

## Mountaineers Topple Top-Ranked Eagles Again!

Written by Mike Flynn

Saturday, 03 November 2012 20:12

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For the second-straight year, Appalachian State University knocked Georgia Southern off its perch atop the NCAA Division I FCS rankings, downing the No. 1 Eagles, 31-28, on Saturday afternoon at jam-packed Paulson Stadium. Combined with

Samford's 24-17 double-overtime win over Wofford on Saturday, Appalachian State (7-3, 5-2 SoCon and ranked 15th in The Sports Network Poll and 14th in the FCS Coaches Poll) once again controls its own destiny in the pursuit of its seventh Southern Conference championship in eight years. The Mountaineers can clinch the SoCon title with a win over Furman (3-6, 2-4 SoCon) next Saturday at Kidd Brewer Stadium.

Despite the demoralizing loss, Georgia Southern (7-2, 6-2 SoCon, No.1 in the Coaches Poll and No.2 TSN Poll) backed into at least a share of its second-straight SoCon crown with Wofford's loss. While Appalachian State's offense and some timely Georgia Southern miscues kept the Mountaineers in the game for much of the afternoon, it was the performance of the Appalachian defense that proved to be the difference down the stretch.

"We needed to play better, we needed to block and tackle and do all of the fundamental things we talk about every week," Georgia Southern coach Jeff Monken said. "We just didn't take advantage of our opportunities, especially in the second half."

Appalachian, which trailed 14-3 after one quarter and 28-24 going into the fourth, took a 31-28 lead on Tony Washington's (High Point, N.C./T.W. Andrews) acrobatic 23-yard touchdown catch with 11:25 to go in the ballgame. From there, the story was the Mountaineer defense.

After not forcing Georgia Southern's first punt of the ballgame until just 11 seconds remained in the third quarter, Appalachian turned in three-straight three-and-outs down the stretch.

However, the Mountaineers punted back to GSU with 7:46 to go and the Eagles began to methodically move down the field against the Mountaineers' fatigued defense, which was on the field for 38:32 on the afternoon. Georgia Southern converted a pair of third downs on the drive and moved all the way to the Appalachian 22, where it faced fourth-and-four with 1:35 to go.

"I really felt our defense really buckled down on their last drive," said ASU coach Jerry Moore. "I kept watching the clock, and I knew what they were going to do. They methodically moved the ball down the field and were eating up time on the clock. If they score, we would get it back with about a minute left to play. But the penalty (face mask) pushed them back and our defense made the big stop."

On the fourth-down play, Tray Butler rushed for what would have been a first down but was aided by teammate Jonathan Bryant grabbing a would-be tackler's facemask. The personal-foul call backed GSU up to the 34 yard line and, not willing to put the game in the hands of 51-yard field goal attempt by place-kicker Alex Hanks (who missed three field goals earlier in the game), Georgia Southern head coach Jeff Monken elected to go for it on fourth-and-16.

Under heavy pressure from Appalachian defensive end and Georgia native Ronald Blair (Greensboro, Ga./Greene County), GSU quarterback Jerick McKinnon heaved up a desperation pass on fourth-and-16 that was intercepted by Mountaineer safety Troy Sanders (Chester, S.C./Chester) with 53 seconds left to seal the Mountaineers' sixth victory in its last eight games against Georgia Southern, including three of the last four played at Paulson Stadium.

"They made a couple of big plays on me," Sanders said. "But stepped up the pressure on them

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on that last play, and I was fortunate to make the interception. Georgia Southern is one of the fastest teams in the Southern Conference, so we had to play faster. And on that final play, it was a passing down, we put on the pressure and it fell right in the bread basket."

"On that last drive I thought we were going to score there," Monken said. "We did a great job to pick up the big first down, but when you get in fourth and long, you feel like you have to go for it. It would have been a 52-yard field goal."

Although the game will likely be remembered for the heart-stopping finish, the story of the afternoon was Appalachian's offense, particularly the play of junior quarterback Jamal Jackson (Atlanta, Ga./North Atlanta) and freshman wide receiver Sean Price (Reston, Va./South Lakes). Jackson, who sustained a knee injury in the first quarter of last Saturday's win at Western Carolina, torched a Georgia Southern defense that had allowed just 147.8 passing yards per game on the season (good for fourth nationally) for a career-high 383 yards and three touchdowns.

Once again, Jackson's favorite target was Price, who set an Appalachian State freshman record with 231 yards on seven receptions. His dazzling 56-yard catch-and-run for a touchdown was one of the biggest plays of Appalachian's 21-point second quarter while his 67-yard gain on third-and-29 from inside the Mountaineer one yard line in the third quarter flipped field position and set up the Apps' late defensive surge and, ultimately, Washington's go-ahead touchdown early in the final period.

"We tried to protect Jamal today," Moore said about his quarterback, who suffered a knee injury at Western Carolina last week. "But when he ran the ball a couple of times, I knew he was going to be all right. Jamal is a tough young man. He's real mature and he makes good decisions."

"The knee feels a little dinged right now, but beating a rival, especially in their place, makes me feel good," Jackson said. "The training staff did a great job getting me ready for today. And I'm thankful for my teammates. I owe them so much. When they do their jobs, it makes my job that much easier. And today, we pulled off some big plays.:

Sanders had 10 tackles, including two for loss, to go along with the game-clinching interception to lead Appalachian defensively. Filling in for regular starter Brandon Grier (Charlotte, N.C./West Charlotte) for the second-straight week, linebacker Karl Anderson (Pilot Point, Texas/Pilot Point) also recorded 10 stops, as did fellow linebacker Jeremy Kimbrough (Decatur, Ga./Cedar Grove).

