

ASU Clinches SoCon Tournament Berth

Written by Mike Flynn
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Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) drove in four runs, including a two-run single in the sixth inning that gave Appalachian State University baseball the lead for good in a 8-5 win over College of Charleston on Saturday afternoon at Patriots Point Park.

With the victory, Appalachian (29-22, 13-13 SoCon) clinched a berth in the eight-team Southern Conference Tournament, which begins May 25 at Charleston's Riley Park.

Zupcic had RBI doubles in the third and fifth innings and snapped a 4-4 tie in the sixth inning when he lined the ninth pitch of his at-bat against C of C starter David Peterson (5-5) into left field, driving in Preston Troutman (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) and Hector Crespo (Miami, Fla./Florida Christian) for the go-ahead runs. Later in the inning, Zupcic stole home on the front end of a double-steal to stretch the Mountaineers' advantage to 7-4.

From there, the story of the ballgame was the performances turned in by ASU relievers Will Helms (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) and David Port (Dunwoody, Ga./Dunwoody).

Helms came into the game with a runner on first and nobody out in the sixth inning and struck out left-handers Rob Kral (.324 batting average) and Daniel Aldrich (.373 avg.) before giving way to Port. Port worked the final 3.1 innings of the game, limiting Charleston's powerful offense to just one run on three hits for his third save of the season.

Zupcic finished 3-for-4 with two doubles, four RBI and two runs scored to lead Appalachian's 13-hit attack. Daniel Kassouf (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) also went 3-for-4 with a double and home run while Troutman, Crespo and Trey Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) chipped in with two hits apiece.

Rob Harding led College of Charleston (33-18, 16-10 SoCon) with a 4-for-4 afternoon at the plate.

Despite walking five batters and allowing four runs on nine hits, ASU starter Nathan Hyatt (Brevard, N.C./Brevard) battled through five-plus innings to earn the win and move to 6-5 on the campaign.

The teams play the rubber match of their three-game SoCon series on Sunday at 1 p.m.