

ASU comes up short at Chattanooga

Written by Mike Kelly

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The Appalachian State men's basketball team just couldn't buy a break Saturday night at The McKenzie Arena in Chattanooga.

The end result, the Mocs (13-10 overall; 5-5 in the Southern Conference North Division) built an 18-point, first-half lead and held on to beat ASU 85-80 in front of 4,331 fans, who braved the snowy elements. The Mocs, who are in third place just one game behind ASU (12-9; 6-4), buried 14 three-point shots, which over-shadowed a terrible night at the free-throw line. UTC, which is last in the SoCon in free-throw shooting at 64%, was an anemic 17-36 at the line (47%). And ASU, which battled back and got within one point on several occasions, just couldn't find the right formula to take the lead.

"Our guys did a great job getting themselves back in the game," said ASU coach Buzz Peterson. "But we actually lost this game in the first half. They are so big and athletic up front. They just killed us on the boards; and we haven't lost too many battles on the boards this year."

Chattanooga outrebounded ASU by a 46-37 margin. And Appalachian's inside game was almost non-existent. Josh Hunter, Isaac Butts and Andre Williamson combined for nine points and 14 rebounds in 54 minutes of work.

Donald Sims, who struggled mightily from the field (6-22 on field goal attempts), led ASU with 24 points. Jeremy Booth tied a career high with 21 points (ironically, Booth scored 21 points in Chattanooga at the SoCon Tournament last season against Georgia Southern).

"I love playing here," said Booth, who also pulled down six rebounds. "This is a shooters gym. But we just couldn't get the lead. I really felt that if we got the lead, we would have taken this game. But we just couldn't score in the clutch."

ASU trailed 75-74 with 2:15 to play. But the Mocs went on a 6-1 run, highlighted by Jasper Williams' three ball with less than a minute to play to build an 81-75 advantage. A three by Booth made it 82-78 with 39 seconds to go before the Mocs iced it away.

The loss also drops ASU into second place in the North Division, one game behind Western Carolina. The Catamounts, who are 7-3 in league play, defeated Samford 62-50 on Saturday afternoon.

"It's a tough loss, but it's still only one game," Peterson said. "We still have a long way to go. The key now is going home and preparing for King College (Monday night) and getting ready for that big showdown next Saturday in Cullowee (v.WCU)."

Our air time for Monday's game with King College begins at 6:15 pm on WATA 1450 AM.

NOTES:The ASU women rallied from a four-point halftime deficit and defeated Wofford in Spartanburg, SC 62-54 Saturday night. The ASU women (11-9 overall; 7-4 SoCon) have won four in a row, and they've produced the most wins they've had in a single season when they won 13 games in 2006-07. Sam Ramirez led ASU with 13 points; Anna Freeman had 11 points, 14 rebounds; Catherine Williams had 10 points and 11 boards. The ASU women travel to

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Furman Monday night. And with ASU playing in Spartanburg Saturday because of the winter storm that invaded the High Country, Wofford will now come to Boone as part of a men's and women's double-header on Thursday, February 25. The ASU men will host Chattanooga that night.