

## Mountaineers Drop Wild Series Opener at WCU

Written by Mike Flynn  
Friday, 02 May 2014 23:48

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In a game that featured four lead changes, Western Carolina rallied for three runs in the bottom of the seventh inning and hung on for a 10-9 win over Appalachian State University baseball on Friday evening at Hennon Stadium.

In addition to the four lead changes, Friday's wild Southern Conference series opener also included 22 hits, 15 walks, three hit batters and two balks — both of which allowed runners to score from third base.

After a crazy start to the game that saw Western Carolina (30-14, 14-4 SoCon) take a 7-4 lead after just three innings, Appalachian State (16-27, 9-9 SoCon) scored four runs in the top of the sixth to regain an 8-7 advantage.

Tyler Stroup (Thomasville, N.C./East Davidson) and Jaylin Davis (McLeansville, N.C./Northeast Guilford) both had RBI singles for Appalachian in the four-run sixth but the Mountaineers scored the tying and go-ahead runs without the benefit of a base hit. Bradley Morton (Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor) came home on a wild pitch to knot the score at 7-7 and Davis scored on a two-out balk to give App State the 8-7 lead.

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The Mountaineers maintained the one-run lead until the bottom of the seventh when WCU tied it at 8-8 on an RBI groundout by designated hitter Luke Gragg. Later in the seventh, it appeared that Appalachian reliever Robert Whaley (Hickory, N.C./Hickory) had worked his way out of a bases-loaded jam when he induced a two-out groundball to shortstop Preston Troutman (Rockwell, N.C./East Rowan). However, the grounder skidded under the glove of Troutman, who was playing in the infield for only the second time in his 195-game collegiate career, and into left-center field. Two runs scored on the two-out error and Western Carolina took a 10-8 lead.

Troutman, who had already tripled, homered and scored two runs earlier in the game, capped a terrific evening at the plate and cut Appalachian State's deficit to 10-9 with a two-out RBI single in the top of the eighth. However, that would be as close as the Mountaineers would get, as they went down in order in the ninth to seal their 10th one-run defeat of the season.

Injuries to both clubs' starting pitchers played a huge role in the bizarre game. Appalachian's Jamie Nunn (Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor) was a late scratch from his normally scheduled Friday night start and likely won't be available all weekend due to a shoulder injury. WCU starter Jeremy Null threw 64 pitches, allowed three runs and walked three in just two innings before being lifted from the game with a back injury.

True freshman Sean Mason (Austin, Texas/McNeil) made the first weekend start of his career in Nunn's place and was roughed up for seven runs (six earned) on seven hits in three innings of

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work. Another true freshman, southpaw Dallas DeVrieze (Moline, Ill./Moline), was very strong in relief of Mason, allowing just one earned run over 3.1 innings of work. However, DeVrieze was responsible for the runner that scored WCU's go-ahead unearned run in the bottom of the seventh and suffered the tough-luck loss to fall to 0-3 on the season.

In addition to Troutman's 3-for-4, two-RBI performance, Michael Pierson (Coral Springs, Fla./Pine Crest) went 2-for-4 to help pace Appalachian offensively. The Mountaineers banged out 11 hits, drew seven walks and were hit by two pitches as a team but stranded 11 baserunners in the defeat.

Bradley Strong doubled twice and scored two runs, Jacob Hoyle went 2-for-4 with two RBI and J.D. Long hit a three-run homer to lead the Catamounts.

The teams continue their three-game series on Saturday at 2 p.m. at Hennon Stadium.

**NOTES:** Mason became the first Mountaineer besides Nunn to pitch a weekend opener since SoCon Pitcher of the Year and current Colorado Rockies farmhand Ryan Arrowood held down the Friday-night role for Appalachian State in 2012 ... Nunn had made 26-straight starts in weekend openers for the Mountaineers ... Pierson has reached base in 18-straight games ... Appalachian State lost for the eighth time this season when leading after six innings ... the three-hour, 36-minute ballgame was Appalachian's longest of the season, surpassing the 3:31 needed for the Mountaineers' 10-inning loss to Notre Dame on March 11.

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**Photo Courtesy: Preston Troutman, App State Athletics**