

Mountaineers Hammer Eagles on Black Saturday

Written by Mike Flynn

Saturday, 26 October 2013 21:52

Appalachian State University football put together the performance its been waiting for all season on Saturday, dominating every phase of the game in a 38-14 rout over rival and No. 24-ranked Georgia Southern at Kidd Brewer Stadium. With the victory, Appalachian State (2-6, 2-3 SoCon) snapped four-game overall and home losing streaks and handed Georgia Southern (4-3, 2-3 SoCon) its worst Southern Conference loss since a 52-16 loss to Appalachian at Kidd Brewer Stadium in 2009.

The Mountaineers racked up 515 yards while limiting the Eagles to 363, 128 below their SoCon-best 491.7-yard average coming in. Appalachian also held significant edges in passing yards (381-72) and yards per play (7.4-5.3) en route to a season high in points and a season low in points allowed.

Georgia Southern scored on the opening series of the game and led 7-0 after one quarter but the Mountaineers scored the game's next 31 points to turn the seven-point deficit into a 24-point lead midway through the third quarter.

Spurred by a controversial spot on its third play of the game, GSU scored on its opening drive to grab the early lead. Appalachian seemingly turned in a three-and-out on the Eagles' first series when it appeared that Georgia Southern running back Jerick McKinnon was stuffed for no gain on third-and-one at the GSU 29 yard line. However, officials ruled that McKinnon picked up the yard needed for the first down and the Eagles turned the good fortune into a seven-play, 80-yard drive. McKinnon capped the series with a nine-yard touchdown run that gave GSU the 7-0 advantage just 6:29 into the ballgame.

The Mountaineers went three-and-out on their next series and Georgia Southern looked to be on the way to extending its lead when it drove inside deep in Appalachian State territory on the ensuing drive. However, the turning point of the game and, perhaps, App State's season came on that series when Mountaineer nose tackle Darian Small (Hampton, Ga./Dutchtown) sustained a serious lower-body injury on an illegal chop block inside the Appalachian 30 yard line. The vicious play seemed to invigorate the Mountaineers, who got a big sack from Deuce Robinson (Blythewood, S.C./Blythewood) on third down to turn what likely would have at least three GSU points into a punt.

From there, the energized Mountaineers scored on five-straight possessions and, when the blitz was over, led 31-7 with 7:27 to go in the third quarter. During that 21:31 span, Appalachian turned the rivalry game into a laughter by not only amassing 332 yards for four touchdowns and a field goal but also limiting GSU's high-powered offense to just 48 yards and three first downs over five series.

After the Mountaineers stretched the lead to 31-7, Georgia Southern showed signs of life by responding with a 10-play, 71-yard drive that cut the deficit to 31-14. The Eagles looked to take advantage of the momentum by trying an onside kick on the ensuing kickoff but Appalachian was not fooled and recovered the ball on the GSU 49 yard line.

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Three plays later, the Apps ended any doubt about what the final outcome would be when Kameron Bryant (Cary, N.C./Panther Creek) found Tony Washington (High Point, N.C./T.W. Andrews) for a 29-yard touchdown pass that stretched the lead back to 24 points.

The final scoring strike from Bryant to Washington highlighted career days for both players. Bryant connected on 27-of-33 passes without an interception for a career-high 381 yards and career-high-tying two touchdowns and also rushed for two scores in the best performance of his young career. His leading receiver was Washington, who racked up a career-high 129 yards on just five receptions.

Fellow senior wideout Andrew Peacock (Durham, N.C./Northern Durham) also had a terrific afternoon with 10 catches for 127 yards, just one reception and three yards short of his career highs. Sophomores Malachi Jones (Roswell, Ga./Central Gwinnett) and Simms McElfresh (Charlotte, N.C./Charlotte Christian) rounded out a great day by Appalachian's receivers with six catches for 57 yards and three catches for 47 yards, respectively. McElfresh hauled in a nine-yard touchdown catch for his second score in as many weeks.

Freshman running back Marcus Cox (Dacula, Ga./Dacula) added a presence on the ground for Appalachian, rushing for 104 yards on 20 carries (5.2 avg.). The 100-yard rushing performance was his second-straight and third in six-career starts.

As good as the Mountaineers' offense was, the story of the day was their defense, which turned in yet another stellar performance against Georgia Southern's vaunted triple-option attack.

Robinson highlighted the defensive masterpiece with nine tackles, including 3.5 for loss and a sack. Inside linebackers Karl Anderson (Pilot Point, Texas/Pilot Point) and Brandon McGowan (Suwanee, Ga./North Gwinnett) led the Mountaineers with 10 tackles apiece while safety Doug Middleton (Winston-Salem, N.C./Parkland) added nine tackles, a tackle for loss, a forced fumble and an interception in his first start of the season.

