

ASU Earns Split at Samford

Written by Mike Flynn
Saturday, 12 May 2012 22:38

After rallying in game one, the Mountaineers failed to hold on to a two-run lead in the nightcap, as Appalachian State University baseball split its Southern Conference doubleheader against Samford at J.L. Griffin Field on Saturday. The Apps scored four runs in the ninth inning to win the first game, 7-4, before dropping four runs in the eighth of game two en

route to a 4-2 loss. With the split, Appalachian State (35-12, 19-7 SoCon) holds on to its narrow lead in the SoCon standings, while Samford (33-18, 19-10) falls to within one game of falling out of the running for the regular-season title.

In game one, the Mountaineers struck quickly in the first inning, as junior Hector Crespo (Miami, Fla./Florida Christian) rattled the day's opening pitch deep into right center for a lead-off double. Classmate Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) advanced the runner with a single into right, and fellow junior Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Young Harris) made it three-straight hits with an RBI-single through the left side to put the Apps in front, 1-0.

In the third inning, Samford's Zeth Stone led off with a double to left center, and a Mountaineer error on a bunt single by Brad Moss cost the Apps their first run. The Bulldogs tallied two more hits in the inning, including an RBI-single by Brandon Miller to give Samford a 1-2 edge.

Appalachian State's mistakes continued in the fourth inning. After ASU pitcher Ryan Arrowood (Rutherfordton, N.C./R-S Central) hit two batters, an Appalachian fielding error cost an unearned run to extend the Samford advantage to 1-3.

After three productive hitters to open the game, ASU's batsmen were stifled at the plate by Samford pitcher Charles Basford, who retired 12 of 13 consecutive batters. The Appalachian offense connected again in the fifth, but despite singles from sophomore Preston Troutman (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) and Crespo, the Mountaineers failed to bring a runner across the plate.

In the sixth inning, junior Tyler Tewell (Charlotte, N.C./Butler) launched his first pitch well over the right-field wall, cutting the deficit to 2-3 with his sixth homer of the season.

Samford had an opportunity to tie the game in the seventh, as the Bulldogs put two aboard on a Mountaineer error and a hit. On a hot grounder to second, Crespo made one of his many athletic stops on the day, holding the runners to save a run and keep the margin at one.

Samford pitching mistakes in the eighth proved crucial, as Zupcic led with a single and advanced on a Callaway sacrifice. A balk and two walks loaded the bases in time for senior Trey Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./Pitt CC) to score the game-tying RBI by taking a pitch to the leg, equalizing the score at 3-3. The tie would not last long, as Samford notched a double and single to right field to score the go-ahead run in the bottom of the eighth.

With the game on the line, Crespo showcased his speed in the ninth. After reaching on a walk, he stole two bases to put the tying run on third. Callaway scored Crespo on a fielder's choice, while Tewell tacked on an RBI single to put the Apps on top. Callaway came across the plate on a balk, and Jeremy Dowdy (Raleigh, N.C./Wakefield) singled to bat in ASU's fourth run of the inning, giving Appalachian its 7-4 lead. Hyatt entered the game and downed the Bulldogs in order in the ninth to earn his 12th save of the season, climbing to tie for second place on ASU's career saves list.

Arrowood tossed 7.0 innings with eight hits, three runs (two earned), a walk and two strikeouts

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for no decision; Ryne Frankoff (Apex, N.C./Apex) (1-1) earned the win on 0.1 inning pitched. Basford threw 7.1 innings for the Bulldogs, tallying seven hits, two runs (both earned), two walks and two strikeouts. Arthur Strauss (0-1) suffered the loss on two earned runs.

In game two, the Mountaineers again started the game with back-to-back hits from Crespo and Zupcic. A Bulldog fielding error scored Crespo, while Zupcic came home on a double play to give the Apps a 2-0 lead in the first.

Both pitchers did well to keep runners off the bases. ASU senior Seth Grant (Etowah, N.C./West Henderson) gave up only four hits through seven scoreless innings, while Samford starter Josh Martin did the same. Grant finished the day with four walks and four strikeouts. Things fell apart for Appalachian in the eighth inning, as five different arms were needed to dismiss the Bulldogs. Reliever David Port (Dunwoody, Ga./Dunwoody) (2-1) yielded four runs (all earned) on three hits, relinquishing the ASU lead and eventually taking the loss.

Martin (10-1) recorded his SoCon-leading 10th win of the season after closing out the complete game with five hits, two runs (neither earned), a walk and six strikeouts. With the split, Appalachian retains a 0.5-game lead over College of Charleston in the SoCon standings and a 1.5-game lead over Samford. The series is scheduled to conclude on Sunday with the rubber game at 2 p.m./1 p.m. Central. An Appalachian win over the Bulldogs would eliminate Samford from regular-season championship contention and would inch the Mountaineers closer to their first title in 25 years.

NOTES: Arrowood entered game one with three career hit batters; he hit his third of the day in the fifth inning ... likewise, Grant doubled his career total from two hit batters to four ... before Saturday, no ASU pitcher had hit more than one batter in a single game this season; both Arrowood (3) and Grant (2) struck multiple Bulldogs ... after reaching base in game one, Kassouf's on-base streak was snapped at 16 games with an 0-for-4 showing in game two ... the game-one win is ASU's only of the year when trailing after eight innings (1-12)

Photo Courtesy: Tyler Tewell, ASU Athletics