

# Jonesboro's underdog rises

## Adams looks back on his athletic career

BRAD BREWER  
SPORTS EDITOR

With almost 1.8 million people watching on FOX, Arkansas State football shocked the nation by taking down Kansas State 35-31 on September 12, securing the Red Wolves' first win over a power five school since 2008. After the game, the experts mentioned one special name: senior wide receiver Jonathan Adams.

### Hometown hero

A Jonesboro native, Adams attended Jonesboro High School after growing up in the Jonesboro Math and Sciences school and Douglas McArthur Junior High School.

His football career began at an early age, but it was not his first love. Adams preferred basketball, but acknowledged that his talents belonged on the field more than they did on the court.

"I started football when I was in third or fourth grade with the Pee-Wee league here," Adams said. "And I just continued playing up to my college career. Football wasn't even my favorite sport, basketball was. But I found out that football was meant to be that sport for me and so I just committed to A-State because I didn't have that many offers."

Jonesboro High School holds fond memories for Adams, who reminisced on his time playing hoops for the Hurricane. "I played basketball my whole life as well and it has always been a favorite sport to me," Adams said. "The inside environment with packed crowds, especially at Jonesboro High School was kind of crazy. My senior year we had the most packed games ever because we went on a 32-0 run and won state. I liked that feeling."

Adams almost wrote off football completely at one point in high school, leaving the team before eventually returning after realizing how much the game meant to him, and how much potential he had to explore.

"Actually when I came in my tenth grade year, I wasn't even going to play football,"

Adams said. "I missed the first game where we played Valley View at A-State. But then I thought about how I was pretty good at football and realized I missed being out there and scoring touchdowns and stuff like that. Football is my sport and is getting me where I want to be in life."

Even though he did not receive many offers, Adams felt that staying home in Jonesboro was the best decision for him, especially after the birth of his son. And playing football with the Red Wolves has further grown his love and appreciation for the game.

"I stayed here which was probably my best option because my family is here and I also have my son," Adams said. "So everything is good and I can see my son whenever I can. I started drawing a lot of attention to myself in football around my senior year in high school when I committed here. I started falling in love with the game and now I'm totally invested into this. Now I'm on a platform where I can show the world what I can really do."

### Realizing his talent

Along with the talent that Adams has displayed throughout his collegiate career, he also displays great confidence in his abilities as a wide receiver, saying he could have been the top guy since his debut with A-State.

"Since I got here my freshman year, I feel like I could have been the top receiver," Adams said. "But you know, you have older people in front of you and they get the balls more than you and stuff like that. At first I had a problem with it because we all put in work, and we always had a good receiving core. I always felt like I could have played more, but now it's my last year and I realize what I've learned from players and coaches and learned more about the game. Every year I just progressed more. We all were good so it was fun competing, but now I have that role and I can finally showcase what I've got."

2019 was the final year at Arkansas State for top wide receivers Omar Bayless and Kirk Merritt, who were both picked up as undrafted free



Senior wide receiver Jonathon Adams, Jr. makes a man miss in last year's contest against SMU. Adams is a Jonesboro native. COURTESY OF ARKANSAS STATE ATHLETICS

agents following the NFL Draft. Because of this, it was finally Adams' time to shine as the top guy. It didn't take long for him to make an impact on a massive stage.

"We came in knowing we could beat Kansas State," Adams said. "I think we played harder than them. That game was a pretty fun game for me. It was a bigger crowd than there was at Memphis, it was sunny, it was a good feeling. Millions of people were watching and we knew that we could win, so it was definitely one of those games you look forward to. We made a statement and after the game the locker room was going crazy. My phone is still ringing to this day. I wish

we could have more of those games. This team could be one of those top-25 teams."

### NFL potential

One huge compliment came Adams' way during FOX's Big Noon postgame show, where one of the analysts remarked that the Red Wolves star was ready to play on Sundays, making his professional aspirations more realistic than ever.

