

Samford Eliminates ASU In Tournament Opener

Written by Ryan Bower
Friday, 07 March 2014 14:49

Appalachian State University men's basketball saw its season come to an end in a 70-56 loss to eighth-seeded Samford on Friday in the first round of the 2014 Southern Conference Tournament.

The No. 9 Mountaineers (9-21, 5-11 SoCon) led by as many as five points in the opening 10 minutes, but the Bulldogs (13-19, 6-10) caught fire in the closing stages of the first half, taking a 20-18 lead with 7:15 on the clock and never trailed again.

After Samford scored on the game's opening possession, Appalachian scored six-straight points to take a 6-2 lead on Ty Toney's (Alpharetta, Ga./Alpharetta) fastbreak layup with 15:29 to go and pushed the lead to as many as five points (13-8) with 12:53 on the clock.

The Bulldogs were able to rally, however, and grabbed a 17-15 lead four and a half minutes later. Tab Hamilton (Winston-Salem, N.C./Fishburne Military) was able to put the Mountaineers back in front when he connected from beyond the arc with eight minutes to go to make it 18-17.

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Appalachian's lead would be short-lived as Samford responded with a three from Connor Miller and never trailed again en route to its first win at the league tournament since 2009.

Although the Mountaineers were able to tie the game at 31-31 on Michael Obacha's (Edo State, Nigeria/High Point Christian) layup early in the second half, the Bulldogs responded with a 15-4 run to push its lead to double digits (46-35) with 13:13 to play.

The Apps were able to cut the deficit to just six points (57-51) with 5:19 on the clock, but Samford scored 13 of the final 18 points as it advanced to play No. 1 Davidson in Saturday's quarterfinal round.

Five Mountaineers scored in double figures as Hamilton and Frank Eaves (Greensboro, N.C./Page) each tallied 11 points and Obacha, Toney and Tommy Spagnolo (West Jefferson, N.C./Ashe County) all poured in 10. Obacha also led the squad with nine rebounds while Spagnolo ripped down eight of his own.

Samford was led by Tim Williams who finished with 21 points and 11 rebounds, both game highs, while Michael Bradley added 14 and Miller scored 11.

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Appalachian shot 39.2 percent (20-of-51) from the floor and was just 2-of-14 from long range while the Bulldogs connected on 43.9 percent (25-of-57) of their shots. Samford pulled down 37 rebounds to App State's 33 and forced 15 Mountaineer turnovers.

NOTES: Appalachian fell to 42-41 all-time in the SoCon Tournament... Friday's game was Appalachian's last as a member of the SoCon as it will play in the Sun Belt Conference next season... the loss marked the first time since 2008 that the Mountaineers lost their opening game of the league tournament... App State dropped to 10-4 all-time in the first round of the SoCon Tournament... the contest marked the first time Appalachian and Samford had ever played each other in the SoCon Tournament... the Mountaineers dropped to 8-5 all-time against the Bulldogs.

SAMFORD 70, APPALACHIAN STATE 56

SCORE BY PERIODS 1ST 2ND TOTAL

APPALACHIAN STATE 25 31 - 56

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SAMFORD UNIVERSITY 29 41 - 70

ASU: OBACHA 10 (9 REBOUNDS), SPAGNOLO 10 (8 REBOUNDS), HAMILTON 11, BURGESS 2, TONEY 10, GILBERT 11, SCOTT 2. FG: 20-51, 3FG: 2-14, FT: 14-21. 33 REBOUNDS, 7 ASSISTS, 15 TURNOVERS.

SAMFORD: T.WILLIAMS 21 (11 REBOUNDS), BRADLEY 14, I.WILLIAMS 8, MILLER 11, WILSON 5, KELLY 4, CAPPS 5, HOOD 2. FG: 25-57, 3FG: 3-15, FT: 17-26. 37 REBOUNDS, 10 ASSISTS, 8 TURNOVERS.

Photo Courtesy: Michael Obacha, ASU Athletics