

## ASU survives, 42-41

Written by Mike Kelly

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The post-Armanti Edwards era began on a dramatic note as the Appalachian State University football team rallied from a 21-point deficit and defeated upstart Chattanooga 42-41 at Finley Stadium on Saturday afternoon.

The teams combined for 978 yards of offense in the season opener and Southern Conference opener for both teams. And Deandre Presley, looking to fill some big shoes left behind by Edwards, ignited the the biggest in ASU history. Trailing 35-14 after three quarters, Presley engineered a 28-point explosion in the final period.

Presley, making his third collegiate start, was 22-29 for 340 yards, two touchdown passes and he also scored twice. But despite the great effort, Presley remained modest about his achievements.

"I'm just the point guard," he said. "We've got the players, and it's my job to distribute the ball. They're the ones that make the plays, and I did my job today putting them in a position to succeed."

The Apps (1-0), who had 224 yards of offense on 47 plays, erupted for 203 yards on 11 plays and scored four touchdowns in a seven-minute span in the fourth quarter to take a 42-35 lead. "I think we have a quarterback," said ASU coach Jerry Moore. "Deandre really worked hard for this. He's a talented quarterback, but he's also a better person. And I think we can win with a person like that."

And it was only fitting that Presley scored the eventual game-winning touchdown on Matt Cline's fumble recovery in the fourth quarter that gave ASU its first lead of the game. He scooped up the loose ball and rambled in from 33-yards away with 6:05 left.

"I just had a job to do, and I didn't want to let my team down," Presley said. "We've worked so hard during the off-season, and we don't let each other down. I am so thankful to be in this position. I thank God first, then my offensive line and my teammates. This is a great win for us." But the Mocs (0-1), who have now lost six straight to the Apps, wouldn't go away. B.J. Coleman (23-37 for 340 yards and three touchdown tosses), who put on a passing clinic in the first half, marched his team downfield and scored on a three-yard run with 51 seconds left, making it a one-point game.

But the Mocs gambled and went for two. Coleman's two-point conversion pass was knocked down by All-America defensive back Mark LeGree to end the threat.

"There was no quit in our guys," Moore said. "It's a tribute to them. We never gave up on ourselves, even though we made a lot of mistakes and gave up way too many big plays in the first half."

The Mocs jumped out to an early 9-0 lead. Following a Presley touchdown run that cut the lead to two, Chattanooga scored 13 unanswered points to take a commanding 28-7 lead at the break.

Jabari Fletcher, who made three tackles, forced a fumble, recovered two fumbles and had a

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hand in three quarterback sacks, said the defense finally buckled down.

"We just had to shut them off," Fletcher said. "They played as hard as we thought to start out the game, but this team knows what it means to come back. I really like playing under pressure. It makes me perform better.

Brian Quick caught five passes for 121 yards; Cline had eight receptions for 99 yards. Cedric Baker scored a pair of touchdowns--on a seven-yard run and a three-yard run. His second touchdown tied the game at 35. Devin Radford led the ground game with 87 yards.

The Mountaineers have now beaten Chattanooga nine times in their last ten meetings, and 23 times in their last 26 matchups. ASU has also won 21 straight SoCon games.

ASU returns home to play Jacksonville next Saturday. Our coverage begins at 1:30 pm on 1450 AM WATA.

**NOTES:** Running back Devon Moore didn't play on Saturday because of a quad injury.....Chattanooga missed three extra point attempts.