"I've been hearing that all my life," Adams said. "I guess it's from how they see me and how I play. But hearing it now though, it's kind of dawned on me. I'm another step there and it's just a year away. I'm a senior now and it can really happen. I just have

to keep working and trust in everything. Especially hearing it now on FOX and hearing it from those sportscasters and reporters, it's exciting. Hearing that from Reggie Bush and stuff gave me more motivation because people are finally seeing what I can really do. I've been that underdog since high school and now I finally have my chance and I'm taking advantage of it."

With his final conference season about to kick off, and potential NFL play on the horizon as well, Adams reflects on his sources of motivation. The prime source being his family.

"One of the reasons why I've been doing this is because

of my mom," Adams said. "But when I had my son it made me want to go even harder in doing what I want to do in life and help my family. My son is getting bigger and just turned three on September 15th, so he's running around and talking more. He's definitely been giving me more motivation. It's a blessing to have him because having a kid, especially a son that looks up to you and wants to be like you, I'm happy I can be that example for him."

Catch Jonathon Adams and the Red Wolves as they take on the Coastal Carolina Chanticleers on Saturday at 11 a.m. The game will be broadcasted live on ESPN2.

Interested in reporting? Join us every  
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Communications Building.

## Sodoma's record breaking story

### Red Wolves' star forward makes history

BRAD BREWER

SPORTS EDITOR

Arkansas State soccer has found itself on a meteoric rise the past few years, and a large part of that is because of senior forward Sarah Sodoma, who recently became the all-time leading goal scorer in program history, after banging in the game-winning goal against Texas State last Thursday.

**Before college**

Sodoma's prodigious college career found its roots before she even entered kindergarten, playing for her church before moving onto playing club soccer with Lou Fusz Athletic.

"I started playing soccer when I was about three or four years old," Sodoma said. "I played for my church's team and played with girls that were a year older than me. I don't really know why but I did. I did that for a while and I started club soccer when I was nine. I played with that same team from nine years old until graduating high school and going off to college. So that was awesome that I got to play with them while growing up my entire life. They became really close friends and I feel like I grew a lot both as a person and as a soccer player on that team."

**Picking A-State**

After progressing quickly during her time with Lou Fusz Athletic, Sodoma entered high school and immediately started her recruiting process, as she played all four seasons on varsity at Parkway South High School.

"I started the recruiting process around my freshman or sophomore year in high school," Sodoma said. "I went on a couple of visits, not a whole lot because

I'm never really good at making decisions. I didn't want to make the decision super difficult for myself, so I limited it from the start. I knew what kind of school I wanted in terms of size and how far from home it was. I eventually visited A-State and I just fell in love with it and that was how I decided to come here."

A-State's soccer program is not particularly a dynasty, as the Red Wolves have never captured a conference championship. Because of this, Sodoma's decision to move to Jonesboro went beyond her desire to succeed on the pitch.

"It seemed like I would have a lot of resources to help me both in school and in soccer," Sodoma said. "When I visited, it seemed like everyone I talked to really cared about the success of the people who entered their program. So that really struck home with me and made me feel comfortable. I knew I didn't want to go to a huge school, but I wanted the town to be supportive of the school. I thought this was a place where I could grow as a person and make an impact."

**Proving her worth**

Sodoma hit the ground running at A-State, winning the Sun Belt freshman of the year award. She was the first Red Wolves player to ever win that award, and led the team with eight goals, which tied for fourth-most in the conference. This was also achieved during a season where the A-State squad was incredibly young, sporting ten freshmen.

"I thought it was a pretty smooth process to come in and get to work," Sodoma said. "We started in the summer which gave me a lot of time to



SARAH SODOMA

Senior forward Sarah Sodoma scored against both Louisiana and Texas State last week, bringing her career goal total to 25.

get to know the girls and how they play. There were a lot of freshmen during my freshman year; there were ten of us. So that made it easier too, knowing there were a lot of people that were in the same shoes as I was. I had a lot of people to lean back on and even the older girls made us feel super welcome."

As of the release of this story, Sodoma has racked up 25 career goals and has been an intricate part to A-State's 4-0 start to the season, the best start in program history. Even though her individual numbers are high, the Manchester, Missouri native is far from a selfish player. She focuses on

her team first, and only wants to succeed individually because she knows it will help the program.

