

Samford Wins SoCon Title

Written by Courtney Burchett
Monday, 07 March 2011 20:33

Appalachian State University women's basketball scored just four points in the final eight minutes of the game, and was unable to withstand a Samford three-point barrage, as the Bulldogs handed Appalachian a heartbreaking 57-54 loss Monday afternoon in the 2011 Southern Conference championship game.

The loss is Appalachian's second to the Bulldogs in the tournament and first-ever in program history in the championship game (6-1), dropping ASU to 25-6 on the season.

ASU took a six point lead into the break, but as expected, the No. 1 and No. 2 teams in the SoCon battled in a back and forth affair and second period play was heated, as action was knotted six times. Kelsey Sharkey (Cincinnati, Ohio/St. Ursula) broke the tie however as she scored a put-back layup earning the Black and Gold a 54-52 lead with two and a half minutes remaining.

Neither team scored for the next two minutes until Samford's Paige Anderson drilled a three-pointer at the top of arc with 13 seconds left to give the Bulldogs the one point edge, leading 55-54. The lead was Samford's first of the second period and first since the midway point of the opening stanza.

Anderson finished as the game's leading scorer with 14 points, including going 4-7 from downtown.

The trey was the Bulldogs 11th of the contest, marking the most three pointers ASU has allowed an opponent to score all season.

With a chance to regain the lead, Courtney Freeman (Carlton, Ga./Carlton) was unable to connect on a layup, but Ashlen Dewart (Spartanburg, S.C./Dorman) grabbed the offensive rebound and was fouled.

Despite playing a strong second half, Dewart came up empty at the free throw line with three

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seconds left, missing both shots and ASU still trailed by one point deficit.

Dewart battled foul trouble the entire contest, but finished with a team-best 13 points on 6-12, and also hauled in five rebounds.

Appalachian then fouled Shelby Campbell, and she made both of her free throws to extend Samford's advantage to three.

Sam Ramirez (Fayetteville, N.C./Southview) then heaved the ball with just ticks left on the clock, but the shot clanked off the rim and was waved off by the officials, giving Samford the tournament title.

First half action was tied twice before a Courtney Freeman jumper earned Appalachian State the lead for the rest of the period, as her bucket sparked a 10-2 Mountaineer streak.

Freeman was on fire, in the first five and a half minutes of play, as the sophomore poured in eight of the Black and Gold's first 10 points, including scoring six in a row. She closed out the contest with 12 points and four rebounds.

Anna Freeman (Thomasville, N.C./East Davidson), Sharkey and Chakeitha Weldon (Atlanta, Ga./Kansas) gave the Apps a little breathing room, as all three found the bottom of the bucket and Appalachian took its largest lead, up 26-18 with less than three minutes until the break.

Samford however continue to chip away at its deficit and two Bulldog treys in the waning minutes of the period, pulled the squad within six, as the Apps held onto the 30-24 lead at the half.

The final 20 minutes were intense with the two teams trading leads, but it was Samford that connected from behind the arc with mere seconds remaining to take the final lead of the game and hand Appalachian a gut-wrenching three point defeat.

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SAMFORD	24	23	-	57
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APPALACHIAN STATE	30	24	-	54
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SAMFORD: DAWSON 9, HILL 13, LONDON 12, ANDERSON 14, KETCHUM 3, CAMPBELL 2, JACK 4. FG: 18-51, 3FG: 11-29, FT: 10-13. 26 REBOUNDS, 11 TURNOVERS.

ASU: SHARKEY 10 (9 REBOUNDS), DEWART 13, RAMIREZ 5 (10 REBOUNDS, 5 ASSISTS), ANNA FREEMAN 8 (10 REBOUNDS), COURTNEY FREEMAN 12, WELDON 6. FG: 25-58, 3FG: 1-5, FT: 3-6. 44 REBOUNDS, 16 TURNOVERS.

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Southern Conference All Tournament Team

First Team

Savannah Hill, Samford

Emily London, Samford

Ashlen Dewart, Appalachian State

Anna Freeman, Appalachian State

Kelsey Sharkey, Appalachian State

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Second Team

Courtney Freeman, Appalachian State

Sophia Aleksandravicius, Davidson

Ali Ford, Elon

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Kylie Lambert, Chattanooga

Mahagony Wililams, Wofford

Most Outstanding Player

Savannah Hill, Samford