured the state girls basketball championship in 2015 and 2016.

In her Kentucky University career, Baalman has a 27-21 record in 73 appearances, with an ERA of 2.80. She has started 44 games, completing 21, with seven shutouts and a save, coming in her freshman year. In 307.2 career innings pitched, she has allowed 293 hits and 165 runs, 123 of them earned, while walking 137 and fanning 231. Baalman has also allowed 57 doubles, eight triples and 35 home runs, while opponents have a career average of .247.

Baalman's best season was in her freshman year in 2018, going 14-9 in 31 appearances with a 2.72 ERA. She started 20 games, completed 10 and had three shutouts while recording her only save, allowing 136 hits and 65 runs, 53 earned, in 136.1 innings pitched, walking 48 and striking our 98, with opponents hitting .258 against her. Baalman's record was 10-10 in her sophomore year, again with a 2.72 ERA. She appeared in 34 games, started 22, and completed 10, allowing 131 hits and 77 runs, of which 55 were earned while walking 66 batters and striking out 102, her career-high. Opposing batters hit .237 against her.

In her freshman year, Baalman was named the Southeastern Conference Freshman of the Week on Mar. 20, and also made the SEC All-Freshman team, getting off to a rousing start in college by shutting out San Diego State, becoming the first Wildcat pitcher to do that since 2013, and completed her first nine starts for Kentucky. She gained her first SEC win against LSU in a 4-1 victory, then in the NCAA regionals, threw a complete game 1-0 shutout over Notre Dame. The next year, Baalman threw a one-hitter against then-number 14 ranked Auburn, the first Wildcat pitcher to do so

since 2012, has back-to-back complete game shutouts of North Carolina and California, and in the NCAA regionals, shut out Virginia Tech in a winner's bracket contest.

As a batsman, Baalman has a slugging percentage is .236, and has a career on-base percentage of .230.

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