

Leach, Burris Lead Mountaineers to Series Victory

Written by Mike Flynn

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Sophomores Alex Leach (Charlotte, N.C./Ardrey Kell) and Brandon Burris (Concord, N.C./Mount Pleasant) each had two doubles and a home run to lead Appalachian State University baseball to an 8-5 victory over Butler on Sunday afternoon at

Beaver Field at Jim and Bettie Smith Stadium. With the victory, Appalachian State (4-1) bested Butler (2-4) in the clubs' three-game weekend series, two games to one.

Nine of the Mountaineers' 10 hits went for extra bases in Sunday's series-clinching victory. In addition to Leach and Burris both going 3-for-4 with two doubles and a homer, Josh Zumbrook (Wilkesboro, N.C./West Wilkes) doubled twice and Jaylin Davis (McLeansville, N.C./Northeast Guilford) also doubled to pace the 10-hit attack.

Highlighted by Leach's solo homer in the third, Appalachian jumped out to a 3-0 lead after three innings. However, Butler exploded for five runs in the top of the fourth to take a 5-3 advantage. The Mountaineers cut the two-run deficit in half in the fifth and regained the lead with four runs in the seventh. Zumbrook led off the decisive seventh frame with a double down the left-field line and two pitches later, Burris launched the first home run of his career to left-center field, a two-run shot that put the Mountaineers ahead for good at 6-5.

Later in the seventh, Leach doubled to drive in William Head (Asheville, N.C./Asheville) and came around to score on a sacrifice fly by Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside) that stretched Appalachian's advantage to 8-5.

From there, senior relief pitchers Tyler Moore (Banner Elk, N.C./Watauga) and Rob Marcello (Royal Palm Beach, Fla./Royal Palm Beach) kept the Bulldogs off the board the rest of the way to nail down the win for starter Sam Agnew-Wieland (Marietta, Ga./Wheeler). Agnew-Wieland allowed five runs on seven hits over seven innings, but didn't surrender any runs and allowed just three hits outside of Butler's five-run fourth. The right-hander struck out seven to move to 2-0 on the young season.

Marcello struck out two batters and did not allow a hit in the ninth for his second save. Jimmy Risi and Lucas Calderon led Butler with two hits apiece.

Appalachian State begins a 10-game road trip on Tuesday with a non-conference tilt at High Point. First pitch is set for 4 p.m.

NOTES: Appalachian State moved to 27-3 at Smith Stadium since the beginning of last season and 87-27-1 at home since 2009 ... the Mountaineers have won four of their first five games for the fourth time in five seasons ... since 2009, the only time that Appalachian hasn't won at least four of their first five games was last season, when they opened at 3-2 ... the Mountaineers have hit 10 home runs through their first five games of the season ... last season, Appalachian did not hit its 10th home run until the 17th game of the campaign ... the Mountaineers sport a gaudy .544 slugging percentage as a team through five games ... by comparison, only one NCAA Division I club had a slugging percentage over .500 in 2012 (Utah Valley — .523).

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Photo Courtesy: Rob Marcello, ASU Athletics