Win and live to play another day.

That's the battle cry during tournament time. But sometimes that's easier said than done. Take Appalachian State's effort against Georgia Southern on Friday afternoon in the opening round of the Southern Conference Tournament at McKenzie Arena in Chattanooga. The Mountaineers (16-14), who closed out the regular season winning seven of their last eight games, shook off a sluggish start and defeated the Eagles 65-57.

The game featured eight ties and eight lead changes before the Mountaineers took control down the stretch. The win moves ASU into the quarterfinal round on Saturday against Wofford College, the No.2 seed from the South Division.

"At this time of year, all that matters is to win and survive," said ASU coach Jason Capel. :Give Georgia Southern a lot of credit. Those guys made the game very ugly. I thought we finally did a good job of settling down in the second half. They did a great job controlling the tempo of the game and it slowed us down."

The Mountaineers, who only shot 38% from the floor in the first half, led by one, 22-21, at halftime. And the Eagles (5-27), who have beaten only two Division I opponents all season, stayed within striking distance until Anthony Breeze snapped a 35-35 tie with a conventional three-point play with 9:35 to play. That play sparked a 10-4 run and the Mountaineers eventually built their biggest advantage at eight points. The Eagles never got any closer than four.

"They did a great job controlling the tempo tonight," said Donald Sims, who blocked Ben Drayton III's jump shot and ignited a transition bucket on a feed to Petey Hausley for a 62-55 lead with 44 seconds left. "They're a tough team to play. I felt if we could get one good run together,. we could put enough distance between ourselves to win the game. And with this being a tournament game, we had the jitters before the game. We didn't get those out until the second half."

Sims led all scorers with 20 points on 4-9 shooting. He was also 11-12 at the foul line in 38 minutes of work. Hausley finished with 11 points, nine of those in the second half. Omar Carter had 14 and Breeze, who hit a pair of free throws with 21 seconds left that sealed the issue, finished with nine points and a team-high seven rebounds.

Georgia Southern won the rebounding battle. The Eagles outrebounded ASU 31-30, but with 16:04 left in the second half, the Eagles held a 23-14 advantage on the boards. They also had ten offensive rebounds and ten second-chance points during that stretch before ASU shut them down.

"We did what I've been preaching all season," Capel said. "We rebounded the basketball much better in the second half. They had ten offensive boards in the first half. But we finally shut them off. They finished with 12. And we started hitting the boards. That allowed us to run and score the basketball. We starting executing our offense."

Drayton led the Eagles with 16 points;Jelani Hewitt had 15, and Marvin Baynham came off the bench and finished with 13 points. The Mountaineers shot better than 50% from the floor in the second half, and shot 45% for the game. The Eagles shot 41% from the floor, but they were 1-9 from the three-point line. Hewitt had the only three for Georgia Southern, which tied the game for the final time at 35 with a little more than ten minutes to play.

"Georgia Southern really played hard and pushed us," Capel said. "But we made stops and took control late in the game."
The Mountaineers take on Wofford College at 4:30 pm Saturday afteroon. Our coverage of the SoCon tournament begins at 1:15 pm on AM 1450, WATA.
NOTES: The Mountaineers are 22-16 against the Eagles lifetime.....They're 4-1 against Georgia Southern in SoCon tournament games.....Jason Capel picked up his first head coaching win in the post-season play.....Jeremy Booth (broken hand) and Mitch Woods (hip injury) played for ASU on Friday. Neither man scored. Woods played 19 minutes; Booth played three.

ASU 65, GEORGIA SOUTHERN 57

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GEORGIA SOUTHERN	21	36 -	57

APPALACHIAN STATE	22	43	-	65

GEORGIA SOUTHERN: SPENCER 4, DRAYTON 16 (5 ASSISTS), FERGUSON 5, HEWITT 15, BAYNHAM 13, TAYLOR 4. FG: 20-49, 3FG: 1-9, FT: 16-24. 31 REBOUNDS, 12 TURNOVERS.

ASU: BREEZE 9 (7 REBOUNDS), WILLIAMSON 7 (6 REBOUNDS), SIMS 20, WRIGHT 3, CARTER 14 (6 REBOUNDS, 4 ASSISTS), HEALY 1, HAUSLEY 11. FG: 18-40, 3FG: 2-10, FT: 27-38. 30 REBOUNDS, 12 TURNOVERS.