"I mean, I just go out there every time and I like to say I play more for my teammates than myself," Sodoma said. "I want them to have the best experience here as possible and I want to do well too for both myself and my teammates. But my focus was never on breaking records. I didn't even know people kept track of those records until my coach brought it to my attention that I had the potential to do it. Once I knew I could do it, that was pretty exciting but it was never my focus. I just wanted to go out

there and give it my all and help my team in every way I could."

**Life after soccer**

Even though it seems that she is hitting her stride as a player, Sodoma's days on the pitch seem to be numbered, and she does not even know if she will continue playing past this season. "I haven't completely made the decision," Sodoma said. "It depends on how this year turns out and how my body holds up. We like to joke that we are the granny's of the team as the seniors. So I don't know yet."

While she is a star in soccer, Sodoma is also an excellent scholar. With one degree under her belt and a master's

degree on the way, the record breaker's future seems to be bright wherever she goes.

"I finished my undergraduate degree this past May," Sodoma said. "Right now I'm working on my master's in accounting and will finish that in the Spring. I've started taking parts of the CPA exam, but in bigger terms I don't completely know exactly what I want to do, but I plan on going into accounting of some sort. I'll probably start in public accounting, but beyond that I don't really know."

### FRESHMAN

- 2017 Sun Belt Freshman of the Year
- All-Sun Belt Conference Second-Team
- 8 goals, 20 points
- Highest scoring SBC Freshman
- Athlete Director's Honor Roll

### SOPHOMORE

- All-Sun Belt Second-Team
- 5 goals, 10 points
- Tied for 4th most goals in SBC

### JUNIOR

- First-Team All-Sun Belt
- 9 goals, 24 points
- Southeast region Second-team
- Second most goals & points in SBC
- Sun Belt Tournament Finalist

**SARAH SODOMA**  
FORWARD | SENIOR

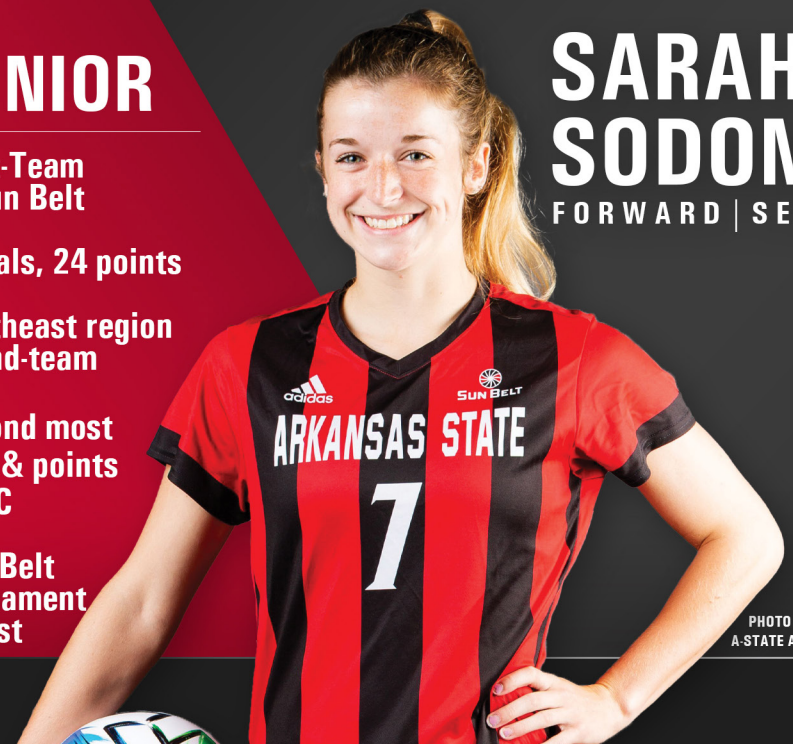


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This Season: 3 Goals, 2 Assists, 8 Points

GRAPHIC BY DREW MORGAN | DESIGN EDITOR