Written by Mike Flynn
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College of Charleston's Rob Kral broke a 4-4 tie in the sixth inning with a two-out, two-run triple and Appalachian State University baseball went on to drop Friday's Southern Conference series opener to Charleston, 7-4, at Patriots Point Park.

With the setback, Appalachian (28-22, 12-13 SoCon) has lost three-straight games for the first time since March 13-18 but remains in sixth place in the SoCon standings, four games ahead of The Citadel and Wofford, who are tied for ninth with five regular-season games left to play. The league's top eight teams qualify for the SoCon Tournament, which begins a week from Wednesday in Charleston.

ASU and College of Charleston (33-17, 16-9 SoCon) were locked in a back-and-forth affair for much of the ballgame, with the lead changing hands three times in the first five innings.

After the Mountaineers grabbed a 4-3 advantage on Daniel Kassouf's (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) RBI double down the left-field line in the top of the fifth inning, the Cougars knotted it the ballgame at 4-4 in the bottom of the frame on Jose Rodriguez's sacrifice fly to left.

The score was still 4-4 in the bottom of the sixth when ASU starter Ryan Arrowood (Rutherfordton, N.C./Central) allowed back-to-back singles to Charleston's No. 8 and 9 hitters to put runners on first and second with one out. Arrowood got C of C leadoff hitter Marty Gantt to fly out to center field and was one strike away from getting out of the inning when Kral laced a 3-2 pitch up the first-base line, past diving first baseman Trey Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) and all the way into the right-field corner. Rob Harding and Jamie Holler easily scored to make it 6-4 and, to make matters worse, Hector Crespo's (Miami, Fla./Florida Christian) relay throw to try to cut down Kral at third skipped past ASU third baseman Zack Briggs (Lexington, N.C./Central Davidson) and Kral scored on the error to stretch the advantage to 7-4.

Appalachian only had one baserunner the rest of the way and was erased on a double play in the eighth.

Arrowood had an uncharacteristically sub-par outing, giving up a season-high seven runs on nine hits and walking three to suffer the loss and fall to 7-2 on the season. After issuing just 14 walks over his first 15 appearances of the season, the right-handed junior has walked eight batters in his last two starts.

Kassouf (2-for-4, double, RBI) and Crespo (2-for-3, two runs) led ASU offensively. Just one game after his 18-game overall hitting streak came to an end, Jack Myers' (Charlotte, N.C./Myers Park) 27-game hitting streak in SoCon games was snapped with an 0-for-3 evening at the plate.

Holler, Matt Leeds and Bran Murray paced Charleston's 10-hit attack with two apiece. C of C starter Josh Renfro (8-2) earned the win by limiting the Mountaineers to four runs (three earned) on five hits over seven innings.

The clubs continue their three-game weekend series on Saturday. First pitch is set for 3 p.m. at Patriots Point.

ASU SOFTBALL ELIMINATED

The Appalachian State softball team had its hopes of winning a Southern Conference championship dashed Friday night in Statesvboro, Ga.

The Mountaineers (26-24), playing in the consolation round of the Southern Conference tournament, lost to College of Charleston 6-3 Friday night and were eliminated. The teams waited out a 2-hour, 37-minute rain delay.

The Cougars (36-20) finally took control with a three-run seventh inning. Katie Nutaitis had a sacrifice fly that drove in a run, giving the Cougars a 4-3 lead; Kristy Giragosian followed with a two-run single to highlight the rally. Caitlin Wainright (6-7) suffered the loss in rellief. She came on for Hannah Dow with two outs in the fourth. Megan Rembielack had three hits and drove in two runs for ASU.