Cornell scored five runs in the top of the ninth inning to rally past Appalachian State University baseball, 8-4, on Sunday afternoon at Beaver Field at Jim and Bettie Smith Stadium.

With a 4-3 lead going into the ninth, Appalachian State (10-7) sent senior closer Rob Marcello (Royal Palm Beach, Fla./Royal Palm Beach) to the mound to seal the victory. However, Marcello, who not been tagged with an earned run yet this season, walked the first three batters he faced before Spenser Souza launched a full-count pitch into the Cornell bullpen in right field for a grand slam that gave the Big Red a 7-4 lead.

Cornell (6-5) would go on to add a fifth run later in the frame when Appalachian freshman center fielder Jaylin Davis (McLeansville, N.C./Northeast Guilford) dropped the would-be third out for a two-base, run-scoring error.

The Mountaineers tried to mount a comeback in the bottom of the ninth, bringing the tying run on deck with one out. However, Cornell's Matt Horton came on to retire the only two batters he faced to earn the save in his first appearance of the season.

Prior to Cornell's ninth-inning comeback, Appalachian State put together a rally of its own earlier in the game when it overcame a 3-2 deficit to take the 4-3 lead it held until the top of the ninth. Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside) and Hector Crespo (Miami, Fla./Florida Christian) provided the Mountaineers' tying and go-ahead runs with RBI singles in the sixth and seventh innings, respectively.

Despite Callaway's and Crespo's big base hits, the story of Appalachian's comeback from the 3-2 deficit was the pitching of sophomore reliever Taylor Thurber (Mooresville, N.C./Lake Norman). Thurber retired all 12 batters that he faced in four perfect innings out of the bullpen to allow the Mountaineers to remain within striking distance and eventually take the lead. With the four flawless innings of relief, Thurber lowered his ERA to a team-best 1.50.

Callaway and Crespo finished with two hits apiece to lead Appalachian State's nine-hit attack. Souza and J.D. Whetsel each had two hits to pace Cornell, which scored its eight runs on just seven hits.

Appalachian State returns to action on Tuesday with its sixth-straight non-conference tilt at local rival North Carolina A&T. First pitch is set for 6 p.m. at historic War Memorial Stadium in Greensboro, N.C.

NOTES: The non-conference series loss is Appalachian State's first at Smith Stadium, which opened during the 2007 season ... Appalachian dropped back-to-back home games for the first time since May 9 and 11, 2011, when it lost to Western Carolina and High Point ... in addition to owning the club's best ERA, Thurber has also made a team-high nine appearances on the mound (three more than any other Mountaineer hurler) ... Josh Zumbrook (Wilkesboro, N.C./West Wilkes) extended his hitting streak to seven games with an eighth-inning single ... Callaway reached base safely for the 11th-straight game ... Noah Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) went 0-for-4 to snap a nine-game hitting streak ... Souza's go-ahead grand slam came with some controversy, as Cornell's right fielder was involved in an on-field altercation after getting picked off first base in the first inning ... during the play in question, Souza appeared to intentionally throw a forearm that connected with Appalachian State first baseman Dillon Dobson (Boonville, N.C./Starmount) but following a minor scuffle, umpires ruled that Souza

would be able to remain in the game.

Photo Courtesy: Will Callaway, ASU Athletics