Appalachian State stays at home to face SoCon-title contender Chattanooga next Saturday. Kickoff is set for 3:30 p.m. at Kidd Brewer Stadium.

NOTES: The victory was Appalachian State's third-straight over future Sun Belt Conference rival Georgia Southern, matching the Mountaineers' longest winning streaks in the history of the series, which dates back to 1932 ... Appalachian also won three-straight over GSU from 1936-87 and 1995-97 ... the Mountaineers' previous two wins over Georgia Southern had come when the Eagles were ranked No. 1 in NCAA Division I FCS (24-17 in Boone in 2011 and 31-28 in Statesboro, Ga. last season) ... Appalachian State moved to 16-12-1 in 29 all-time meetings versus GSU, including a 12-10 edge in 22 meetings when both teams were members of the SoCon (1993-2013) ... with the win, Appalachian avoided losing its fifth-straight game at home, which would have stood alone as the longest home losing streak in school history ... the Mountaineers moved to 79-55-1 all-time and 39-17 in its last 56 matchups versus nationally ranked FCS teams ... the attendance of 23,901 was the 50th-consecutive regular-season crowd above Kidd Brewer Stadium's official seating capacity....• Appalachian State (2-6, 2-3 SoCon) snapped four-game overall and home losing streaks with the decisive win over No. 24-ranked

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Georgia Southern (4-3, 2-3 SoCon). The win is Appalachian State's first since a 31-21 win at Elon on Sept. 21 and the first at Kidd Brewer Stadium since a 33-28 win over Furman in the 2012 regular-season finale (Nov. 10, 2012)....Appalachian State quarterback Kameron Bryant had a career day, completing 27-of-33 passes for a career-high 381 yards and career-high-tying two touchdowns. He also ran for a career-high two touchdowns....Appalachian State senior wide receivers Andrew Peacock (10 receptions for 127 yards) and Tony Washington (5 receptions for a career-high 129 yards) combined for 15 receptions, 256 receiving yards and one touchdown....Appalachian State freshman running back Marcus Cox rushed for 104 yards, good for his third 100-yard rushing game in six career starts.

APP STATE 38, GEORGIA SOUTHERN 14

Score by Quarters 1 2 3 4 Total

Georgia Southern 7 0 7 0 - 14

Appalachian State 0 17 21 0 - 38

1st

08:31 GSU - J. McKinnon 9 yd run (Y. Koo kick), 7-80 2:40 7 - 0

2nd

13:54 APP - Kameron Bryant 2 yd run (Drew Stewart kick), 7-84 1:48 7 - 7

03:52 APP - Drew Stewart 41 yd field goal, 15-56 5:38 7 - 10

00:24 APP - Kameron Bryant 7 yd run (Drew Stewart kick), 9-67 2:00 7 - 17

3rd

12:53 APP - Marcus Cox 12 yd run (Drew Stewart kick), 2-36 0:20 7 - 24

07:23 APP - Simms McElfresh 9 yd pass from Kameron Bryant (Drew Stewart kick), 10-89 3:47 7 - 31

02:23 GSU - K. Ellison 1 yd run (Y. Koo kick), 10-71 4:53 14 - 31

01:28 APP - Tony Washington 29 yd pass from Kameron Bryant (Drew Stewart kick), 3-49 0:54 14 - 38

Team Statistics

FIRST DOWNS: ASU 26, GSU 22

RUSHING YARDS: ASU 134, GSU 291

PASSING YARDS: ASU 381, GSU 72

TOTAL YARDS: ASU 515, GSU 363

FUMBLES/LOST: ASU 0-0, GSU 2-1

PENALTY YARDS: ASU 7-75, GSU 5-43

TIME OF POSSESSION: ASU 27:07, GSU 32:53

THIRD DOWN CONVERSIONS: ASU 5-11, GSU 5-12

FOURTH DOWN CONVERSIONS: ASU 0-0, GSU 1-2

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Individual Statistics

RUSHING:

ASU: COX 20-104-TD

GSU: ELLISON 20-95-TD

PASSING:

ASU: BRYANT 27-33-381-2TD

GSU: ELLISON 5-13-72-I

RECEIVING:

ASU: PEACOCK 10-127, WASHINGTON 5-129-TD, JONES 6-57

GSU: BRYANT 2-40, JOHNSON 2-25

Photo Courtesy: Kam Bryant, Tom Lanier