

ASU Blows Out Furman In DH Sweep

Written by Mike Flynn
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Appalachian State University baseball completed a three-game series sweep of Furman in convincing fashion, beating the Paladins by scores of 6-5 and 14-0 in a Saturday doubleheader at Beaver Field at Jim and Bettie Smith Stadium. Saturday's first game was a back-and-forth affair that Appalachian (28-9, 13-5 SoCon) won on

Tyler Tewell's (Charlotte, N.C./Butler) walk-off RBI single in the bottom of the ninth inning. In the nightcap, the Mountaineers scored 11 runs over its final three at-bats to turn a close ballgame into a laugher. Combined with a 14-2 win in Friday's series opener, Appalachian outscored visiting Furman (18-23, 7-14 SoCon), 34-7, en route to its first sweep of the Paladins since 2008. With the series sweep, the Mountaineers will remain atop the Southern Conference standings for the seventh-consecutive week.

Saturday's opening contest featured three ties and two lead changes. Appalachian jumped out to a 2-0 advantage in the second inning but Furman roared back to take 3-2 and 4-3 leads before the Apps regained a 5-4 advantage on Noah Holmes' (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) two-out RBI single in the sixth inning.

However, the pesky Paladins would knot the score at 5-5 in the top of the eighth and the game would remain tied until the bottom of the ninth. Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) led off the decisive frame with a sharp single to left field, followed by Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside) beating out a bunt single to put runners on first and second. Furman's Jacques de Gruy (1-2) loaded the bases by hitting Daniel Kassouf (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) with a pitch to set the stage for Tewell, who ripped an 0-1 pitch past FU's diving first baseman Taylor Johnson and into right field. Zupcic scored easily from third base with the winning run to give the Mountaineers' their second walk-off victory of the season.

Led by Tewell, four different Mountaineers collected three hits apiece to pace Appalachian's 17-hit attack in the opener. Zupcic, Noah Holmes and Trey Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) also had three hits each while Trey Holmes drove in two of the Apps' six runs.

In the nightcap, starting pitcher Rob Marcello (Royal Palm Beach, Fla./Royal Palm Beach) turned in six shutout innings despite sitting through a 46-minute rain delay and the ASU offense exploded after the delay to finish off the sweep. A solo home run by Callaway highlighted a three-run fourth inning that gave the Mountaineers a 3-0 lead but immediately following the fourth-inning outburst, rain halted play for the second time in the afternoon. Marcello returned to the mound following the 46-minute delay and kept the Paladins off the board for two more innings to keep Appalachian's three-run advantage intact.

The Mountaineers erupted for four runs in the sixth inning, five in the seventh and two more in the eighth to turn the slim 3-0 lead into a commanding 14-0 advantage. Tewell once again stole the spotlight with a seventh-inning grand slam that highlighted the 11-run late-inning outburst. Tewell finished 2-for-5 with five RBI and three runs scored to wrap up a 5-for-9, six-RBI, five-run day at the plate. Zupcic and Callaway also had multiple hits in the nightcap.

Despite the offensive fireworks, the most impressive part of the 14-0 win may have been the performances turned in on the mound by Marcello and three relievers. Marcello scattered five hits and struck out three over his six shutout innings to earn the win and up his record to 5-3 on the season. Jamie Nunn (Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor), Ryne Frankoff (Apex, N.C./Apex)

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and Jordan Jessup (Westfield, N.C./East Surry) each worked a scoreless inning out of the bullpen to close out the triumph. Appalachian's pitchers did not walk a batter in the shutout, marking the second time in three games that ASU didn't issue any free passes. Appalachian closes out a rain-shortened four-game homestand on Tuesday evening when it hosts High Point. First pitch is set for 6 p.m. at Smith Stadium.

Photo Courtesy: Tyler Tewell, ASU Athletics