Blocking Texas State's undefeated streak

Red Wolves look to spoil Bobcats' perfect season

BRADLEY BREWER
SPORTS EDITOR



Photo by: Miya Garrett | A-State Athletics
Redshirt sophomore Kendahl Davenport awaits a serve at the net with junior setter Lauren Musante behind her.

Two more wins are on the board for Arkansas State volleyball after the Red Wolves went down to the state capitol and took down Little Rock in both matches to improve to 8-5 on the season.

The queen of blocks

While the wins are a nice story, a bigger one is found in an individual on the team. Redshirt sophomore Kendahl Davenport is a large reason why the Red Wolves have found victory when they have this season, as she leads the entire NCAA in blocks with 78 this year.

Davenport is an in-state development as her hometown is just a two hour or so drive in Conway, Arkansas. Unsurprisingly, as productive as she is for A-State, she was the same for the Conway Wampus Cats.

"I got to Conway my freshman year in high school," Davenport said. "I played all three positions on the front row: right side, middle blocker and outside hitter. We had really good years all three years. I was able to learn a lot and grow against some good competition. My senior year I led my team in blocks and I believe I still have the season-high record for individual blocks."

Jonesboro was not the initial collegiate home for Davenport, as she committed to Missouri State and spent her first fall semester there, but quickly transferred to A-State in the spring to play for then head coach David Rehr.

"I initially went to Missouri State, before transferring here in the spring semester and played with Dave [Rehr] before he went to Houston," Davenport said. "And then we of course got Santiago [Restrepo] last year. I've always felt like I'm a pretty adaptable player and do what I need to do for my team. I don't worry about stats, I just want the team to win and I want to do whatever will contribute to that."

While her stats have been nothing short of noteworthy in 2020, Davenports remains humble and emphasizes the work her teammates do, rather than her own abilities.

"It really goes into team chemistry and me being able to trust them," Davenport said. "I wouldn't be able to hit if Tatum wasn't doing a good job on the back row passing and if Lauren wasn't good at spreading the ball and making good decisions. If Madison and Josie weren't setting up good blocks, I wouldn't be able to get as many good touches and do the things that I am able to do."

Head coach Santiago Restrepo notes that while Davenport had an impressive freshman campaign last year, her growth has been phenomenal and that she's an incredibly important asset to the team.

"She's finally settling into the positions compared to last year," Restrepo said. "From last year to this year, it's been night and day with her. She has been really good and available for attacking, and that's why she's in the top-ten in hitting percentages in the conference. I also think she does a really good job with blocking and making sure she's a force to be reckoned with at the net. One thing about blocking is the side to side movement and trying to set up the block at the pin, and she's done a very good job recognizing that and moving fast enough."

Putt's return from injury

Another key player for the Red Wolves in the past has been outside hitter Macey Putt, who has been slowly but surely making her return from injury, even scoring a couple of kills this past weekend against Little Rock.

"She's improving health wise and getting stronger," Restrepo said. "Last week she went at it full out in practice and had some good swings. I knew that she was ready in the match against Little Rock. We are going to have to use her a bit more this weekend and I think she's up to it. She's more decisive now and we are excited to have her back."

The final boss

It is set up to be a battle of the Sun Belt's best offense and the Sun Belt's best defense this weekend, as the Bobcats from Texas State are the final opponents for A-State ahead of the Sun Belt tournament.

"It's going to be interesting because Texas State is leading the conference in hitting and we are leading the conference in blocks and defense," Restrepo said. "It's going to be a big matchup between offense and defense. And not to take anything away from their defense as they are in the top-five, but it's going to be pretty interesting how we will respond to really good offense and how many great hitters they have."

Texas State is currently miles ahead of the rest of the conference with an undefeated record and are ranked 13th in the country, but Davenport sees a potential advantage that A-State can utilize in an attempt to defeat the unbeaten Bobcats.

"I think our team has the ability to really take it to Texas State," Davenport said. "We have the advantage since Texas State hasn't played against a team that's as defense-oriented as ours. A lot of other teams don't have as big of a block or as much competition at the net. So that'll be in our favor since we can take it to them. Right now their team has everything to lose and we have nothing to lose, so that's a dangerous situation for them to be in."

The first matchup of the weekend will take place on Friday at 11 a.m. followed by another match at 6 p.m. The weekend will close on Saturday with the final match being played at 1 p.m. All matches will take place at the First National Bank Arena in Jonesboro and will be broadcast on ESPN+.

SEE BELOW: Seniors Madison Brown and Tatum Ticknor both received player of the week rewards.



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF SUN BELT CONFERENCE

Cross Country wins big at conference

Champions both individually and as a team



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUN BELT CONFERENCE

A-State's womens' team won the team Sun Belt Confrerence Cross Country championship on Saturday, led by senior Pauline Meyer who finished second individually in the race.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUN BELT CONFERENCE

Senior Bennett Pascoe won the individual Sun Belt Conference Cross Country championship on Saturday after finishing first in the meet. This was the first individual championship in program history. Pascoe also won the SBC Runner of the Year award, presented in the image above.

