

ASU Sweeps Twinbill, Series From Davidson

Written by Mike Flynn

Saturday, 23 April 2011 21:48

Appalachian State University baseball completed an impressive three-game road sweep over Davidson by taking both ends of a doubleheader from the Wildcats on Saturday afternoon at Wilson Field.

Appalachian swept Saturday's twinbill by scores of 4-3 and 7-0.

With the three-game series sweep, Appalachian (25-17, 10-11 SoCon) moved solidly into sixth place in the Southern Conference standings, two games ahead of eight-place The Citadel (15-23, 8-13 SoCon) and ninth-place Wofford (19-21, 6-11 SoCon). Davidson (16-22, 8-15 SoCon) plummeted from seventh to 10th place with the series sweep. The conference's top eight teams will advance to next month's SoCon Tournament in Charleston, S.C.

As he was in Thursday's series opener, Hector Crespo (Miami, Fla./Florida Christian) was the hero of Saturday's first game, as his two-out RBI single broke a 3-3 tie in the top of the ninth inning.

Zack Briggs (Lexington, N.C./Central Davidson) led off the ninth with a single up the middle off Davidson closer Mike Frongello (3-3). Jeremy Dowdy (Raleigh, N.C./Wakefield) was then called upon to lay down his first sacrifice bunt of the year but bunted right back to Frongello, who fired to second to cut down Briggs. However, Frongello's throw pulled DC shortstop Michael Zeblo off the bag, allowing Briggs to slide in safely. Zeblo did manage to throw Dowdy out at first, giving ASU's catcher an unorthodox 1-6-3 sacrifice.

After a groundout left Briggs on second base with two outs, Frongello's first pitch to Preston Troutman (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) went to the backstop and Briggs moved to third on the wild pitch. Frongello then intentionally walked Troutman to bring up Crespo, who provided the winning runs with a two-out, two-run single in the 12th inning of Thursday's 3-1 ASU victory.

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Once again, Crespo came up big in the clutch, as he roped an 0-1 pitch into left field, easily bringing Briggs home with the winning run.

Taylor Miller pitched a perfect ninth to cement the win and his ninth save of the year. Will Helms (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) needed just four pitches to get the Mountaineers out of a two-on jam in the eighth and earn the victory. With the win, Helms (3-0) moved to 10-0 in his career, making him one of only two active NCAA Division I players with as many as 10 wins and no losses (Virginia's Will Roberts being the other at 15-0 in his career).

The story of Saturday's second game was junior pitcher Seth Grant (Etowah, N.C./West Henderson), who mowed through Davidson's lineup en route to Appalachian's sixth shutout of the year. The right-hander struck out a career-high 11 and allowed just five hits over seven scoreless innings en route to the sweep-clinching victory.

Only three runners reached second base and none advanced to third in Grant's seven flawless stanzas. The right-hander needed only four innings to surpass his previous career high of seven strikeouts.

Just two days removed from what initially appeared to be a significant ankle injury, ASU staff ace Ryan Arrowood (Rutherfordton, N.C./Central) came out of the bullpen to finish off the sweep with two innings of shutout relief.

Offensively, the Mountaineers were buoyed in the nightcap by home runs from Trey Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) and Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside), three hits from Crespo and two apiece from Troutman and Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence). Troutman scored two of ASU's seven runs following a double and triple.

In Saturday's first game, Daniel Kassouf (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) provided all of Appalachian's offense prior to Crespo's game-winning hit with an RBI groundout in the first inning and a towering two-run homer — hit team-leading seventh bomb of the year — in the sixth. Crespo, Holmes and Jack Myers (Charlotte, N.C./Myers Park) had two hits apiece in the first game of the twinbill.

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Myers also went 1-for-5 in the finale, stretching his overall hitting streak to 12 games and his hitting streak in SoCon play to 24-straight contests. The senior has hit safely in all 21 conference games this season and is second in the SoCon with a .430 batting average in league play.

Nevertheless, the story of the weekend was Appalachian's sterling pitching. In all, seven Mountaineer pitchers combined to surrender only two earned runs over 30 innings of work while striking out 41 and issuing just eight walks.

Winners of 17 of its last 24 games, Appalachian plays a pair of non-conference contests this week before settling into a week-long break for final exams. The Mountaineers play at Radford on Tuesday at 4 p.m. before opening a six-game homestand versus North Carolina A&T on Wednesday at 6 p.m.