What a difference three days can make.

Wednesday night, the Appalachian State men's basketball team coughed up a 13-point, second-half lead and lost a crucial game at Georgia Southern. The loss also snapped Appalachian's three-game winning streak.

But the Mountaineers came charging back in a big way Saturday and defeated the No.1 seed, Western Carolina, 87-74 at the Holmes Center in front of 5.074 screaming fans----the largest crowd of the season.

Donald Sims led three players in double figures with 28 points. Kellen Brand finished with 19 points; and Marcus Wright came off the bench and turned a strong performance with 15 points, six assists and no turnovers. The win leaves ASU (11-8 overall; 5-3 in the North Division of the Southern Conference) just one-half game behind the Catamounts for first place.

"Every game is a rollercoaster," said ASU coach Buzz Peterson. "We gave one away Wednesday night, but our guys battled today and beat a very good team. I'll admit, Western has some excellent wing players. They can jump and they can get to the hole.

"But our guys stepped it up late in the first half and carried that over into the second half. It's a quality win for sure."

Wright nailed a huge three as time expired in the first half to give ASU a two-point lead at the break. From there, the Apps turned it up a notch and shot an incredible 62.5% in the second half eventually building a 10-point lead.

"But I've told these guys, we just keep finiding ways to let teams stay in the game," Peterson said. "It's our job as a (coaching) staff to keep our guys under control."

ASU outrebounded WCU, 37-36. But the Catamiounts (15-4; 5-2) had 19 offensive rebounds. But they only shot 39% from the floor. Brandon Giles led Western with 15 points.

"We let one get away Wednesday night," said Wright. "Coach Peterson worked us real hard the last two days. First place was on the line. We were very motivated to win this game."

The Catamounts now return home to play College of Charleston Monday night. The Cougars, who defeated Wofford 70-68 Friday night, have won seven in a row. They lead the SoCon South with an 8-0 record. But the Catamounts are 8-0 at home.

And if the Cougars beat Western, the Apps would pull into a first-place tie.

"We're going onj a big road trip, so it's very important we win our next two games in Birmingham (against Samford) and Chattanooga," said Sims. "We have what it takes to win this division. And beating Western today was a huge statement for our team."

The Apps, who are 8-2 at home, now embark on a four-game road trip, which begins Thursday night at Samford. The road trip will be interrupted by a home game against King College on February 1.

"This was a great crowd," said Peterson. "This is what I was hoping for when I came back. It's great to play in front of big crowds. And I told the guys, if you play well, they will come back. But if you play poorly and lose, they may not.

"But I want to thank the fans. They were big for us today."

NOTES: Our coverage of ASU-Samford Thursday night begins at 7:15 pm on WATA 1450 AM. The ASU women have won three in a row. They defeated Davidson 72-61 Saturday afternoon at the Holmes Center. The Appalachian women are now 10-9 overall, 6-4 in the SoCon.