

Samford Edges Mountaineers

Written by Charles Cochrum
Friday, 03 February 2012 08:38

Appalachian State University men's basketball couldn't overcome a four-minute scoreless drought late in the ballgame and suffered a heart-breaking 53-52 loss to Samford on Thursday evening at the Holmes Center. Jamaal Trice's (Los Angeles, Calif./Midland College) three-pointer gave

Appalachian (9-12, 5-6 SoCon) a 44-43 lead with 6:34 to go in the ballgame but the Mountaineers missed their next three shots and fell into a 49-44 hole with two-and-a-half minutes remaining.

Back-to-back three-pointers by Nathan Healy (New Bern, N.C./Blair Academy) and Omar Carter (Charlotte, N.C./Charleston Southern) snapped the scoring skid, but ASU still trailed by three in the waning seconds when Tab Hamilton (Winston-Salem, N.C./Fisburne Military Academy) was fouled on a three-point attempt with just a half-second left on the clock. With a chance to send the game to overtime, the true freshman made the first of his three free throws but missed the second. After a timeout, he inadvertently banked in the third attempt and Samford (8-14, 5-6 SoCon) launched the inbounds pass beyond half-court to end the contest.

Healy led the Apps with 14 points on 6-of-10 shooting. The junior added six rebounds, an assist and one steal in 30 minutes on the floor. Though Carter struggled to find shooting opportunities, the team's leading scorer found other ways to contribute, including a team-high four assists and four rebounds.

In a back-and-forth affair, Appalachian trailed by as many as eight points early in the game only to take a pair of seven-point advantages early in the second half. However, cold-shooting doomed the Mountaineers in the second period, as they suffered a six-minute scoreless stretch early in the half to go along with the decisive four-minute drought late in the ballgame.

Healy was the only Mountaineer in double-figures against the stingy Bulldogs with 14 points on 6-of-10 shooting. Mike Neal (Greensboro, N.C./Oak Ridge Military Academy) finished with eight points on a pair of three-pointers and dished out three assists.

Samford's Tyler Hood led all scorers with 18 points but SU's Jeffrey Merritt turned in the game's best all-around performance with nine points, 10 rebounds and six assists.

Coming off the bench, Isaac Butts (Milledgeville, Ga./Georgia Military College Prep) sank both of his attempts from the floor for five points to add to his team-leading eight rebounds. He was matched on the glass by Andre Williamson's (Dayton, Ohio/Prince George) eight boards. The forward added five points and a pair of assists.

Hamilton and Trice finished with seven points each, and combined for three of ASU's 15 assists. Appalachian's string of seven-straight games with a 40-percent or better mark from the field was snapped as the team converted 38.5 percent (20-52) of its shot attempts. The home team knocked in 7-of-25 three-pointers, compared to just 4-of-25 for Samford.

The Bulldogs shot a paltry 36.2 percent from the floor but converted 15-of-19 free throws for a 78.9 percent clip. Samford's four bench players were held scoreless in the game as each of the starting five played at least 28 minutes. ASU won the battle on the glass by a slim 34-33 margin. Seven of the Apps' eight offensive rebounds came before the intermission.

Appalachian looks to rebound from the disheartening loss on Saturday when it hosts perennial Southern Conference power College of Charleston. Tipoff is set for 2 p.m. at the Holmes

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Center.

NOTES: Appalachian recorded nine assists — by seven different players — on 12 first-half baskets ... Butts' eight rebounds were the most for the big man since he hauled in nine against Davidson on Jan. 14 ... Appalachian did not record a blocked shot for the first time this season ... Samford committed all eight of its turnovers in the first half.

SAMFORD 53, ASU 52

SCORE BY PERIODS 1ST 2ND TOTAL

SAMFORD.....	26	27	53
APPALACHIAN STATE..	31	21	52

SAMFORD: HOOD 18 (6 REBOUNDS), WINDLER 11, MERRITT 9 (10 REBOUNDS), KELLY 10, COOK 5. FG: 17-47, 3FG: 4-25, FT: 15-19. 33 REBOUNDS, 8 TURNOVERS, 9 ASSISTS.

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ASU: HEALY 14 (6 REBOUNDS), WILLIAMSON 5 (8 REBOUNDS), HAMILTON 7, TRICE 7, NEAL 8, CARTER 6 (4 REBOUNDS, 4 ASSISTS), BUTTS 5 (8 REBOUNDS). FG: 20-52, 3FG: 7-29, FT: 5-8. 34 REBOUNDS, 11 TURNOVERS, 15 ASSISTS.

Photo Courtesy: Jamaal Trice, ASU Athletics