

ASU Eliminated By The Citadel

Written by Brandon McGinnis
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After a slow start, but a valiant effort to stay alive, fifth-seeded Appalachian State University baseball was eliminated from the Southern Conference Tournament with an 8-6 loss to fourth-seeded The Citadel, Saturday at Fluor Field. The heart-breaking defeat closes the Mountaineers 2013 season with a 30-24 record, their seventh-

straight season with 30 or more wins. With the win, The Citadel advances to Sunday's championship game for a chance to earn the SoCon's automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament. Despite going hitless the first time through the order, Appalachian was able to bounce back with 12 hits for the afternoon, as Michael Pierson led the starting nine with a 3-for-5 day. The three hits, all singles, set a new career-high for hits in a single game. The leftfielder also collected an RBI on a single in the fifth.

The Citadel was on the opposite side, starting quickly with five runs in the first two innings. The Bulldogs smashed seven hits over the first two frames, including a Mason Davis home run to begin the game. Appalachian starter Jeffrey Springs was unable to close out the first inning, giving up three runs on three hits.

Taylor Thurber cooled down the Bulldog hitters after two runs in the second inning, which allowed the Mountaineers to stay within striking distance and find the scoreboard for the first time in the third inning. After going hitless for the first time in 27 games in Friday's win over Western Carolina, shortstop Will Callaway got the Apps back in the game with a two-run single up the middle, plating Hector Crespo and Noah Holmes.

After Pierson's RBI single in the fifth, The Citadel nabbed insurance runs in the sixth with two runs on four hits, extending the Bulldog lead to 7-3.

Appalachian's biggest hit of the afternoon came in the sixth inning when catcher Josh Zumbrook brought the Apps within one with a three-run home run over the leftcenter wall. Zumbrook last hit a homer on March 16 against Cornell, breaking a 28-game stretch without a home run. Despite the three-run shot, the Mountaineers were unable to find the scoreboard again, only notching three hits in the final three innings. Joining Pierson with multi-hit games were Crespo and Holmes with two hits apiece.

The top of the order for The Citadel was dominant, combining for eight hits, three RBI and five runs scored. Davis led the way with a 3-for-5 day with two RBI and three runs scored.

NOTES: Appalachian has now gone 29-straight seasons without winning the SoCon Tournament ... With two stolen bases on the day, Appalachian swiped 100 bags for the season, becoming just the third club in the program's history to achieve the feat (137 – 1974, 107 – 2010) ... With his 22 stolen bases this season, Crespo moved to eighth in the single-season stolen base list in program history ... Crespo recorded his 102nd career stolen base and will remain in sixth in SoCon history ... Callaway ended the season by hitting safely in 28 of the last 29 games ... Holmes reached base in each of the squad's final 16 games ... With a single in the fifth, William Head reached base safely in 14-straight games to conclude the year ... The Citadel moves to 5-0 against Appalachian this season, with two wins coming in the SoCon Tournament ... All five games were decided by three runs or less, including two walk-off wins.

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Photo Courtesy: Jeffrey Springs, ASU Athletics