

Apps Drop Five-Set Thriller to Catamounts

Written by Ryan Bower

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Appalachian State University volleyball dropped a five-set thriller to arch rival and Southern Conference foe Western Carolina on Thursday evening at the Ramsey Center. The Mountaineers

(5-14, 1-4 SoCon) rallied from a 2-1 deficit to tie the match with a dominant fourth-set effort, but the Catamounts (7-13, 3-2) seized all the momentum early in the deciding set en route to the victory.

The night would begin with a back-and-forth battle early in the first set before Western was finally able to gain control thanks to several late runs as it took a 25-20 victory in the first set. Appalachian would take the second set by a 25-18 score. The Mountaineers trailed 8-1 early on, but reeled off an impressive 7-0 run to knot the score up. The teams would trade points over the next several minutes, but the Apps were eventually able to take control and tie the match at 1-1.

A wild third set would be the highlight of the night as the teams were tied 12 times and traded the lead nine times. App State had a chance to put the Catamounts away with a 25-24 lead, but Western Carolina scored three-straight points to take the set, 27-25, and grab a 2-1 lead in the match.

The Mountaineers would come out firing on all cylinders in the fourth set. Appalachian put forth a dominant effort as it took the early lead and never looked back in a 25-12 fourth-set win. The fifth and final set would be all Western Carolina, however, as the Catamounts raced out to a 10-2 lead on their way to a 15-4 fifth set win and a 3-2 match victory.

Jacqui Spurgeon (Waxhaw, N.C./Marvin Ridge) netted a match-high 15 kills while Dalton Tolliver (Ortonville, Mich./Notre Dame Prep) and Lindsey Sauls (Prairie Village, Kan./Shawnee Mission East) finished with 14 and 13, respectively. Courtney Rhein (York, Pa./Eastern York) set a career-high with 40 digs and Lauren Brown (Overland Park, Kan./St. James Academy) tallied a career-high 41 assists.

Western Carolina was paced by Jordan Timmerman's 14 kills while Tina Nazarlo led all players with 45 assists. Morgan Cochran (35) and Caitlin Piechota (25) each eclipsed the 20-dig mark. The Apps tallied 15 blocks on the night to Western Carolina's 18. Tolliver led the Apps with a match-high nine blocks including four solo and five block assists. The Mountaineers hit .092 for the match while the Catamounts hit just .102 on the attack.

Appalachian State returns to action on Saturday when it hosts SoCon rival Georgia Southern at 7:30 p.m. at the Holmes Center.

MATCH NOTES: The Mountaineers dropped to 46-28 all-time against Western Carolina... Rhein's dig total was the seventh highest single-match total in school history... Rhein needs just 165 more digs to become App State's all-time leader... she has recorded 1,664 career digs and needs 16 more to move into second all-time.

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Photo Courtesy: Jacqui Spurgeon, ASU Athletics