

## Appalachian Topples Top-Seeded Virginia

Written by Mike Flynn  
Monday, 04 June 2012 05:37

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Appalachian State University baseball scored six runs in the first two innings then received clutch pitching and fielding performances the rest of the way to defeat top-seeded Virginia, 6-5, on Sunday in the NCAA Division I Baseball Championship Charlottesville Regional. With the victory, third-seeded Appalachian

(41-16) advances to Monday's regional championship round. The Mountaineers play Oklahoma (40-23) at 4 p.m. Oklahoma defeated Virginia 5-4 Sunday night. Coverage begins at 3:40 P.M. on AM 1450, WATA. If Appalachian loses Monday's first game, it will play a second game against the same opponent immediately after. Whoever prevails will advance to the Super Regional round at No. 8 national seed South Carolina (41-17), the winner of this weekend's Columbia Regional.

"I'm just really proud of our kids. Virginia has one of the best teams in the country," said ASU coach Chris Pollard. "To come here and stand toe-to-toe with them is a tremendous credit to the toughness and resiliency of our players. I thought Seth Grant did a great job coming here and grinding away. He went out there most of the day with just a fastball and pounded away to get it done. It's a tremendous credit to his toughness to be able to give us six good innings off of one pitch. I thought it was a great job by our bullpen - Frankoff and Hyatt - to come when UVa had seized momentum back. They made some tough pitches in some key spots. We weren't perfect all day. Obviously we had four errors, but we competed and made plays when we had to. That has been the mark of this team all year and I could not be more proud of them."

Appalachian exploded out of the gates against Virginia on Sunday afternoon, scoring a run in the bottom of the first inning and five more in the second to take a commanding 6-0 lead.

The Mountaineers benefitted from a bit of good fortune to kickstart the six-run outburst. Leading off the game, Appalachian's Hector Crespo (Miami, Fla./Florida Christian) hit what appeared to be a routine popup to shallow left field. However, UVa shortstop Chris Taylor lost the ball in the sun and it dropped to the field. Crespo, who never stopped hustling after making contact, slid easily into second base for a leadoff double. Two batters later, Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside) ripped a double down the left field line to drive in Crespo and give the Apps a 1-0 advantage.

After starting pitcher Seth Grant (Etowah, N.C./West Henderson) wiggled his way out of a bases-loaded jam in the top of the second, the Mountaineer offense ripped UVa's Artie Lewicki for five hits and plated five runs to take the six-run lead. ASU cleanup hitter Daniel Kassouf (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) delivered the biggest hit of the five-run frame, a two-run single through the right side of the infield that came after Virginia elected to walk Callaway to load the bases for Appalachian's home run and RBI leader.

From there, Appalachian certainly didn't play its sharpest baseball of the season but made enough plays to never relinquish the advantage. The Mountaineers committed four errors, issued four walks and hit two batters, were called for two run-scoring balks and had a base-running blunder that likely cost them a run. However, they also banged out 11 hits against a Virginia pitching staff that ranked 18th nationally with 8.01 hits allowed per nine innings this season and forced the Cavaliers to leave 12 men on base, including seven in scoring position. Appalachian was particularly clutch after Virginia sliced the lead to 6-5 in the seventh inning, as

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the Mountaineers forced UVa to strand runners over the final three stanzas, four of which were left in scoring position. The Cavaliers pulled within a run after Ryne Frankoff (Apex, N.C./Apex) was called for a run-scoring balk two outs in the seventh and had two runners on base when Frankoff got out of the inning by inducing a routine fly out to right field.

Big defensive plays highlighted the Apps keeping Virginia off the board in the eighth inning. Second baseman Kevin Werman led off the eighth by smoking a hard-hit ground ball towards the hole between first and second base but Crespo made a spectacular diving stop to his left and recovered in time to throw out the speedy Werman for the first out of the inning. Later in the frame with a runner on first base and two outs, .380 hitter Stephen Bruno roped a double off the wall in left field. However, freshman left fielder Brandon Burris (Concord, N.C./Mount Pleasant), who was only in the game because of an injury to regular starting outfielder Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence), hustled to the ball and got it back into the infield in time to keep Taylor from scoring the tying run. The play proved to be a game-saver when Frankoff got the next batter, Derek Fisher, to fly out to center on a 3-2 pitch for the final out of the inning. Closer Nathan Hyatt (Brevard, N.C./Brevard) issued a one-out walk in the ninth but got back-to-back grounders to end the frame with yet another runner in scoring position and send the Mountaineers to the regional championship.

Despite not having command of his breaking ball all afternoon, Grant gutted out six-plus innings and allowed just five runs (four earned) on six hits while striking out four to move to 7-3 on the season. Hyatt added to his own school record with his 16th save of the year.

"It speaks to his toughness for him to come back and pitch after an outing that was not up to our standards and not up to his standards," Pollard said. "To come out and basically have 4,000 people rooting against you and get those final three outs, speaks to his toughness."

At the plate, the bottom three hitters in Appalachian's batting order continued to be the Mountaineers' offensive catalysts. No. 7-hitter Trey Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) led the charge by going 3-for-4 for the second-consecutive day while No. 8-hitter Preston Troutman (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) went 2-for-4 and No. 9 Noah Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) chipped in with a 1-for-3 effort that included an RBI single and a walk.

**NOTES:** Appalachian set a new school record with its 41st win of the season, breaking the previous mark of 40 set in 1986 (40-13-1) ... after going 14,252 days between NCAA postseason wins, the Mountaineers have now done won back-to-back NCAA Tournament games ... Appalachian moved to 4-6 all-time in the NCAA Division I Baseball Championship ... the Mountaineers moved to 6-2 this season versus opponents from Bowl Championship Series conferences. Four of the six wins have been against nationally ranked teams ... the win over No. 15 Virginia was Appalachian's fourth of the season over a nationally ranked team. Prior to this season, ASU had only one win over nationally ranked opponents since 1982 ... Grant's six innings set a new single-season school record with 100.2 innings pitched, breaking the previous record of 99.1 IP set less than 24 hours earlier by Ryan Arrowood (Rutherfordton, N.C./R-S Central) during the Apps' 5-4 win over Oklahoma on Saturday night ... Hyatt extended his school record with his 16th save of the season ... Appalachian moved to 11-2 in one-run games this season ... the Mountaineers have won eight-straight games decided by just one run ... ASU head coach Chris Pollard was ejected from the game in the seventh inning after third-base umpire John Bennett called Noah Holmes out on a check-swing on a 3-2 pitch ... by NCAA rule, Pollard can coach tomorrow's 4 p.m. game, however, Appalachian is awaiting final word on how the Southern Conference's unique ejection and suspension rules will ultimately apply in this case ... Zupcic (knee) is day-to-day.

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**Photo Courtesy: Seth Grant, ASU Athletics**