

Furman Stuns ASU with Ninth-Inning Rally

Written by Mike Flynn
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Furman's three-run rally in the bottom of the ninth inning dealt Appalachian State University baseball a heartbreaking 3-2 loss on Friday evening at Latham Stadium.

Appalachian (16-15, 4-9 SoCon) snapped a scoreless tie with two runs in the top of the eighth inning but closer Taylor Miller (Raleigh, N.C./Wakefield) couldn't retire any of the six batters he faced in the bottom of the ninth and Furman (16-15, 7-3 SoCon) walked off with the stunning victory.

Furman's ninth-inning comeback ruined a third-straight stellar start on the mound by ASU right-hander Ryan Arrowood (Rutherfordton, N.C./Central). The junior surrendered just five hits and struck out nine over 6.2 scoreless innings, upping his strikeout total over his last three starts to 29.

Arrowood gave way to lefty Will Helms (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) after the Mountaineers' committed their third error of the game to put the go-ahead run on base with two outs in the seventh and Helms preserved the 0-0 score by striking out FU's Alex Abrams to end the inning.

Appalachian then exorcised its two-out demons in the top of the eighth by scoring two runs with two away to take a 2-0 lead. Freshman Lawrence Pardo (Miami, Fla./Christopher Columbus) got the two-out rally going by fouling off seven pitches to draw an 11-pitch walk. Hector Crespo (Miami, Fla./Florida Christian) then drove the very next pitch through the left side of the infield to put runners on first and second and Trey Holmes followed with an RBI single up the middle that brought pinch-runner Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside) home with the first run of the ballgame. One batter later, Crespo scored on a wild pitch to stretch the Mountaineer advantage to 2-0.

The two-out rally was especially noteworthy for ASU due to the fact that the Mountaineers came into the evening hitting just .215 on the season with two outs.

Mountaineer right-hander David Port (Dunwoody, Ga./Dunwoody) worked around two singles to preserve the 2-0 lead in the bottom of the eighth but Miller wasn't as fortunate in the ninth. After allowing consecutive singles to lead off the inning, Miller hit FU's Will Miller to load the bases.

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Abrams then avenged the strikeout in the seventh with a two-run single to left center that knotted the score at 2-2. ASU intentionally walked Will Muzika to load the bases but Paul Nitto followed with a game-winning single to right center field.

Making the ninth-inning collapse even more frustrating was that all four Paladin hits came with two strikes. The setback marked only the second time in the past 160 games that ASU lost a contest it led after eight innings.

Crespo registered two of the Mountaineers' five hits in the losing effort.

Appalachian will look to bounce back on Saturday when it plays the second game of the three-game weekend series at Furman. First pitch is set for 4 p.m.