

Huge Rally Comes Up Short in ASU Loss

Written by Mike Flynn
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Appalachian State University baseball nearly came all the way back from a 9-0 deficit but the rally fell just short in its 10-8 loss to Elon on Saturday afternoon at Beaver Field at Jim and Bettie Smith Stadium. Appalachian State (25-18, 12-12 SoCon) trailed 9-0 after four-and-a-half innings but cut the deficit to 9-8 going into the ninth. After Elon (24-26, 16-10 SoCon) tacked on an insurance run in the top of the ninth, Appalachian brought the tying run to the plate with no outs in the bottom of the stanza. However, Noah Holmes' (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) line drive back up the middle was snagged by Elon closer Andrew MacDonald, who doubled William Head (Asheville, N.C./Asheville) off first base to end the ballgame and squash the Mountaineers' hopes for an epic comeback victory.

Buoyed by two Appalachian errors, five walks and a hit batter, Elon scored four runs in the third inning, three in the fourth and two in the fifth to take the commanding 9-0 lead. While his offense was putting nine runs on the board, Phoenix starter Kyle Webb retired the first 15 batters he faced to take a perfect game into the sixth inning.

However, the game took a wild turn in the bottom of the sixth when, helped by three Elon errors, Appalachian sent 12 batters to the plate and scored seven times to pull within two runs at 9-7. Jaylin Davis (McLeansville, N.C./Northeast Guilford) broke up Webb's perfect game with a leadoff single and Will Callaway (Greenville, S.C./Eastside) provided the inning's biggest hit with a two-run single. Thanks to the Phoenix's three miscues in the frame, five of the seven runs were unearned.

The score remained 9-7 until the bottom of the eighth when the Mountaineers plated another run on an RBI groundout by Preston Troutman (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan) to make it 9-8. The Apps would go on to load the bases with two outs but Webb got perhaps the biggest out of the game when Hector Crespo (Miami, Fla./Florida Christian) grounded back to the mound to end the inning and leave the bases juiced.

Back-to-back doubles by Danny Lynch and Chris King in the top of the ninth allowed Elon to stretch the lead back to 10-8 but Head led off bottom of the frame with a single to bring the tying run to the plate with nobody out. MacDonald struck out Callaway on three pitches for the first out of the inning but Holmes ripped a liner back up the box for what initially looked like a sure base hit. However, the hot shot found MacDonald's glove and he threw over to first to easily double off Head for the final out of the crazy contest.

Davis, who snapped a 2-for-31 skid with a two-run triple on Friday night, continued to swing a hot bat on Saturday and went 3-for-4 to lead the Mountaineers' eight-hit effort. Head added two hits and Callaway extended his team-best hitting streak to 18 games with his two-run single in the sixth.

Sam Agnew-Wieland (Marietta, Ga./Wheeler) struggled for the fourth-straight outing, allowing seven runs (six earned) in just 3.1 innings. Since tossing back-to-back shutouts versus Wofford (March 30) and Georgia Southern (April 6), the right-hander has not gotten out of the seventh inning in any of his last four starts and has surrendered 25 runs during that span. He fell to 5-5 with the loss.

Webb (6-2) worked eight innings for Elon and gave up just three earned runs on seven hits. The clubs play the rubber match of their three-game Southern Conference series on Sunday afternoon. First pitch is set for 1 p.m. at Smith Stadium.

NOTES: Appalachian State scored seven runs in the sixth inning for the second game in a row ... Appalachian has outscored its opponents, 38-12, in the sixth inning this season ... Elon has

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allowed a seven-run stanza in each of its last three games (ninth inning vs. Wake Forest on Wednesday, sixth inning in the first two games of this weekend's series) ... the Mountaineers can earn its second SoCon series victory over Elon in 10 attempts with a win on Sunday ... Appalachian's only other SoCon series win over the Phoenix came in 2008 when it won 2-of-3 games at Elon ... the Mountaineers fell to 2-7 on Saturdays in SoCon play this season ... the Apps are 10-5 on Fridays and Sundays in SoCon action.

Photo Courtesy: Jaylin Davis, ASU Athletics