

# Red Wolves beat Troy 34-31 in a thrilling finish

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STAFF WRITER

Arkansas State hosted the Troy Trojans in their 4th conference game of the season. The Red Wolves looked to build off of their momentum at home and climb the Sun Belt West standings.

The Red Wolves got off to a hot start early in the first half. A-State ended their first two possessions with two field goals with Clune Van Andel making 22 and 19-yard field goals.

Running back Zak Wallace had a monster game with 16 carries for 64 yards and three touchdowns, and his biggest touchdowns came in the red zone on A-state's next two possessions. The Red Wolves converted on a 39-yard field goal made by Van Andel on their final possession before half.

A-State built a 23-3 lead at the half, but Troy came roaring back in the second half. Troy scored 3 third quarter touchdowns to take a 24-23 lead before Van Andel kicked a 46-yard field goal to regain the lead for Arkansas State.

Troy responded immediately, scoring on a 10 play, 80 yard drive to take a 31-26 lead with 1:45 left in the game. Arkansas State marched 75 yards down the field, thanks in large part to clutch receptions from wide receivers Corey Rucker and Regan Ealy, before running back Zak Wallace scored a game-

winning 1 yard touchdown with 0:33 remaining. A late interception would clinch the win for the Red Wolves

"Every Thursday, we work our two minute drill. Every Thursday we execute it, and we believe in each other. And that's what I love about this team, and what I love about my teammates is that no one ever had any doubt," Wallace said. "Obviously, we need to quit putting ourselves in these situations. But you know, we never doubted each other, and we have trust in each other."

Quarterback Jalen Raynor threw 24/41 for 349 yards passing. Raynor also led the team in rushing yards, scrambling for 71 yards. Raynor also committed a turnover on what could have been a touchdown when he fumbled the ball out of the end zone. RB Ja'Quez Cross had 13 carries for 52 yards.

Wide receiver Corey Rucker led the team with 12 receptions and 193 yards. Rucker is currently ranked fourth in receiving yards in Red Wolves football history. Rucker needs just under 200 more yards to break the program's all-time career receiving yards record, which is currently held by former Red Wolves great and retired NFL running back J.D. McKissic, who just so happened to be in attendance for this game.

WR Adam Jones had 2 receptions for 53 yards, including a spectacular

reception for 46 yards to help set up a touchdown drive.

The defense was able to come up with big plays and force Troy to turn the ball over 4 times. Safety Justin Parks, as usual, led the team in tackles with 10. Linebacker Marvin Ham had 9 tackles and S Trevian Thomas was able to contribute, having 9 tackles, a pass deflection and a huge interception to seal the win. S Websley Etienne had 7 tackles and a huge second-half interception. Senior Cornerback Jordan Mahoney also had a big first half interception.

"For us to get these turnovers, man, is impressive. Man, we put so much work into the first period of practice, so the fruits of our labors are starting to pay off. So, I appreciate Coach Harley for that, you know, and Coach Jones as well", said Parks.

Arkansas State is now tied for second place with a 3-1 record in conference and are one win away from being bowl eligible. The Red Wolves have now won 6 consecutive home games and this season is the first time since 2017 that A-State had at least three conference victories in their first four conference games.

This also marks the 100th win for Arkansas State Head Coach Butch Jones, who is now one of just 17 active FBS coaches with 100 career victories.

"I don't want to diminish the 100 wins, because there's a lot of people that have had a big part of that. It's not about me, it's



Photo by Abigail Leggett | Staff Photographer

**RB Zak Wallace carries the ball for the Red Wolves. Wallace scored 3 touchdowns in the game against Troy.**

more about the journey. And I've been very blessed and fortunate to have coached a lot of great players that have contributed to that, and a lot of great coaches, and so this isn't really about me. I think it's about the journey, whether it's been Central Michigan, whether it's been Cincinnati, Tennessee, or here at Arkansas State", Jones said.

Jones expressed excitement about the team's momentum and the importance of capitalizing on it during the bye week. Jones said it is important for his team to rest up, and begin preparing

for their next opponent.

The Red Wolves next game is Saturday Nov. 9 at Louisiana where they will take on the Ragin' Cajuns in a critical conference game. The Red Wolves record is currently 5-3, and they are in second place in the Sun Belt West. Should the Red Wolves win against the Cajuns, Arkansas State will move into first place, but will have to win out and hope Texas State loses another conference game so they can play in the conference championship.

