

ASU Comes Up Short In Regional Finals

Written by Mike Flynn

Tuesday, 05 June 2012 05:30

Appalachian State University baseball left 21 men on base and surrendered nine two-out runs in a doubleheader sweep at the hands of No. 23 Oklahoma in the championship round of the NCAA Tournament Charlottesville Regional

on Monday at Davenport Field. With the defeats, Appalachian (41-18) closes its Cinderella season just one victory short of winning an NCAA regional for the first time and three wins shy of the College World Series. Oklahoma (42-23) advances to the Super Regional round where it will face No. 8 national seed South Carolina next weekend in Columbia, S.C.

The Mountaineers, seeded third in the Charlottesville Regional, jumped out to leads in both of Monday's ballgames but could not hold on like it did in wins over No. 2-seed Oklahoma on Saturday and top-seeded Virginia on Sunday. Sparked by RBI from Daniel Kassouf (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson), Tyler Tewell (Charlotte, N.C./Butler) and Jeremy Dowdy (Raleigh, N.C./Wakefield), Appalachian batted around in the third inning in Monday's first game to take a 3-0 lead. However, Oklahoma erased the Mountaineer advantage with three runs in the fourth inning then added four in the sixth, four in the seventh and three in the eighth to account for its regional-high 14 runs.

Despite surrendering 14 runs, the Mountaineers had ample opportunities to stay in the ballgame by banging out 11 hits against five OU pitchers and drawing 10 walks. However, Appalachian, which came in to the day hitting .329 with runners on base and .316 with men in scoring position, left a season-high 14 runners on base, including 10 in scoring position.

The story of the winner-takes-all second game was a duel between two seldom-used pitchers in OU's Drew Harrison and Appalachian's Jeffrey Springs (Belmont, N.C./South Point). It looked like it would be a short-lived duel when Appalachian took a 1-0 lead against Harrison on a two-out RBI double by Kassouf in the top of the first and Oklahoma answered with three runs in the bottom of the frame against Springs.

After the shaky first, both hurlers settled in but Harrison, a converted first baseman making his first start in only the sixth appearance of his career, earned top billing. The right-handed junior limited the Mountaineers to two runs on three hits over six innings before giving way to two of the Sooners' most established arms in Jordan John and Steven Okert, who worked three scoreless innings to close out Harrison's first-career victory.

Making only the fifth start of his short career, Springs (2-1) battled through 5.2 innings, allowing five runs on 10 hits while striking out four. Appalachian stranded seven more baserunners in the finale but only two were left in scoring position.

Kassouf drove in both Mountaineer runs in the nightcap to finish his spectacular senior season with 66 RBI, the second-highest total in school history. Picked to finish sixth in the Southern Conference in the preseason media poll, Appalachian finished the season with a school-record 41 wins. The Mountaineers won their first SoCon championship since 1987, advanced to NCAA postseason play for the first time since 1986 and won their first NCAA Tournament games since 1973.

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CHARLOTTESVILLE REGIONAL ALL-TOURNAMENT TEAM

C - Nate Irving (Virginia)

1B - Trey Holmes (Appalachian State)

2B - Jack Mayfield (Oklahoma)

3B - Stephen Bruno (Virginia)

SS - Caleb Bushyhead (Oklahoma)

OF - Brandon Burris (Appalachian State)

OF - Cody Reine (Oklahoma)

OF - Preston Troutman (Appalachian State)

DH - Matt Oberste (Oklahoma)

P - Ryan Arrowood (Appalachian State)

P - Dillon Overton (Oklahoma)

Most Outstanding Player - Matt Oberste (Oklahoma)

Photo Courtesy: Daniel Kassouf, ASU Athletics