

Four-Run 10th Inning Lifts App State

Written by Mike Flynn
Wednesday, 14 May 2014 06:41

Appalachian State University baseball strung together five-straight hits and scored four runs with two outs in the top of the 10th inning to defeat East Tennessee State, 9-5, on Tuesday night/Wednesday morning at Thomas Stadium.

Appalachian State (18-31) rallied from a 5-3 deficit with single runs in the sixth and seventh innings to set up the four-run outburst in the top of the 10th. The win the Mountaineers' first in extra innings since a 10-9, 11-inning victory at Furman on March 10, 2013 and snapped their three-game losing streak in extra-inning affairs.

Jaylin Davis (McLeansville, N.C./Northeast Guilford) kick-started Appalachian's string of five-consecutive two-out hits with a clean single to left field on an 0-1 pitch from ETSU closer Clinton Freeman. True freshman Brian Bauk (Salisbury, N.C./Salisbury) followed with the biggest hit of his young career, a double to right field that brought Davis home all the way from first base with the go-ahead run.

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Three more run-scoring extra-base hits — a double by Josh Zumbrook (Wilkesboro, N.C./West Wilkes), a triple by Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) and another double by Bradley Morton (Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor) — followed and gave the Mountaineers a commanding 9-5 lead.

Appalachian closer Robert Whaley (Hickory, N.C./Hickory) retired the side in order in the bottom of the 10th to seal the victory and cap a terrific evening for the Mountaineers' much-maligned bullpen. Relievers Taylor Thurber (Mooresville, N.C./Lake Norman) and Whaley combined to toss 5.1 scoreless innings to close out the game. The duo allowed just one hit and struck out six. Whaley (2-1) was particularly impressive, striking out four of the 10 batters he faced in three hitless innings.

The game got off to an inauspicious start for Appalachian State. After a long rain delay before first pitch, ETSU (24-27) jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the bottom of the first on a towering two-run homer by Freeman.

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Appalachian cut the deficit in half with one run in the third and took its first lead of the game with two runs in the fifth. However, the Mountaineers' 3-2 lead was short-lived, as the Buccaneers regained a 5-3 advantage with three runs in the bottom of the fifth.

A leadoff triple by Davis in the top of the sixth led to a run that cut App State's deficit to 5-4 and a two-out RBI double by Dillon Dobson (Hamptonville, N.C./Starmount) in the top of the seventh knotted the score at 5-5.

Appalachian State banged out 17 hits — its third-highest total of the season — in the win. Eight of the 17 hits went for extra bases (six doubles and two triples).

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Davis led the way, going 3-for-5 with the two pivotal runs scored. Bauk, Dobson, Zumbrook, Zupcic and Michael Pierson (Coral Springs, Fla./Pine Crest) added two hits apiece.

Tyler Roach went 3-for-5 at the plate to pace ETSU. Freeman, who ranks second in the Atlantic Sun Conference with 10 saves, suffered the loss to fall to 2-6 on the campaign.

Appalachian State closes the regular season this weekend when it hosts a crucial three-game Southern Conference series versus Furman. The winner of the three-game set clinches one of the six automatic berths into the double-elimination portion of next week's SoCon Tournament while the loser will have to win a single-elimination opening round game on Tuesday to earn a spot in the eight-team double-elimination field.

Game times for this weekend's series are set for 6:30 p.m. Thursday, 6:30 p.m. Friday and 3 p.m. Saturday at Beaver Field at Jim and Bettie Smith Stadium in Boone, N.C.

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NOTES: With the win, Appalachian State swept its two-game season series from longtime local rival East Tennessee State (the Mountaineers claimed a 7-6 walkoff win over ETSU at home on April 2) ... Appalachian had not swept a multi-game season series from ETSU since the Mountaineers won both games that the teams played in 2010 ... Davis matched an Appalachian State single-season record with his sixth triple of the campaign ... Davis and Troutman, who also has six triples this season, are the 11th and 12th players to match the long-standing school record, which has stood since Randy Ingram became the first Mountaineer to accomplish the feat in 1976 ... Pierson extended his hitting streak to 10 games, hit safely for the 21st time in 22 games and reached base for the 24th-straight game ... Tuesday's game first pitch wasn't thrown until 8:33 p.m. (nearly 90 minutes later than the originally scheduled 7:05 p.m. start time) due to the pregame rain delay ... the game then went on to be Appalachian State's longest of the year at three hours and 48 minutes and did not conclude until Wednesday at 12:21 a.m.

Photo Courtesy: Preston Troutman, App State Athletics