Appalachian State football coach Jerry Moore raised an interesting question this week---Just how good are the Mountaineers?

And it was a legitimate question coming from the winningest coach in school and Southern Conference history. Afterall, the Mountaineers (5-0 overall; 3-0 in the SoCon), had rolled over their last three opponents following a come-from-behind win against Chattanooga on opening day. And the Mountaineers, who are the unanimous No.1 team in the nation and winners of 23 consecutive SoCon games, answered that question by fending off a serious challenge from one of their biggest adversaries, the Elon Phoenix. The teams combined for 981 yards of offense (ASU had 478 yards; Elon had 503) as the Mountaineers knocked off No 19 Elon 34-31 on Homecoming Saturday at Kidd Brewer Stadium.

A record-breaking crowd of 31,531 watched quarterback DeAndre Presley, who was added to the Walter Payton Award watch list this week, turn in another stellar day. The ASU junior had 374 yards of total offense---204 through the air, a career-high 170 yards on the ground. He also scored twice and he hooked up with CoCo Hillary on a 13-yard touchdown pass.

That grab by Hillary gave ASU a 10-point lead, and proved to be the game winner.

"This team has great character," Moore said. "We wouldn't have come back like we did against Chattanooga, if it wasn't for the character of our players. This group is very close and supportive of one another. They believe in each other.

"It was a big conference win. Elon had its back to the wall. They had to win this game. A loss and they're eliminated from everything. But we showed the mark of a good ball club to overcome all of our penalties and mistakes."

The Mountaineers were flagged 12 times for 116 yards. But despite all that, Presley, who was shaken up at the end of the game (he was hit in the head), turned in one of his best performances in his short career. And to many, especially Appalachian's opponents, Armanti Edwards (a third-round draft pick of the Carolina Panthers last spring) never left. Just ask Elon coach Pete Lembo.

"DeAndre is a great athlete, and he's done a terrific job," Lembo said. "His numbers speak for themselves, but his leadership abilities have been outstanding. There really isn't much difference between DeAndre and Armanti. He's has stepped in and done a great job."

Quarterback Scott Riddle of the Phoenix (2-4; 1-2 SoCon) had a pretty good day himself. The senior and all-time passing leader in the SoCon, nearly pulled off the upset. On three occasions, the Phoenix rallied from 10-point deficits, Riddle's 17-yard scoring pass to wide receiver Sean Jeffcoat with 3:50 left brought Elon within three at 34-31, but the Mountaineers put together a time-consuming drive and ran out the clock.

Riddle in his final game against the Mountaineers turned in his best performance. He was 31-43 for 394 yards and four touchdowns. Three of those went to wide receiver Aaron Mellette. But he was sacked three times.

Jabari Fletcher turned in strong game with four tackles, three for loss and two quarterback sacks. D.J. Smith had 14 stops.
"Our goal was to put pressure on (Riddle)," Fletcher said. "We wanted him to scramble around back there. He's a good quarterback. He can make something out of nothing; he's a dangerous player. But our guys never quit. Sure, we made some mistakes, but we just picked each other up.
"That's why I like this team. They always have your back."
For Hillary, it was his most productive game of the season. He led all ASU receivers with three catches for 76 yards.
"It felt great to be a part of this again,"said Hillary, whose battled a knee injury and some off-the-field issues."I love it. Catching that pass felt great. I knew it was coming to me and I just squeezed it, and then I finished the play. It's a great win for us beating an in-state rival like Elon."
The Mountaineers entertain The Citadel next Saturday night. Our coverage begins at 4 pm on AM 1450, WATA
NOTES: The Mountaineers haven't lost to an in-state rival at home since 1984 (against Western Carolina). The Mountaineers have won 29 consecutive games against in-state opponents at home.....The Mountaineers lead the all-time series with Elon 29-9-1. They've also beaten Elon 15 consecutive times; eight consecutive times since the Phoenix joined the Southern Conference. And the Phoenix hasn't won in Boone since 1964.