

Puk is hard-luck loser for Florida

Written by Metro Sports Report

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OMAHA - A.J. Puk pitched a strong game for the Florida Gators in the College World Series Monday night, but the Cedar Rapids Washington grad was the hard-luck loser.

Puk was charged with one run in 5 1/3 innings as the Gators lost to Virginia, 1-0, in the second round of the College World Series at TD Ameritrade Park in Omaha.

Puk (9-4) allowed just one hit in the first five innings. He retired the first batter in the bottom of the sixth, but Virginia strung together three straight singles to load the bases.

Puk was replaced by a relief pitcher at that point with the game tied, 0-0. The next batter hit a sacrifice fly to center field for the game's only run.

Puk struck out five batters and walked three.

Florida got only two hits in the nine-inning ballgame and was shut out for only the third time this season. The game did not end until 12:30 a.m. Tuesday.

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Florida (50-17) will play Miami (Fla.) in a loser's bracket game Wednesday night in the double-elimination tournament. Both teams have 1-1 records at the College World Series and Florida defeated Miami in the opening round.

If Florida beats Miami, the Gators will face Virginia again Friday night and would need two victories over Virginia to reach the championship round of the CWS.

Puk, a 6-foot-7 left-hander, graduated from Cedar Rapids Washington in 2013. He is a sophomore at Florida and will be eligible for the Major League draft next year.

Puk lowered his ERA to 3.81 with Monday's performance. He has collected 104 strikeouts in 78 innings this season with 35 walks.

Monday's game was televised to a national audience by ESPN2.