Kassouf, Zupcic Lead Long-Ball Brigade Against Furman

Written by Mike Flynn Saturday, 21 April 2012 09:02

Daniel Kassouf (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) homered twice and Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) hit the first grand slam of his career to lead Appalachian State University baseball to a 14-2 rout over visiting Furman in the teams' Southern Conference series opener on Friday evening at Beaver Field at

Jim and Bettie Smith Stadium. With the victory, Appalachian (26-9, 11-5 SoCon) regained sole possession of first place in the SoCon standings, percentage points ahead of College of Charleston (27-12, 15-7 SoCon).

The Mountaineers trailed Furman (18-21, 7-12 SoCon), 1-0, after one-and-a-half innings but took the lead on Preston Troutman's (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) two-out, two-run single in the bottom of the second and never looked back. Appalachian went on to score two runs in the third and fourth innings, sent 11 men to the plate in a seven-run sixth and capped the 14-run onslaught with a single tally in the seventh.

Kassouf led the Mountaineers' season-best 18-hit attack by going 4-for-5 with three RBI, four runs scored and his SoCon-leading 14th and 15th home runs of the campaign. The senior's first homer of the evening was a towering two-run blast to left center in the third inning and his second was a line drive over the left-field wall in the seventh. With the big night, Kassouf raised his batting average to a team-high .392 and may find himself back atop the SoCon's triple crown categories by the end of the evening with 44 RBI to go along with the league-best 15 home runs.

Zupcic provided the evening's other big swing with a grand slam off the left-field foul pole that fueled ASU's seven-run sixth inning. Zupcic, who said after the game that he had never hit a grand slam at any level of baseball, finished 3-for-5 with two runs scored to go along with the slam. His four RBI matched a career high. Hector Crespo (Miami, Fla./Florida Christian) also had three hits while the bottom two hitters in Appalachian's batting order, Troutman and Noah Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) combined to go 4-for-5 with two walks, four RBI, three runs scored and a perfectly executed squeeze bunt laid down by Holmes in fourth inning. Perhaps overshadowed by the offensive explosion was a third-straight solid start on the mound by ASU ace Ryan Arrowood (Rutherfordton, N.C./R-S Central). Arrowood scattered seven hits and surrendered only two runs over seven innings. The right-handed senior struck out five and didn't issue a walk to up his record to 7-0 on the season. Catcher Paul Nitto was the lone bright spot for the Paladins, going 2-for-3 with a home run and an RBI single to account for both of Furman's runs.

The clubs resume their three-game SoCon series on Saturday at Smith Stadium. First pitch has been moved up three hours to NOON due to a forecast for rain later in the day.

NOTES: Elon and Western Carolina began the evening in a four-way tie for first place with Appalachian and Charleston but lost at Wofford (11-5) and Samford (6-3), respectively ... Kassouf is just one home run shy of ASU's single-season record of 16, shared by Pete Camelo (1982) and Andre Crawford (1996) ... Arrowood upped his career record to 24-8, moving within two wins of Appalachian's all-time record of 26, set by former teammate Matt Andress from 2007-10 ... of the Mountaineers' season-high 18 hits, all but Kassouf's and Zupcic's home runs were singles ... the Apps' three homers also matched a season high ... nine different

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Mountaineers recorded at least one hit, including 8-of-9 members of the starting lineup ... ironically, the only Appalachian starter that didn't have a hit was Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside), who came into the night as the SoCon's leading hitter with a .393 batting average ... Callaway also had a streak of reaching base in 29-consecutive games snapped by not getting aboard for the first time since Feb. 25 ... true freshman Jeffrey Springs (Belmont, N.C./South Point) struck out the side to finish off the Paladins in the ninth.

Photo Courtesy: Tyler Zupcic, ASU Athletics