

ASU Downs Samford To Take Series

Written by Mike Flynn
Monday, 14 May 2012 08:09

Despite a late effort by the Bulldogs, the Mountaineers held on to win the series, as Appalachian State University baseball defeated Southern Conference opponent Samford, 9-7, at Joe Lee Griffin Field on Sunday. With the win, Appalachian

(36-12, 20-7 SoCon) retains its top standing in the SoCon standings, a full game ahead of second-place College of Charleston, while Samford (33-19, 19-11) sees its title hopes dashed as the Bulldogs fall out of regular-season championship contention.

For the third straight game, the Mountaineers posted the first runs. Junior Tyler Tewell (Charlotte, N.C./Butler) led off the second inning with a walk before senior Jeremy Dowdy (Raleigh, N.C./Wakefield) let loose on his third home run of the season, clearing the left-center wall to put Appalachian on the scoreboard, 2-0. In the bottom of the same inning, Samford cut the deficit with a lead-off walk followed by an RBI-single by Christian Durdaller that caught the left-field foul line to make it a 2-1 ball game. Later, Samford tried to score another on a single to right field, but a successful relay and putout by Dowdy protected the lead.

Junior Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) picked up a double in the third inning, and hits by Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside) and Daniel Kassouf (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) brought Zupcic home to increase the Appalachian advantage to 3-1.

ASU starter Rob Marcello (Royal Palm Beach, Fla./Indian River) navigated four innings with only four hits before Samford gained momentum in the fifth. The Bulldogs tallied five hits and capitalized on a Mountaineer error to score three runs and take a 3-4 advantage. Marcello would finish the day with 4.2 innings pitched, four runs (all earned), five walks, two strikeouts and no decision.

With rain beginning to fall, Appalachian responded in the top of the sixth inning. Kassouf led off with a double, while Tewell and freshman Brandon Burris (Concord, N.C./Mount Pleasant) notched hits to score the tying run-Burris earning the RBI. Preston Troutman (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) reached on a dropped sac-fly, and sophomore Noah Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) brought two more to the plate on a two-RBI single, putting Appalachian back on top, 7-4.

In the eighth, Appalachian plated two more runs as Troutman walked, while Crespo and Zupcic each picked up RBI singles to bump the ASU margin to 9-4.

The bottom of the eighth saw the Mountaineers struggling to pitch strikes. After two hit batters and four walks, Samford brought three batters to the dish, cutting the gap to 9-7. In the end, junior Tyler Moore (Boone, N.C./Watauga) was able to force a Bulldog double play to escape the trouble.

In the ninth, Samford led off to put the tying run aboard on back-to-back hits, but Moore's work forced another double play to close the door on Appalachian's 9-7 victory.

Despite yielding a pair of runs in the eighth, freshman reliever Jamie Nunn (Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor) (5-0) earned the win and Moore earned his first save of the year for his efforts. Moore totaled 1.2 scoreless innings with two hits and a strikeout.

The Samford battery had a rough game, as starter Kyle Putkonen navigated 3.0 innings with three runs (all earned) on five hits, a walk and one strikeout. Reliever Joseph Burns (3-1) got through nearly two scoreless innings before allowing the decisive four runs (three earned) on

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four hits, a walk and two strikeouts.

With its 20-7 conference record, Appalachian State can clinch at least a share of the SoCon championship by winning two of its three scheduled games in its final league series against Western Carolina. The Apps maintain a one-game edge over second-place College of Charleston; the Cougars' conclude their SoCon slate with a series against UNCG next weekend.

Appalachian State returns home to Boone for its final home game of the season on Tuesday. The Apps host non-conference opponent Gardner-Webb for a single game beginning at 6 p.m. Appalachian rounds out its regular season next weekend at Western Carolina with a three-game SoCon series starting Thursday at 5 p.m.

NOTES: Crespo recorded a hit to lead off each of the three games of the series (double, single, single) ... Appalachian's 2012 squad now has the third most wins in program history (36) ... the team also has its fourth-most steals (90) and saves (13) ... following the weekend, Crespo moves to third on the ASU season stolen bases list (30), trailing his 2010 mark of 31 swiped bags ... Ryan Grant moves to ninth on career starts list (37) ... ASU's four double plays are its most in SoCon play this season; the Apps had five against Duke on March 13 ... Moore's save is the first this season for any pitcher other than Nathan Hyatt ... Nunn became the third ASU pitcher in as many games to hit multiple batters (2) in the same game; the previous ASU high prior to the weekend was one.

Photo Courtesy: Tyler Moore, ASU Athletics