Kickoff for next Saturday's pivotal regular-season finale versus Furman is set for 3:30 p.m.

**NOTES:** Appalachian State moved to 4-5 all-time against teams ranked No. 1 in one of the major NCAA Division I FCS polls (media or coaches – Georgia Southern was No. 1 in this week's coaches' rankings) ... the win was Appalachian's first-ever against a No. 1 team on the road ... Price extended his own Appalachian freshman records with his fourth 100-yard game of the season and set a new freshman record with his eighth touchdown reception of the campaign ... Price also holds the school's freshman records for receptions (58) and receiving yards (914) ... Price's 231 yards are good for a tie for fourth in Appalachian's single-game history overall and were the most by any Mountaineer since DaVon Fowlkes' school-record 280 yards against Elon on Nov. 6, 2004 ... freshman Malachi Jones' (Roswell, Ga./Central Gwinnett) nine-yard touchdown catch with 49 seconds to go in the second quarter was the first of his career score ... the win was Appalachian's first in a game that it trailed after three quarters since it came

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back from a 28-14 deficit after three periods at Chattanooga in the 2010 season opener....Appalachian State (7-3, 5-2 SoCon) remained in contention for its seventh Southern Conference championship in eight years with its win over first-place Georgia Southern (7-2, 6-2 SoCon)....Appalachian State beat Georgia Southern when it was ranked No. 1 nationally for the second-straight year. Appalachian beat No. 1 GSU, 24-17, on Oct. 29, 2011 in Boone, N.C...Appalachian State moved to 4-5 all-time versus teams ranked No. 1 in one of the two major NCAA Division I FCS polls....Appalachian State beat Georgia Southern for the sixth time in the last eight meetings and third time in the last four matchups at GSU's Paulson Stadium....Appalachian State won for the first time when trailing after three quarters since Sept. 4, 2010 at Chattanooga (the Mountaineers trailed Georgia Southern, 28-24, going into the fourth quarter on Saturday)....Appalachian State wide receiver Sean Price set an Appalachian State freshman record with 231 receiving yards. The 231-yard output tied for 4th in school history overall (record: 280 by DaVon Fowlkes vs. Elon, 2004)....After missing more than three quarters of last Saturday's win at Western Carolina with a knee injury, Appalachian State quarterback Jamal Jackson threw for a career-high 383 yards on 21-of-34 passing (3 touchdowns, 0 interceptions). The 383 passing yards rank 8th in school history.

### Scoring Summary

#### Score by Quarters 1 2 3 4 Total

Appalachian State 3 21 0 7 - 31

Georgia Southern 14 7 7 0 - 28

#### 1st

11:42 APP - Sam Martin 28 yd field goal, 9-65 3:18 3 - 0

04:40 GSU - W. Banks 4 yd run (A. Hanks kick), 12-58 6:53 3 - 7

01:34 GSU - W. Banks 20 yd run (A. Hanks kick), 2-60 0:27 3 - 14

#### 2nd

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13:36 APP - Steven Miller 1 yd run (Sam Martin kick), 7-74 2:50 10 - 14

04:53 GSU - W. Banks 36 yd run (A. Hanks kick), 5-80 2:18 10 - 21

03:25 APP - Sean Price 56 yd pass from Jamal Jackson (Sam Martin kick), 6-78 1:22 17 - 21

00:49 APP - Malachi Jones 9 yd pass from Jamal Jackson (Sam Martin kick), 5-58 0:41 24 - 21

### 3rd

09:19 GSU - E. Youyoute 12 yd run (A. Hanks kick), 12-65 5:32 24 - 28

### 4th

11:25 APP - Tony Washington 23 yd pass from Jamal Jackson (Sam Martin kick), 3-49 0:38 31 - 28

## Team Statistics

FIRST DOWNS: ASU 17, GSU 22

RUSHING YARDS: ASU 70, GSU 268

PASSING YARDS: ASU 383, GSU 166

TOTAL YARDS: ASU 56-453, GSU 73-552

FUMBLES, NUMBER/LOST: ASU 1-1, GSU 2-1

TURNOVERS: ASU 1, GSU 2

PENALTY YARDS: ASU 4-65, GSU 8-90

TIME OF POSSESSION: 21:28, GSU 38:32

3RD DOWN CONVERSIONS: ASU 5-11, GSU 7-14

4TH DOWN CONVERSIONS: ASU 0-1, GSU 0-1

## Individual Statistics

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### **RUSHING:**

ASU: MILLER 9-60-TD

GSU: BANKS 19-129-3TD, McKINNON 21-121

### **PASSING:**

ASU: JACKSON 21-34-383-3TD

GSU: McKINNON 3-5-INT-106, YOUYOUTE 2-4-60

### **RECEIVING:**

ASU: PRICE 7-231-TD, PEACOCK 6-72, JONES 4-22-TD

GSU: WALKER 2-72, BRYANT 2-67

## **SOUTHERN CONFERENCE STANDINGS**

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Georgia Southern 6 - 2; 7 - 2

Wofford 5 - 2; 7 - 2

**Appalachian State 5 - 2; 7 - 3**

Chattanooga 4 - 2; 5 - 4

Samford 4 - 3; 6 - 3

Citadel 4 - 3; 5 - 4

Furman 2 - 4; 3 - 6

Elon 1 - 5; 3 - 6

Western Carolina 0 - 8; 1 - 9

### **SATURDAY'S GAMES**

**APPALACHIAN STATE 31, GEORGIA SOUTHERN 28**

SAMFORD 24, WOFFORD COLLEGE 17 (2OT)

THE CITADEL 38, ELON 24

CHATTANOOGA 45, WESTERN CAROLINA 24

**Photo Courtesy: Sean Price, ASU Athletics**