

Spagnolo Scores 23, Apps Fall In OT

Written by Ryan Bower

Saturday, 08 February 2014 19:45

A pair of free throws by Tab Hamilton with 0.2 seconds remaining in regulation sent the game to overtime, but Appalachian State University men's basketball was unable to complete a huge comeback

in an 82-75 loss to Southern Conference rival Western Carolina on Saturday at the Ramsey Center.

The Mountaineers (7-16, 3-7 SoCon) looked solid early on and led for much of the first half, but a series of foul calls midway through the opening period helped the Catamounts (13-11, 5-3) regain their footing and seize momentum in the closing moments of the first half.

In a back-and-forth first half neither team would see its lead go beyond three points, Appalachian looked poised to potentially take control as it was able to draw seven Catamount fouls over the first 10 minutes of play - putting itself in position to build on its lead with free throws for the remainder of the half.

The Apps led by as many as three points twice in the opening four minutes of play - the first time when Tommy Spagnolo converted a three-point play with 16:27 on the clock and again when Hamilton connected on a pair of free throws less than five minutes later to seemingly give Appalachian early momentum.

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That momentum would end when the Mountaineers were whistled for six fouls in a three-plus minute span midway through the half to put both teams in the bonus for the rest of the period. Western Carolina was able to capitalize as it connected on 11-of-15 first-half free throws and Tom Tankelewicz drilled a three pointer with just 38 seconds left in the first half to send the Catamounts to the locker room with a 31-30 lead.

Western's momentum would carry over into the second half as it scored the first nine points of the final period to take a 40-30 lead on a layup from Kenneth Hall with 17:22 left to play. Appalachian would battle back to tie the score twice over the next nine minutes - the first time at 49-49 on an Aaron Scott with 9:37 on the clock and again on Spagnolo's layup that made it 51-51 with 8:28 to play.

Trey Sumler nailed a three following the Spagnolo bucket to give Western Carolina a 54-51 lead but Appalachian pulled within one point (54-53) on a pair of Hamilton free throws with 7:33 to play.

After another three from Tankelewicz put the Catamounts up by seven (60-53) at the 5:35 mark, the Mountaineers would score seven-straight points to tie on a Rantavious Gilbert layup with under four minutes to play, but Sumler nailed a layup, drew a foul and converted the free throw on the next possession to give Western Carolina a 63-60 lead.

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Appalachian responded with a Spagnolo free throw and a Ty Toney layup to tie it at 63-63 with just over two minutes to play before Western Carolina made it 65-63 on Sumler's free throws with just under two minutes to play.

The Mountaineers responded with a Spagnolo dunk to tie the contest at 65-65 with 1:08 on the clock before Sumler connected on two more at the charity stripe to give WCU a 67-65 lead with 49 seconds remaining. Appalachian had a chance to tie when Mike Neal went to the line 16 seconds later, but the junior missed his first attempt.

After Sumler put the Catamounts up by two (68-66) with 15 seconds to go, Hamilton was fouled on a desperation three pointer and nailed 2-of-3 shots to send the game to overtime.

In overtime, Appalachian jumped out to a 74-70 lead with 3:01 to play, but WCU reeled off a 12-0 run over the next two and a half minutes to put the game out of reach and pick up its fourth-straight home win over the Mountaineers.

Spagnolo led the Mountaineers with a career-high 23 points and ripped down a game-high 12 rebounds while Hamilton scored 15 and Toney added a career-high 14 off the bench while finishing 10-of-12 at the free-throw line.

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Sumler paced the Catamounts with a game-high 25 points while Brandon Boggs added 15. James Sinclair scored 11 for WCU and Tankelewicz and Tawaski King each poured in 10.

Appalachian shot 40.4 percent from the floor (23-of-57) and went 27-of-39 at the charity stripe while WCU shot 44.4 percent (24-of-54) and converted 31-of-42 free-throw attempts. The Mountaineers pulled down 35 rebounds to Western's 35 and dished out 11 assists while forcing 15 Catamount turnovers.

The Mountaineers return to action on Feb. 13 when they play host to Samford at 7 p.m. at the Holmes Center to begin a three-game homestand that finished with games against Wofford (Feb. 15) and Western Carolina (Feb. 20).

NOTES: Appalachian dropped to 117-69 all-time against Western Carolina... the Mountaineers also fell to 42-44 when facing the Catamounts in Cullowhee... the two teams were whistled for a combined 60 fouls and made a combined 81 trips to the free-throw line... a total of seven players finished the game with for or more fouls... Spagnolo recorded his fourth double-double in the past six games... Appalachian outscored the Catamounts 38-28 in the paint and 31-29 in bench points.

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WESTERN CAROLINA 84, APPALACHIAN STATE 75 (OT)

SCORE BY PERIODS 1ST 2ND 1OT TOTAL

APPALACHIAN STATE 30 38 7 - 75

WESTERN CAROLINA 31 37 16 - 84

ASU: OBACHA 3, SPAGNOLO 23 (12 REBOUNDS), HAMILTON 13 (4 ASSISTS), BURGESS 2, NEAL 3, KOBANI 2, GILBERT 9, EAVES 1, SCOTT 5, TONEY 14 (4 ASSISTS). FG: 23-57, 3FG: 2-9, FT: 27-39. 37 REBOUNDS, 11 ASSISTS, 14 TURNOVERS.

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WCU: HALL 6 (8 REBOUNDS), KING 10, BROWN 3, SUMLER 25 (4 ASSISTS), SINCLAIR 11, TANKELEWICZ 10, BRUMMITT 4 (7 REBOUNDS), BOGGS 15. FG: 24-54, 3FG: 5-14, FT: 31-42. 35 REBOUNDS, 10 ASSISTS, 15 TURNOVERS.

Photo Courtesy: Tommy Spagnolo, ASU Athletics