Blacked out performance against Troy

Red Wolves in tailspin after dropping to 1-3 in SBC

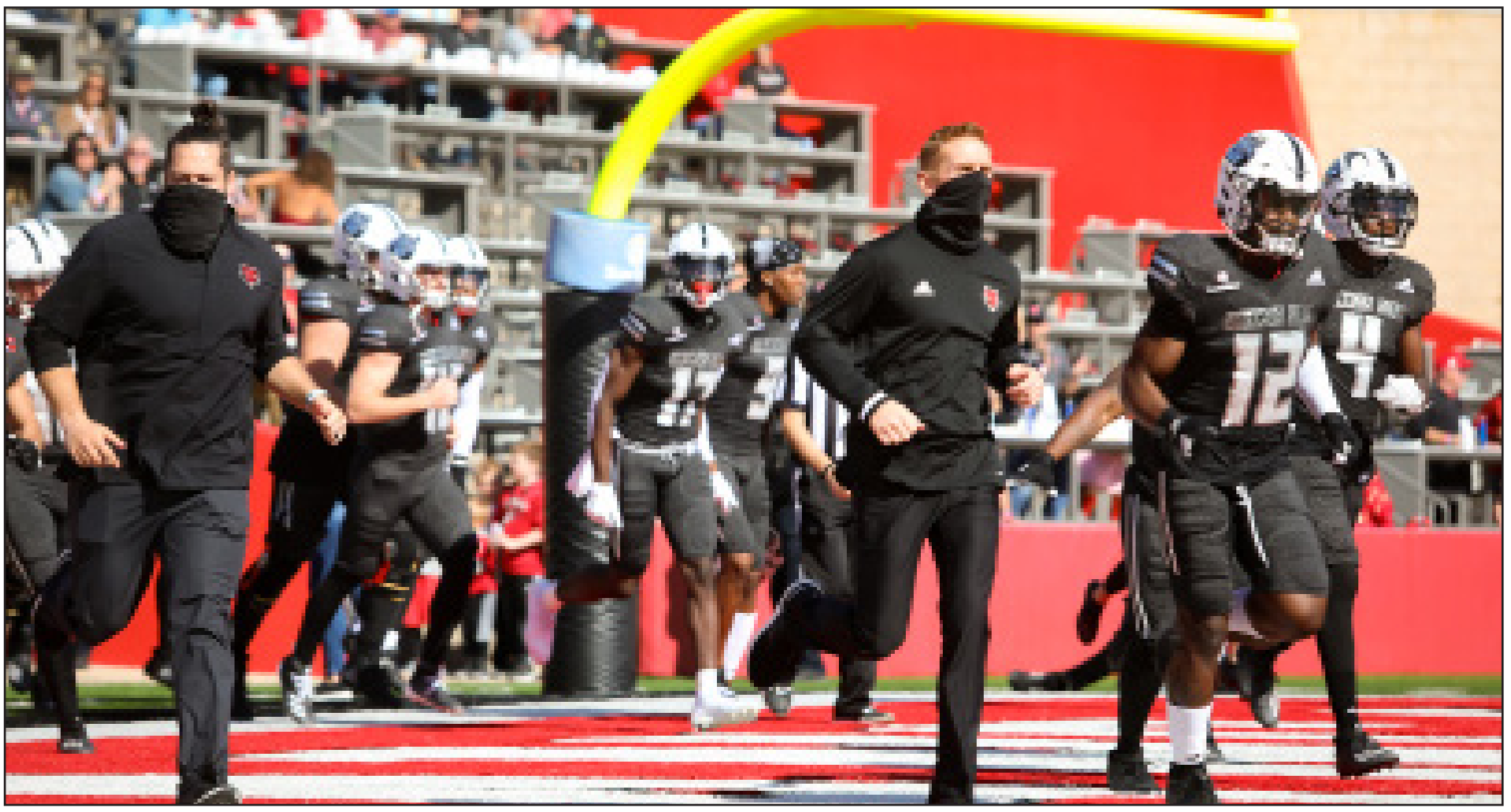


Photo by: Hannah Risker | Photo Editor

A-State head coach Blake Anderson leads the team out of the tunnel in last Saturday's matchup against Troy. The Trojans easily handled the Red Wolves.

BRADLEY BREWER

SPORTS EDITOR

In what was the most lethargic performance from Arkansas State this season, the Red Wolves suffered a 38-10 loss to the Troy Trojans to end any hopes of a conference championship bid.

The Trojans held control of the game for the entire 60 minutes, never relinquishing its lead and out-gained A-State by a massive 487-379 margin, continuing the offensive woes the team experienced against Appalachian State.

Troy was much better on third downs as well, converting nine times on 17 tries, while A-State converted just three times on 14 attempts.

On Monday's press conference, head coach Blake Anderson revealed that the team's primary problem is translating the success the team has in practice onto the field.

"We talked yesterday about struggling to find consistency," Anderson said. "We are limiting making mistakes in practice, but are struggling on getting that onto the field. Defensively we had three opportunities in the first half to force a turnover that we didn't make, there was a wide-open drop from Jay Adams that could've been a touchdown and sparked the offense early. That's where the frustration lies."

Fans and analysts alike were able to easily spot the lack of energy on the A-State sideline, and naturally a team without energy is going to have a much harder time winning football games.

"It bothers me because it's a choice that we make," Anderson said. "We cannot allow ourselves to show up without the energy we need. The bell is going to ring at 11 a.m. on Saturday morning and Louisiana will be waiting for us. It doesn't matter if you're not feeling your best or if you didn't get a great night of sleep, we need to come out and play with our hair on fire."

Anderson does have a plan that could give the team an easier time in translating their success in practice over onto the field.

"Let's reduce some of the thinking. Let's target our best features, and how can we play to those strengths in every area. Step back and think about how we are teaching things for particular individuals and specific groups."

The Red Wolves will travel to Lafayette to play Louisiana on Saturday at 11 a.m. The game will be broadcast on ESPNU.