

Sims, Mountaineers fall short, 76-74

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 20 November 2010 00:07

Donald Sims turned in a yeoman effort Friday night, but it wasn't good enough.

Sims, the Southern Conference Player of the Year last season, erupted for a game-high 40 points (the second 40-point performance of his career), but it couldn't save Appalachian State as Mississippi State rallied for a 76-74 non-conference win in Starkville, MS.

Trailing 73-64 with two minutes left, the Bulldogs (2-0) came charging back with a 12-1 run. Jalen Steele capped off the comeback by taking the ball away from Sims and scoring at the other end for a 75-74 lead with 21 seconds left.

"Give Mississippi State credit," said ASU coach Jason Capel in a disappointed tone. "But it came down to what we didn't do, compared to what they did. I felt that if we hit some big shots and rebounded the ball, we would be in a good position to win the game. And We did all that, but we didn't finish. It's very disappointing."

Ravern Johnson made one of two free throws giving Mississippi St. a two-point lead with eight seconds left. Following a Mountaineers (2-1) time out, Sims had one final chance to tie or win the game, but his three-point attempt from 25 feet away was partially deflected by Kodi Augustus.

"We thought they were going to pressure the ball, but they dropped off," Sims said. "The screen was too deep, so I tried to put up the three. But (Augustus) got a piece of it. They really fed off their crowd down the stretch. It's tough to lose, but you must have a short memory and be ready for Tuesday (at Tennessee Tech)."

Sims, who had his highest-scoring game since last January when he dropped 44 on Davidson, was 11-31 from the floor, and 7-20 from the three-point line. As a team, the Mountaineers had their poorest shooting effort of the year. They only made 37% of their shots and 29% of their three-point attempts.

Nathan Healy backboned Sims with 13 points and nine rebounds. He was also 5-9 from the floor before he fouled out with 3:39 to go. Healy was one of four Mountaineers to foul out. Andre Williamson, Marcus Wright and Petey Hausley were victimized as well.

"Nate can shoot the ball," Capel said. "He does what he has to do to be effective. And I'm proud of how our guys played tonight. Yes, the loss is disappointing, but considering how many people we lost to foul trouble in the post, and considering the environment we were playing in, it says a lot about the character of our team."

For ASU it brought back memories of last year's overtime loss at Arkansas.

"It doesn't matter who we play, or where we play," Healy said. "We have to focus better when things get rough like they did tonight down the stretch. We shouldn't have blown a nine-point lead."

ASU, which trailed by 11 at the break, came charging back with a 24-10 blitz to start the second half. The Mountaineers finally took their first lead of the second half at 50-49 on a three-ball from Sims with 13:30 left. But the Bulldogs rallied and led 61-59 on a three by Johnson with 7:38 to go. But Sims, doing his best impersonation of Super Man, took over from there.

The senior ignited a 14-3 run that gave ASU its nine-point advantage. Sims had seven points, including a three that made it 71-64 with 2:30 left, in that run. But ASU couldn't hang on.

"We'll learn from this, I'll guarantee you that," Sims said. "It hurts to lose this one, but it's only

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November. We had our chances, but we let it get away. We just have to put it behind us, go back to practice, work on some things and get ready for our next game."

Omar Carter was held to five points, including one field goal in the second half. That field goal, however, came during Appalachian's 14-3 run and gave the Mountaineers a 66-62 advantage. Freshman Mitch Woods had eight rebounds. Augustus led Mississippi St. with 26 points; Johnson finished with 19.

The Mountaineers, who are on a five-game road trip, travel to Tennessee Tech Tuesday night. Our coverage begins at 6:15 pm on AM 1450, WATA.

NOTES: This road trip takes ASU to Tennessee Tech on Tuesday, Vanderbilt (next Saturday), Chattanooga (December 2), Samford (December 4) and Georgetown (December 12).....The Vanderbilt game next Saturday tips off at 2 pm.....ASU won't play at home until December 18, when NCAA qualifier Robert Morris comes to town.

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|-------------------|----|----|---|----|
| APPALACHIAN STATE | 32 | 42 | - | 74 |
| MISSISSIPPI STATE | 43 | 33 | - | 76 |

ASU: SIMS 40, HEALY 13 (9 REBOUNDS), CARTER 5, HAUSLEY 4, BOOTH 4, WOODS 3, WILLIAMSON 3, WRIGHT 2. FG: 25-67, 3FG: 9-31, FT: 15-24. 44 REBOUNDS, 10 TURNOVERS.

MSU: AUGUSTUS 26 (10 REBOUNDS), JOHNSON 19, BENOCK 8, BRYANT 7, STEELE 6, LEWIS 6, BECKHAM 2, BAILEY 2. FG: 25-57, 3FG: 8-22, FT: 18-29. 43 REBOUNDS, 11 TURNOVERS.

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