

ASU Scores 10 Unanswered Runs to Rally for Win

Written by Mike Flynn

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Appalachian State University baseball roared back from an early 5-0 deficit to score the game's final 10 runs in a 10-5 triumph over The Citadel on Friday afternoon at Beaver Field at Jim and Bettie Smith Stadium. With the victory, Appalachian (15-3, 4-0 SoCon) remained perfect both in Southern Conference play

and at home (9-0) this season. ASU also snapped a seven-game losing streak at the hands of longtime nemesis The Citadel (8-9, 1-3 SoCon).

Perhaps still feeling some of the effects from Wednesday's heartbreaking 6-4 defeat at No. 3 South Carolina, Appalachian appeared a bit listless in the early stages of Friday's ballgame. The Citadel took advantage of ASU's early doldrums and scored two runs in the first inning and three more in the third to grab a commanding 5-0 lead.

Appalachian began to chip away at the deficit — its largest of the season to date — in the bottom of the third. Daniel Kassouf (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) opened the Mountaineers' scoring when he lined a two-out single up the middle to bring Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) home from third and, an inning later, Trey Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) made it 5-2 with a two-out RBI single of his own.

The score remained 5-2 until the bottom of the sixth, when Appalachian exploded for three runs to knot the score at 5-5. Noah Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) kickstarted the three-run rally with a leadoff solo home run down the right-field line and Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside) provided more two-out magic when he ripped a two-out, two-run double to left field to draw the Mountaineers even.

Preston Troutman (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) turned in the game's biggest hit in the seventh inning with a two-run double off the wall in right-center field that gave Appalachian its first lead of the ballgame at 7-5. Back-to-back homers from Kassouf (a two-run blast for his team-leading sixth home run of the season) and Tyler Tewell (Charlotte, N.C./Butler) upped the ASU advantage to 10-5 in the eighth.

The Citadel made it interesting in the top of the ninth when they loaded the bases for center fielder Nick Orvin, who was 4-for-4 with a home run and three RBI to that point. However, Mountaineer closer Nathan Hyatt (Brevard, N.C./Brevard) got Orvin to ground out for the final out of the ballgame. Hyatt needed just two pitches to record his seventh save of the season. Troutman was the hero in the comeback win. The sophomore, who came into the ballgame hitting just .143 on the season, went 3-for-4 with a pair of doubles, including the go-ahead two-bagger in the seventh. Kassouf led ASU with three RBI and Callaway finished 3-for-4 with two RBI. Eight of ASU's nine starters contributed to the club's 14-hit outburst.

Ryan Arrowood (Rutherfordton, N.C./R-S Central) struggled early but settled in to hold the Bulldogs scoreless over his final four innings. In all, the right-handed senior allowed five runs on seven hits over seven innings but retired the final eight batters he faced to move to 4-0 on the season.

Orvin had nearly half of The Citadel's 10 hits with his 4-for-5, three-RBI, two-run performance. Bulldog reliever James Reeves (4-2) walked the only two batters he faced to suffer the loss. The teams continue their three-game SoCon series on Saturday at 2 p.m. at Smith Stadium.

NOTES: In addition to breaking a seven-game overall losing streak at the hands of The Citadel,

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Appalachian also snapped a string of eight-consecutive regular-season losses to the Bulldogs ... the Mountaineers are 4-0 in SoCon play for the first time since 1978, when they won their first seven conference games of the season ... Zupcic went 1-for-4 with a double and two runs scored to extend his ASU-season-best hitting streak to 11 games ... Kassouf and Callaway each have eight multi-hit efforts in the last 13 games ... just 18 games into the campaign, Hyatt already ranks sixth in ASU single-season history with seven saves ... the Mountaineers' three home runs were a season high.

Photo Courtesy: Preston Troutman, ASU Athletics