

Short-Handed, Weary Mountaineers Fall In Opener

Written by Mike Flynn

Saturday, 15 February 2014 08:38

Besieged by travel issues that left it with only two-thirds of its travel roster and coaching staff in uniform, Appalachian State University baseball dropped a 12-2 decision at No. 25 Arkansas in Friday's season opener at Baum Stadium.

Appalachian State's travel itinerary for the opening-weekend series at Arkansas was thrown into disarray by the winter storm that slammed much of the eastern half of the United States this week. Appalachian had two different flights cancelled on Thursday and Friday, which allowed only 20 players and two coaches to make it to Fayetteville in time for Friday's season opener. The Mountaineers left Boone, N.C. at 5 a.m. ET Friday and those that did get on a morning flight out of Charlotte Douglas Airport did not arrive at Baum Stadium until less than an hour before the original game time of 3 p.m. CT. The game was pushed back an hour to 4 p.m. CT to allow the Mountaineers time to take a full round of batting and infield practice.

However, the combination of travel fatigue and a very strong Arkansas club proved to be too much for Appalachian State (0-1) to overcome in Friday's lid-lifter. The Razorbacks (1-0) jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the first inning and added two runs in the third, three in the fourth and three in the fifth to take an 11-0 advantage before the Mountaineers scored their lone runs on a two-RBI single by Dillon Dobson (Hamptonville, N.C./Starmount) in the eighth. Arkansas tacked on a single run in the bottom of the eighth to close out the scoring.

Arkansas banged out 13 hits in the win, led by three apiece from Joe Serrano, Brian Anderson and K.J. Wilkerson. Four Razorback pitchers combined to limit Appalachian State to just four hits. Junior Jalen Beeks struck out six in six scoreless innings to earn the win.

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Dobson, Jaylin Davis (McLeansville, N.C./Northeast Guilford), Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) and Michael Pierson (Coral Springs, Fla./Pine Crest) notched Appalachian's four hits. All-Southern Conference pitcher Jamie Nunn (Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor) had an uncharacteristically shaky outing, allowing eight runs on eight hits while issuing four walks and hitting a batter in three innings of work to suffer the loss.

Appalachian State and Arkansas resume their three-game weekend series on Saturday at 1 p.m. ET.

NOTES: Appalachian State dropped to 6-5 in their last 11 games versus members of the baseball-rich Southeastern Conference ... Appalachian lost its season opener for only the second time in the last six years ... Zupcic played in his first game in more than 20 months after sitting out of last season due to a severe knee/lower-leg injury sustained in the opening game of the 2012 NCAA Charlottesville Regional ... in his first action in over 22 months due to a shoulder injury, relief pitcher Zach Joyce (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) allowed just one earned run on one hit in two innings of work.

Photo Courtesy: Tyler Zupcic, ASU Athletics