

## Apps Keep Hopes for First-Round Bye Alive

Written by Ryan Bower  
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Appalachian State University men's basketball remained in contention for a first-round Southern Conference Tournament bye with a 70-67 double-overtime victory over Samford on Thursday evening

at the Holmes Center. With the victory, Appalachian State (13-15, 9-8 SoCon) remains in control of its own destiny for the crucial first-round tournament bye, needing only a victory over Chattanooga (13-17, 8-9 SoCon) in Saturday's regular-season finale to receive the fourth and final free pass into the SoCon quarterfinals. Samford (11-19, 9-8 SoCon) would receive the bye with a win over Western Carolina (8-9, 12-18 SoCon) and a UTC win over Appalachian on Saturday.

Despite leading by as many as 12 points in the first half, the first-round bye appeared to be slipping away from Appalachian when Samford took a 59-51 lead on Rajion Kelly's jumper with 4:08 to go in regulation. However, led by five points from Jamaal Trice, the Mountaineers outscored the Bulldogs, 8-0, over the final 3:50 of regulation to send the game to overtime knotted at 59-59.

Appalachian State did not make a field goal in the first overtime but two free throws by Mike Neal with 3:14 to go in the initial extra period proved to be all it would need to send the game to a second overtime tied at 61-61.

Trice gave the Mountaineers the lead for good when he hit a three-pointer just nine seconds into the second overtime. Appalachian did not score again after it extended the lead to 70-65 on a Nathan Healy layup with 2:36 to go but it held Samford scoreless over the final 2:18 of the ballgame to secure the critical win.

Appalachian was paced on offense by Trice's team-high 18 points while Tevin Baskin poured in 10 off the bench. Michael Obacha finished just shy of a double-double with nine points and eight boards while Healy scored eight points, ripped down eight rebounds, dished out four assists and tallied three blocks and three steals.

Tyler Hood led all players with 22 points for the Bulldogs while Tim Williams poured in 12 and Connor Miller score 11. Kelly, who entered the night averaging a team-best 14.8 points per game, was held to just six points and committed five turnovers.

On the night, the Mountaineers shot 45.9 percent (28-of-61) from the floor while the Bulldogs connected at a clip of 42.4 percent (25-59). Both squads finished with 36 rebounds but the Apps dished out 14 assists and committed just 13 turnovers while forcing Samford into 17 turnovers to just nine assists.

Appalachian State closes out the regular season when it plays host to Chattanooga at 2 p.m. on Saturday. The contest will mark the final home game for Healy and Trice.

**GAME NOTES:** Appalachian State improved to 6-4 all-time against the Bulldogs... the Apps moved to 3-2 when facing Samford in Boone... Thursday's game was the fifth overtime game of the season, breaking the previous school record of four set in 1998-99... it was also the first multiple-overtime game since an 87-84 double-overtime win over Charlotte on Nov. 19, 2008... Trice matched a career-high with five three-point field goals... the Apps have now won at least nine home games for the fourth-straight season... Mike Neal did not start at point guard for the first time since Dec. 30 due to an illness, but did play 32 minutes and scored nine points.....With

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the victory, Appalachian State remains in contention for a first-round bye in next week's Southern Conference Tournament. Appalachian will clinch a first-round bye with a win over Chattanooga in Saturday's regular-season finale....Appalachian State set a single-season school record with its fifth overtime game of the season. The previous record of four was set in 1998-99.....The double-overtime game was Appalachian State's first since an 87-84 2OT win over Charlotte on Nov. 19, 2008.

### **ASU 70, SAMFORD 67 (OT)**

#### **Score by periods 1st 2nd OT OT2 Total**

Samford	29	30	2	6	- 67
Appalachian State	33	26	2	9	- 70

SAMFORD: GEFFRARD 8, WILLIAMS 12, HOOD 22 (7 REBOUNDS), MILLER 11, KELLY 6, WILSON 8 (5 ASSISTS). FG: 28-61, 3FG: 4-17, FT: 7-8. 36 REBOUNDS, 9 ASSISTS, 17 TURNOVERS.

THREE-POINTERS: MILLER 3, HOOD.

ASU: OBACHA 9 (8 REBOUNDS), HEALY 8 (8 REBOUNDS), CANTY 9 (7 REBOUNDS, 5 ASSISTS), HAMILTON 1, BURGESS 6, BASKIN 10, TRICE 18, NEAL 9. FG: 25-59, 3FG: 6-17, FT: 14-23. 36 REBOUNDS, 14 ASSISTS, 13 TURNOVERS.

THREE-POINTERS: TRICE 5, NEAL.

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**Photo Courtesy: Jamaal Trice, ASU Athletics**