

## ASU Men's Tennis Defeats Furman/ Ends 16-Year Drought

Written by Paul Blascovich  
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With the team's first win over the Paladins in 16 years, Appalachian State University men's tennis defeated Southern Conference rival Furman, 4-3, at ASU Tennis Courts on Thursday. The victory snaps

a streak of 18-straight series wins for FU, dating to April 14, 1996. With the win, the Mountaineers (14-6, 7-2 SoCon) solidify at least third place in the final SoCon standings, while the Paladins (8-14, 5-4 SoCon) slide to fifth with one match remaining. By capturing the No. 3 spot, the Apps secure their highest SoCon Tournament seed since the current team-tournament format was instituted in 1998.

Appalachian's victory snaps a streak of 15 regular-season and three tournament wins for Furman, a team still feeling the effects of the last year's retirement of 45-year head coach Paul Scarpa, the all-time winningest coach in Division I history.

In doubles, Appalachian got off to a quick start as the No. 2 duo, Alex Markov (Pernik, Bulgaria/Hawai'i Pacific) and Alain Humblet (Montreal, Quebec/DE Mortagne), opened up a 5-0 lead, and the seniors cruised to an 8-3 win.

The pairs point was clinched when ASU's No. 3 tandem of junior Andrew McKinnon ( Mooresville, N.C./Lake Norman) and redshirt-junior Steve Karendal (Kernersville, N.C./Lees-McRae) scored seven out of eight games to close an 8-2 victory.

At No. 1 doubles, Mountaineer senior Philip Kloc (Melbourne, Australia/Mentone Grammar) and sophomore Sebastien King (Montreal, Quebec/George Vanier) broke serve to take a 5-4 lead and held for an 8-6 win to sweep the twosomes.

With the early team lead, Humblet powered through five unanswered games to clinch his opening set and scored three straight to conclude the second in his 6-2, 6-2 victory at No. 3 singles.

Less than five minutes later, Furman put its first point on the board with a 6-1, 6-1 Paladin win in the No. 1 singles match. FU controlled the action at No. 2 singles as well, as the Paladins secured a 6-2, 6-3 win to tie the team score at 2-2.

In the No. 5 match, Furman scored eight straight games to end the first set and begin the second, turning a 6-2, 6-3 match into a 3-2 edge on the scoreboard. With the Paladins needing to win one of the remaining matches to win the match, the Mountaineers and fans watched anxiously as the final two Apps continued to compete.

Sophomore Matt Saltsgaver (Winter Park, Fla./Winter Park) saw his serve broken on the opening game of his match, but the Mountaineer remained focused and tied the set at 3-3, only to see his serve broken again to a 3-4 deficit. Saltsgaver won the 10th game to set off a string of three-straight broken games that resulted in a 6-6 tie to trigger the day's only tiebreaker.

Saltsgaver jumped out to a 4-1 lead in the extra points and used that energy to win the final three points of a 7-6(7-3) set. With momentum in his favor, the App tore through four consecutive games to close his match, 7-6(7-3), 6-1, and equalize the team score, 3-3.

With all eyes on him, Appalachian's Karendal earned a 6-4 win in the opening set of his match at No. 5 but let one service game slip in a 4-6 second set. In the decisive set, Karendal broke open a 3-0 lead and won the last three games of a 6-4, 4-6, 6-1 match, lifting ASU to its first win over Furman this century.

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Appalachian State concludes the regular season when the Mountaineers host first-place College of Charleston in SoCon play on Friday. Action begins at 2:30 p.m. at ASU Tennis Courts and will be preceded by a brief senior-recognition ceremony.

**Photo Courtesy: Alain Humblet, ASU Athletics**