

Elon Rallies Past Eagles Into Title Game

Written by Phil Perry

Saturday, 25 May 2013 22:07

Number three seed Elon scored five runs in the seventh inning and thwarted No. 7 seed Georgia Southern's ninth-inning rally Saturday to earn a 7-6 victory in a win-or-go-home game at the Southern Conference Baseball Championship at Fluor Field. The Phoenix advances to Sunday's title game, where it will meet No. 4 seed The Citadel. Elon (31-28), which lost its tournament opener to Furman on Wednesday, has won four straight games to reach the championship tilt, including a pair of stunning rallies against the Eagles (27-31) on Saturday. That earned the Phoenix a date with the Bulldogs (35-24) in the championship game, which will appear on ESPN3, as well as Time Warner Cable in select New York, New England and North Carolina markets. That game is set for 2:05 p.m.

Trailing 6-2 heading to the top of the seventh, GSU quickly recorded two outs before Elon started its momentum-swinging rally. Alex Swim singled to get things going, with SoCon Player of the Year Ryan Kinsella drawing a walk behind him. Sebastian Gomez and Casey Jones followed with RBI singles, and Antonio Alvarez hit a two-run double to tie the game at 6. Chris King then sent the first pitch he saw into right center to score Alvarez with what would prove to be the winning run.

The Eagles would not go quietly, however, bringing in ace Justin Hess – who threw 141 pitches in a four-hit shutout in GSU's opener on Thursday morning – to open the eighth inning. Hess showed no ill effects, striking out the side on 11 pitches. Hess was again up to the task in the ninth, surrendering just a two-out single to give Georgia Southern a chance in the bottom half. The Eagles seemed poised to rally, putting runners on second and third with no one out after a pair of infield singles and an error. One out later, T.D. Davis was intentionally walked to load the bases, and Elon went to its ace, Kyle Webb, who started Wednesday against Furman. Webb induced a fielder's choice as the Phoenix nipped the speedy Scooter Williams at the plate for the second out of the inning, and Stryker Brown lined out to shallow center to end it.

Just like in Saturday's first game between the squads, an 11-4 Elon win, GSU jumped out to a big lead, only to see the Phoenix turn things around with a big inning late. This time, the Eagles scored three runs in the first inning, with Chase Griffin, Brown and Tyler Avera recording RBIs in the frame.

After the teams traded single runs in the third, Elon got an RBI double from Tyler McVicar in the fourth to pull within two at 4-2. The Eagles answered with two runs in the bottom half of the frame on Williams' RBI single and an Elon error.

Nine players recorded hits for the Phoenix, who got two each from Kinsella, Jones and King. Williams and Ben Morgan had two each to lead Georgia Southern. Dylan Clark (6-4) earned the win for Elon, throwing five innings of three-hit, scoreless relief. Webb earned his first save with 2/3 of an inning of scoreless work. GSU reliever Kyle Rowe (4-4) took the loss after surrendering five runs on six hits in 3 1/3 innings.

Elon will be making its third title game appearance and first since 2009. The Phoenix won the title in 2008. The Citadel, an 11-4 winner over Appalachian State earlier Saturday, will be making its 11th appearance and is seeking its ninth title.

The winner will receive the Southern Conference's automatic bid to the NCAA Baseball Regionals.

NOTE: In Time Warner Cable's Albany, Central New York, Rochester and New England territories, Sunday's championship game will air on channels 1551 (8) and 1552 (7). In New York City, it will appear on channels 197 (7) and 198 (8), and in the Charlotte and Eastern

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Carolina territories, it will appear on channels 518 (7) and 519 (8).

Wednesday, May 22

(Fluor Field, Greenville, S.C.)

Game 1: #4 The Citadel 6, #5 Appalachian State 5

Game 2: #1 Western Carolina 13, #8 Samford 7

Game 3: #6 Furman 10, #3 Elon 1

Game 4: #2 College of Charleston vs. #7 Georgia Southern, ppd.

Thursday, May 23

(Fluor Field, Greenville, S.C.)

Game 4: #7 Georgia Southern 2, #2 College of Charleston 0

Game 5: #3 Elon 18, #2 College of Charleston 8

Game 7: #4 The Citadel 12, #1 Western Carolina 11

Game 8: #7 Georgia Southern 3, #6 Furman 2

(Furman's Latham Stadium, Greenville, S.C.)

Game 6: #5 Appalachian State 2, #8 Samford 1

Friday, May 24

(Fluor Field, Greenville, S.C.)

Game 9: #5 Appalachian State 15, #1 Western Carolina 4

Game 10: #3 Elon 8, #6 Furman 1

Saturday, May 25

(Fluor Field, Greenville, S.C.)

Game 11: #4 The Citadel 8, #5 Appalachian State 6

Game 12: #3 Elon 11, #7 Georgia Southern 4

Game 13: #3 Elon 7, #7 Georgia Southern 6

Sunday, May 26

(Fluor Field, Greenville, S.C.)

Game 14: #4 The Citadel vs. #3 Elon (ESPN3), 2:05 p.m.

All times Eastern