

App State Clamps Down on Bulldogs

Written by Ryan Bower

Friday, 07 February 2014 09:46

Tommy Spagnolo recorded his third double-double in five games and Appalachian State University men's basketball allowed its fewest points to a Division I opponent in 33 years in a 54-45 triumph over The Citadel on Thursday evening at the Holmes Center.

Spagnolo scored 12 points and 12 rebounds to help lead Appalachian State (7-15, 3-6 SoCon) to its third win in five games. Ten of his 12 points came in the second half, including two huge buckets in the final four minutes of the game that helped Appalachian hold off a late charge by The Citadel (4-21, 0-10 SoCon).

The Citadel, which had not led since Appalachian State closed the first half with an 8-0 run that gave the Mountaineers a six-point halftime lead, pulled within a point on two free throws by Matt Van Scyoc with 4:52 to go. However, two possessions later, Spagnolo took a nice post feed from Chris Burgess, spun into the lane and finished with a left-handed baby hook to stretch Appalachian's lead to 44-41 with 3:39 left to play.

The Bulldogs cut the deficit to just one point again on their next possession but Tab Hamilton answered with a 15-foot jumper from the right wing to stretch the Mountaineers' advantage back to three with 1:47 to go. After a stop and big rebound by Michael Obacha, Spagnolo delivered the dagger with a baseline jumper that gave App State a 48-43 lead with 36 seconds left. Hamilton and Mike Neal combined to make 6-of-6 free throws down the stretch to seal the victory.

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Both teams struggled to find a rhythm offensively in the first half as each shot under 40.0 percent over the first 20 minutes and combined for just 48 first-half points - the fewest combined first-half points in an Appalachian State basketball game since Feb. 2, 2012 when App State and The Citadel combined for just 45 in a 62-51 win for the Bulldogs in Charleston.

Neither squad got on the board until Hamilton's jumper with 17:49 to play in the opening period and neither hit double-digit points until C.J. Bray's jumper gave the Bulldogs a 10-9 lead with 9:36 on the clock, but Appalachian would outscore The Citadel 18-11 the rest of the way to take the six-point lead into the locker room.

After the Mountaineers built an eight-point lead (42-34) on Neal's three-pointer with 11:04 to go, Appalachian State went cold and would not score again for nearly eight minutes - but the Bulldogs were unable to capitalize, scoring just seven points during the scoring drought, which was eventually broken when Spagnolo converted a layup with 3:39 to play.

The Citadel was able to cut the deficit to just one point (44-43) with 2:08 left on the clock, but the Mountaineers clamped down and allowed just one more bucket - a tip-in with 14 seconds remaining - to come away with the hard-fought win.

Hamilton led all players in scoring with 17 points while Neal poured in 15 and dished out six

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assists. In addition to his 12 points and 12 blocks, Spagnolo also tallied three assists and two blocks. Obacha finished with eight rebounds as the Mountaineers ended the night with a 36-28 edge on the glass.

Quinton Marshall paced the Bulldogs with 13 points while Matt Van Scoyc scored 12. Three different players pulled down five rebounds for The Citadel and Ashton Moore dished out a team-best three assists.

On the night, Appalachian connected on just 38.3 percent (18-of-47) of its field-goal attempts but held the Bulldogs to just 36.0 percent (18-of-50) from the floor. The Mountaineers were clutch at the charity stripe, connecting on 12-of-15 (80.0 percent) of their free throws including a 9-of-10 mark in the second half.

Appalachian State returns to action on Saturday when it travels to archrival Western Carolina for a 2 p.m. contest at the Ramsey Center.

NOTES: The Citadel's 45 points were the fewest that Appalachian State has allowed since a 77-44 win over Lees-McRae on Nov. 17, 2009 and the fewest that it has surrendered to a Division I opponent since a 48-41 win over The Citadel on Feb. 7, 1981... Appalachian improved to 53-25 all-time against the Bulldogs including a 29-7 mark at home... The Citadel's field-goal percentage was the lowest for an App State opponent since Milligan connected on 32.3 percent (21-of-65) on Dec. 30, 2012... it was the lowest shooting percentage for a Division I opponent

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since Feb. 15, 2012 when Chattanooga hit 33.3 percent (23-of-69)... over the past five games, Spagnolo has scored 55 points (11.0 ppg), pulled in 54 rebounds (10.8 rpg) and shot 62.9 percent (22-of-35) from the floor.

APPALACHIAN STATE 54, THE CITADEL 45

SCORE BY PERIODS 1ST 2ND TOTAL

THE CITADEL 21 24 - 45

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APPALACHIAN STATE 27 27 - 54

THE CITADEL: BRAY 9 (5 REBOUNDS), MOORE 5 (5 ASSISTS), VAN SCYOC 12, MARSHALL 13, HARRIS III 6. FG: 18-50, 3FG: 5-15, FT: 4-5. 28 REBOUNDS, 10 ASSISTS, 8 TURNOVERS.

ASU: OBACHA 2 (8 REBOUNDS), SPAGNOLO 12 (12 REBOUNDS), HAMILTON 17, BURGESS 3, NEAL 15 (6 ASSISTS), KOBANI 2, TONEY 3. FG: 18-47, 3FG: 6-19, FT: 12-15. 36 REBOUNDS, 13 ASSISTS, 10 TURNOVERS.

Photo Courtesy: Mike Neal, ASU Athletics