

Howard Pitches Apps to 13th-Straight Win Over A&T

Written by Mike Flynn

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Making the first start of his career, true freshman Rob Howard (Waynesville, N.C./Tuscola) allowed just one run in 5.2 innings and Appalachian State University baseball cruised to its 13th-straight win over North Carolina A&T, a 7-3 triumph on Tuesday evening at Beaver Field at Jim and Bettie Smith Stadium.

Howard (1-0) limited N.C. A&T to just four hits and struck out four in his first career victory. The freshman had pitched only nine innings in his collegiate career before being called upon to make the start for Appalachian State (22-15), which is in the midst of a grueling stretch of 13 games in 17 days.

Howard sailed through the first five innings, retiring seven in a row at one point and surrendering just two singles. While the right-hander was nearly flawless on the mound, his offense scored a run in the first inning and two in the second, fourth and fifth to stake him to a commanding 7-0 lead.

After throwing no more than 51 pitches in any of the first six appearances of his career, Howard began to run out of gas as he approached the 75-pitch mark in the sixth inning. However, he still managed to limit the damage to just one run before leaving to a standing ovation with two outs and a 7-1 advantage in the sixth.

Red-hot Hector Crespo (Miami, Fla./Florida Christian) was once again the catalyst for Appalachian State's offense. The senior went 2-for-4 with three RBI, giving him multiple hits for the fourth game in a row, sixth time in seven games, ninth time in 11 games and 17th time in 28 games. With the 2-for-4 effort, Crespo also raised his batting average to an even .350 on the season.

William Head (Asheville, N.C./Asheville) also had two hits and scored two runs for the Mountaineers while Noah Holmes (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) and Gabe Dimock (Greensboro, N.C./Grimsley) chipped in with an RBI apiece.

Kelvin Freeman (3-for-4) and Dairio Little (2-for-3) combined for five of North Carolina A&T's seven hits. Starting pitcher Dustin Myers (0-4) allowed three runs in just 1.2 innings of work for the Aggies, which dropped its fifth-consecutive game.

Appalachian State returns to the road on Wednesday when it makes the short jaunt to Johnson City, Tenn. for a matchup with longtime local rival ETSU. Game time is set for 7 p.m. at ETSU's Thomas Stadium.

NOTES: The victory snapped Appalachian State's four-game losing streak, it's longest skid since March 12-18, 2011 ... Appalachian moved to 48-6 all-time versus North Carolina A&T ... the Mountaineers have not lost to N.C. A&T since a wild 16-15 setback at Smith Stadium on April 18, 2007 ... Appalachian is 34-7 at Smith Stadium since the beginning of last season ... Crespo has reached base in 16-straight games ... Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside), who is carrying a 13-game hitting streak, sat out of Tuesday's game to rest a minor hand injury sustained last Wednesday versus Campbell ... Callaway will return to the lineup no later than Friday's Southern Conference opener versus Samford ... Chad Farmer (Evans, Ga./Greenbrier), who had started each of Appalachian State's previous six Tuesday games this season, was bumped back a day and will start on Wednesday at ETSU.

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Photo Courtesy: Hector Crespo, ASU Athletics