

Mountaineers Victorious On Senior Day

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 26 February 2011 17:16

The Appalachian State University men's basketball team continued its hot pace on Saturday afternoon.

The Mountaineers (10-8 Southern Conference North Division; 15-14 overall) wrapped up the regular season by knocking off The Citadel 70-59 on Senior Day at the Holmes Convocation Center. But it was a pair of red-shirt juniors that backboned ASU to its seventh win in its last eight games.

Omar Carter, who was held scoreless in the last meeting between these teams, poured in a game-high 25 points, and Anthony Breeze, who has gone through his personal share of ups-and-downs this season, turned in his best effort as a Mountaineer with a career-high 14 points. His three pointer at the horn gave ASU a 42-30 halftime lead.

"We just believe in each other," Carter said. "Things have really gone our way the last few weeks. Winning seven of eight games, like we have, has given us a lot of confidence going into the conference tournament. We're on a roll right now, and we're going to win it (the conference tournament)."

The Bulldogs (6-12 SoCon and the No.5 seed in the South Division; 10-21 overall), who have lost nine of their last ten games, got within five at 48-43 with 12:39 to go on a three-point play by Mike Groselle. But ASU pulled away thanks to a 12-3 run during a 2:17 stretch and put the contest out of reach. A bucket by Anthony Thomas (his first points since ASU played Georgetown on December 12) gave ASU its largest lead at 66-51 with 7:05 to play. The Bulldogs never got any closer than 11 the rest of the way.

"(The Citadel) didn't see our best game the last time we played them," said ASU coach Jason Capel, referring to Appalachian's 81-63 loss on January 20. "Today, we executed our plays, and our guys were ready for the moment. They came out and put together a solid effort. We're playing well right now. We're getting hot at the right time of the year."

Donald Sims, who finished his career with 2,151 points, only scored seven points in Saturday's win. He was scoreless in the second half, but he had four assists, three steals and he even blocked a shot. J.R. Archer, who played at Watauga High in Boone, turned in his best performance as a Mountaineers. The Boone native, making his first career start, finished with six points on a pair of threes in just nine minutes of playing time. His second trifecta gave ASU an 8-5 lead early in the first half.

"It's going to be tough to say good-bye to those (seniors)," Carter said. "Especially J.R. Archer. He knew he wasn't going to get a lot of playing time this year, but the guy really gave it his all in practice everyday. I'm am so happy for him."

Cameron Wells led the Bulldogs with 21 points on 9-13 shooting. He also had seven boards. Ironically, the Bulldogs had won three of the last four meetings between the schools, but ASU got the last laugh on Senior Day.

"You don't want to be the best team in December," Capel said. "You want to be the best team in

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late February going into March. I feel we're doing that. These guys have fallen in love with the process. Life is tough and no one is going to hand you anything. But we have persevered, and we're worked through our tough spell. Now we have a chance to achieve our ultimate goal, and that's winning the conference tournament. We're very confident right now."

Jeremy Booth, who suffered a broken hand during the second half of Thursday's win against the College of Charleston, and Mitch Wood (hip injury) did not play Saturday against the Bulldogs.

"Jeremy had successful surgery on his non-shooting hand Friday," Capel said. "We hope to have him back in a week. Mitch has been playing in pain most of the year. He was just a little too sore to go today, so we decided to give him a day of rest. But we hope to have both of these guys with us at the conference tournament.

"But if they can't go, every man on this team will have to step it up. We just have to work hard, get healthy and win the next four games."

ASU, the No.3 seed in the North, will open tournament play against Georgia Southern, the No.6 seed in the South, on Friday, March 4 at a time yet to be determined. If the Mountaineers advance, they would play Wofford College in the quarterfinals Saturday. The Terriers nailed down the No.2 seed in the South Division by knocking off Furman 77-65 Saturday afternoon in Greenville, SC.

We will have the full brackets and results from the other games around the league later tonight on GoBlueRidge.net. Our coverage of the SoCon tournament begins at 1:15 pm Friday, March 4 on AM 1450, WATA

ASU 70, THE CITADEL 59

THE CITADEL: HOLSTON 4, GROSELLE 10 (6 REBOUNDS), URBANUS 6, WELLS 21 (7 REBOUNDS, 4 ASSISTS), DAHN 12, STREETER 6. FG: 20-49, 3FG: 6-15, FT: 13-17. 30 REBOUNDS, 12 TURNOVERS.

ASU: HEALY 2 (5 REBOUNDS), WILLIAMSON 4 (5 REBOUNDS, 3 BLOCKED SHOTS), SIMS 7 (4 ASSISTS, 3 STEALS), CARTER 25, ARCHER 6, THOMAS 2, WRIGHT 2 (4 ASSISTS), BREEZE 14 (4 REBOUNDS), HAUSELY 8 (5 REBOUNDS). FG: 28-54, 3FG: 7-20, FT: 7-10. 29 REBOUNDS, 10 TURNOVERS.

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