As for Troy, the Trojans now

drop to 1-7 on the season, with the team's only win coming against FCS opponent Florida A&M. With the loss, the Trojans are officially eliminated from bowl contention, a fact that they were visibly upset by at the conclusion of the game.

"I'll always remember this win," Jones said. "By the way we won, and I think the joy in our players' faces after the game and in the locker room, but I'm more excited right now about number five."

## Red Wolves Basketball survives exhibition upset vs Trevecca Nazarene, 78-70

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Arkansas State men's basketball played Division II Trevecca Nazarene at home for their annual exhibition game. For Arkansas State, this exhibition game gives players an opportunity to warm up for the season and start to build fan interest.

A-State Head Coach Bryan Hodgson and his team looked to build continuity and momentum for the upcoming season.

Guard Derrian Ford led the way with 21 points on 9-14 shooting in 33 minutes.

Guard Taryn Todd added 17 points, 7 rebounds and 5 assists on the day, while forward Kobe Julien tacked on 13 points.

The Red Wolves shot only 41% from the field and 84% from the foul line.

The Red Wolves struggled in the first half just to find a rhythm offensively. "It was not a great effort," Hodgson said. "We did not play well on either side of the ball."

Trevecca Nazarene got off to a fast start in the first half leading by as much as 14. The Red Wolves shot 31 percent (2-15) from three in the first half. Forward Kobe Julien led the Red Wolves on a 9-0 run to cut the deficit to 5 with 6:07 left in the half. Trevecca Nazarene



Photo by Ibuki Hinohara | Staff Photographer

**Forward Kobe Julien drives towards the basket.**

forced A-State into multiple turnovers and were able to find plenty of success offensively.

With two minutes left in the half, guard Derrian Ford made a huge bucket to cap off a 10-0 run by the Scarlet and black tying the game at 30. The Trojans fought back with a 7-0 run to take a 37-30 lead into the half.

"We are still not even close to our standard. I had made a decision coming into the game that I was going to give everybody available a shot," Hodgson said. "That was advantageous to us at times but I was willing to die

on that hill to see some guys out there in live action and you saw it, it didn't go great."

The Red Wolves cut into the seven-point deficit in the second half, but The Trojans pushed their lead back to 6 with 15 minutes left in the game. The Red Wolves fought back with another 7-0 run to take a 49-48 lead; they never looked back and kept the lead for the remainder of the game.

A-State was able to force 22 turnovers including 12 steals.

"We knew that Trevecca was going to be a good exhibition for us. If you check into our

schedule you see we don't do anything for an easy win. What they do offensively is extremely challenging. Planning for them offensively, just schematically, would be one of the hardest scouts in the Sun Belt," Hodgson said.

Trevecca won the rebound battle 36-33. They were able to create a lot of A-state turnovers, and they found a lot of success offensively.

Second chance points were huge for the Trojans.

The Red Wolves played without starting center Izaiyah Nelson, who is recovering from a foot injury.

Freshman forward Josh Hill was his replacement, but he struggled to rebound and find his rhythm on offense.

The Red Wolves were also without Terrance Ford due to injury, and Rashad Marshall, who Hodgson said was out for "family reasons."

"We weren't playing to our standards in transition, we weren't playing to our standards in the half court. We had seven assists in the game, which is horrific. We got out-rebounded which was a major issue. So we have got a ton of stuff to clean up before we host Akron," Hodgson said.

The Red Wolves will host their first game at home Nov. 4 vs Akron.

## Upcoming Events:

### Friday, Nov. 1

- Women's Bowling vs TRACK Kat Klash, Houston, Texas
- Tennis at Liberty Hidden Dual, Lynchburg, Virginia
- Cross Country at Sun Belt Conference Championships, Foley, Alabama 8:30-9:15 a.m.
- Volleyball at Louisiana, Lafayette, Louisiana, 6:00 p.m., ESPN+

### Saturday, Nov. 2

- Volleyball at Louisiana, Lafayette, Louisiana, 1:00 p.m., ESPN+
- Tennis at Liberty Hidden Dual, Lynchburg, Virginia
- Bowling vs TRACK Kat Klash, Houston, Texas

### Sunday, Nov. 3

- Bowling vs TRACK Kat Klash, Houston, Texas
- Tennis at Liberty Hidden Dual, Lynchburg, Virginia

### Monday, Nov. 4

- Women's Basketball at Western Michigan, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 6:00 p.m.
- Men's Basketball vs Akron MAC/SBC Challenge, Jonesboro, Arkansas, 7:00 p.m., ESPN+, 107.9 KFIN