

Long Ball Lifts ASU Over Tennessee

Written by Mike Flynn
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Three home runs in the first three innings of the game provided all the scoring Appalachian State University baseball needed in a 6-5 victory over Tennessee on Tuesday evening at Lindsey Nelson Stadium.

After going 19 years in between wins over Tennessee, Appalachian (19-15) claimed its second-straight victory over the traditional college-baseball stalwart and moved to 3-2 since 2008 versus opponents from the powerful Southeastern Conference.

ASU, which had only 14 home runs through 33 games coming in, matched a season high with its three blasts in the first three stanzas. Daniel Kassouf (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) started the early long-ball frenzy with a monster two-run bomb off UT starter Jon Reed in the top of the first inning. Kassouf's team-leading fifth homer of the year cleared the stands and parking lot beyond Lindsey Nelson Stadium's left field wall and landed on a bordering street, an estimated 425-450 feet away from home plate.

After Tennessee (19-14) evened the score at 2-2 in the bottom of the first, Trey Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) quickly broke the tie when he launched a three-run homer to right field that gave the Mountaineers a 5-2 advantage.

Zack Briggs (Lexington, N.C./Central Davidson) got into the act in the top of the third when he led off the inning with a solo shot that hit a third of the way up a light pole in left center field. Briggs' blast not only stretched Appalachian's lead to 6-2 but also extended his hitting streak to 14 games, ASU's longest of the season and the longest current streak in the Southern Conference.

The Vols cut the Mountaineer lead to 6-5 with a single run in the fifth inning and two more in the seventh but the ASU bullpen trio of Will Helms (Charlotte, N.C./Providence), David Port (Dunwoody, Ga./Dunwoody) and Taylor Miller (Raleigh, N.C./Wakefield) turned in three scoreless innings to close out the victory. The Vols brought the winning run to the plate with two outs in the ninth but Miller fanned Andrew Toles, who had two of UT's eight hits, to end the

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game and secure his seventh save of the season.

Starting pitcher Lawrence Pardo (Miami, Fla./Christopher Columbus) worked five strong innings on the mound for the Mountaineers. The freshman southpaw surrendered three runs on four hits and struck out three over his five innings of work to earn the second marquee victory of his young career. Combined with a win over No. 20 Miami (Fla.) on Feb. 25, Pardo's first two collegiate triumphs have come against programs that have appeared in a total of 27 College World Series.

Kassouf (2-for-4) recorded the only multi-hit game for the Mountaineers, who tallied seven hits against six UT pitchers.

The loss was Tennessee's eighth in a row.

Appalachian begins a five-game homestand on Wednesday night when it hosts Gardner-Webb at Beaver Field at Jim and Bettie Smith Stadium. First pitch is set for 6 p.m.