

Appalachian Wins SoCon Opener

Written by Staff Reports

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Behind a career-high 16 kills from Alison Blasingame (Yorktown, Va./Virginia Tech/Grafton), the Appalachian State volleyball team picked up a 3-1 win over Samford in the SoCon opener for both teams on Saturday, Sept. 24.

After dropping the first set by a 25-20 score, the Mountaineers (9-6, 1-0) won the final three sets of the match to send the Bulldogs (13-2, 0-1) to their first loss in six matches.

Samford trailed just twice in the early going of the first set before jumping out to a seven-point lead (17-10) by notching six-straight points on four kills and two Appalachian errors. The Bulldogs would see their lead diminish to just three points (21-18) late in the set before hanging on for a 25-20 set win.

The Apps bounced back in the second set with a 25-20 win of their own. Samford notched the first point of the set before ASU took a 3-2 lead and never trailed again. Appalachian led by as many as seven points (11-4) in the early going before pulling off the win. The Bulldogs never came closer than three points in the late stages of the second set.

The third set featured a back-and-forth battle that feature 16 ties and seven lead changes. Samford looked to have the upper hand land as it held a 21-16 lead, but the Apps rallied with a 6-1 run to tie the set at 22-22. Appalachian would stave off defeat when the Bulldogs took a 24-23 lead and eventually won, 26-25, thanks to back-to-back kills from Kelly Rhein (York, Pa./Virginia/York Catholic).

Appalachian dominated the fourth and final set, winning by a score of 25-17. The Apps cruised to a 13-7 lead and never led by less than six the rest of the way. Rhein finished with four kills and four digs in the final set as ASU held Samford to a .000 hitting percentage in the final set. As a team, the Apps hit .230 and held the Bulldogs to a hitting percentage of just .168.

Appalachian forced 27 attack errors against the opposition. In addition to her career-high in kills, Blasingame also set a new career-mark with a .682 hitting percentage.

Rhein finished with 11 kills and a season-bets 15 digs while Anna Wagner (Lincoln, Neb./Florida Gulf Coast/Lincoln East) tallied 14 kills and 12 digs. Meghann Forshey (Glen Allen, Va./Deep Run) tallied 10 kills and Kasey Sauls (Prairie Village, Kan./Shawnee Mission East) notched 35 assists. Lauren Brown (Overland Park, Kan./St. James Academy) had 10 kills and hit .421. Appalachian returns to action tomorrow when it plays host to SoCon foe Chattanooga at 4 p.m. ET. The Mountaineers continue conference play on the road next weekend with matches at Elon and UNCG.

MATCH NOTES: ASU's victory upped its current winning streak to a season-best four matches... the victory was Appalachian's third-straight in a SoCon opener... the Mountaineers have won 12 of their last 14 sets during their current winning streak... Wagner finished with 14 or more kills for the seventh time this season... the senior outside hitter has recorded 14 or more kills in three-straight matches... Blasingame also finished the night with two solo blocks and four block assists... the solo block total tied her previous career-high... she has recorded two solo blocks on seven different occasions... her last performance with two solo blocks also came against Samford (11/7/10).