

Heartbreak on the hardwood



Photo by Sooyeong Choi | Photo Editor

Guard Chandler Jackson throws a pass to make the play. Jackson finished the game against South Alabama with 13 points and 7 assists.

ALLIE CARSON

NEWS EDITOR

With a 99% win percentage and six minutes to play, Arkansas State lost their second game against South Alabama to go 7-7 in Sun Belt play. Despite the end result, the game started hopeful as the Red Wolves scored first with guard Christian Harmon who drilled in his first of many threes of the game. The Red Wolves would miss all of their shots until the first media timeout where they came out with an immediate three by Harmon followed by a contested layup by forward Aly Tounkara. This started the momentum shift in favor of A-State. This shift caused the Red Wolves to fill up the red balloon, just in time for Valentine's Day. A-State primarily shot threes during the first half, making 11 of their 22, Harmon with six of those, including three in a row for A-State points.

While A-State filled the 3-point balloon with 16 made threes, the team shot a total of 41, resulting in a 39% success rate. During the first half, Harmon scored 20 points in A-State's 41-32 lead. A-State continued to lead during the second half, going up as much as 18 points with six and a half minutes of regulation. However, costly turnovers and fouls slowly turned the tide in favor of the Jaguars. Soon, the visiting team was within two points with only three minutes to play. While both teams were going to the line to shoot a free-throw, A-State's make percentage wasn't nearly as good as South Alabama's, a 67% make rate versus the Jaguars' 70% rate. Even though both made the same amount, 20, the Red Wolves shot 10 more, costing them a lead and a point differential. With six seconds left in regulation, a missed free-throw by guard Matt Hayman would put A-State up four points

and the ball in the hands of South Alabama's best shooter. Jaguars guard Chaze Harris, who scored 30 points this game and 38 points in the last outing against the Red Wolves, rebounded the ball and made a 27 foot on the move three, his third three of the season, with Hayman on his heels. Hayman's presence was enough for the referees to call a foul on him, however, and Harris was able to make it a tied ballgame and push the game into overtime. In their second match up of the season, South Alabama, once again, pushed A-State into overtime. The only points the Red Wolves scored in overtime consisted of two made free throws, one from guard Chandler Jackson and one from Tounkara, and a three from none other than Harmon, giving him 33 points on the game, tying the Red Wolves' season high with Jackson from Missouri State. Unfortunately, five points

Sputtering Red Wolves fall to Rebels

ERIC FLUKE

SPORTS EDITOR

After a promising start to a contest between an SEC giant, the Red Wolves sputtered out in a 7-6 loss to the Ole Miss Rebels. In a pattern similar to the three-game series against Stony Brook this weekend, A-State came onto the field Tuesday with the hot hand, but found its offense stalling in the middle of the game. Being up first at bat in the first inning, A-State found itself in a hole after two strikeouts from Ole Miss pitcher Owen Kelly. After outfielder Ashton Quiller and infielder Lane Walton failed to get a hit at the plate, infielder Patrick Engskov, who ended the game with two hits and a run, bunted a pitch to make the first move on offense. Engskov decided to make a gutsy move while outfielder Jalen Foxx made his return to the mound following an injury Friday and stole two bases on his way to third. It would all be in vain, however, after Foxx gave up the third strikeout of the inning, stranding Engskov.



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

Catcher Kaden Amundson runs around the bases. He recorded one run and one hit during the game at Ole Miss.

Engskov and infielder Derek Martinez felt the brunt of the stagnant offense this game, ending up left on base a team high of three times. Meanwhile, pitcher Collin Maloney made the most of his first start this season, pitching two strikeouts but also allowing

a walk. Over in the outfield was a different story. A fielding error allowed Ole Miss to put the first run of the night on the scoreboard, but the infield picked up the slack to send the A-State batters back out on the field for the second inning with a ground out.

during the five minutes of overtime wasn't enough to beat the Jaguars as the Red Wolves fell 92-88. This score reflects the same deficit from their previous meetup in January where A-State fell 91-87 in an eerily similar fashion. "I think our mental focus was on the way that regulation finished, which impacted the way that we played. We weren't playing to win in overtime, and that's something we have to be able to do," Pannone said. Statistically, many of the Red Wolves put up good numbers and broke their career bests. Jalen Hampton was one of those players, recording a career-best 16 rebound game with Tounkara who was right behind with 15. The two grabbed 31 of the total 54 rebounds during the game, marking one of the high points of the team's play. It was primarily turnovers and shooting percentage that aided in a loss, recording 18 turnovers which resulted in 23 points for the Jaguars. Head Coach Ryan Pannone said with close loss games, composure is something they need to work on in order to win games. "Just handling the moment, understanding that mistakes are going to come and that you can't allow one to become another," Pannone said. "Somebody makes a bad decision, and they compound that instead of having the ability to recognize the mistake that they made and be able to learn from it and handle it with composure and move on and not let one mistake become two." A-State goes on the road to play the Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns, who are 9th in the Sun Belt, at 7 p.m. on Thursday.

The second inning shot a spark of life into the A-State offense early. While only being the cause of one run this inning, multiple errors from the Ole Miss defense allowed a few runners to get in position to score at the bases. To get the first run of the night for A-State this inning, outfielder Evan Griffis was able to make his way home for the first run of the night for A-State off his own single and stolen base, along with the help of a single from infielder Cougar Cooke and a fly out from designated hitter Aiden Houseworth. Quiller made up for his strikeout in the first inning by hitting a single that sent Walton to home plate, giving the outfielder his fourth RBI of the season. To cap off the three-run possession, catcher Kaden Amundson made his way home after a fielding error allowed him to run for the hills.

Read the full article at astatetheherald.com/!

SNAPSHOTS

What else is happening in the world of A-State Athletics?



Photo by Shay Sayeed | Opinion Editor

The seventh ranked A-State Rugby club clashes with third ranked Lindenwood during their game February 14. The Red Wolves dropped the match against one of the top ranked teams in college rugby 45-25.



Photo by Sooyeong Choi | Photo Editor

Outfielder Ashton Quiller dances after making it safely to the base. A-State baseball swept the Stony Brook Seawolves in their opening series this past weekend, starting the season out at a promising 3-0.



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

Distance runner Kamil Przybyla participates in a relay at the Fairgrounds Invitational track and field competition in Indianapolis, IN. He won the 800m event with a time of 1:49.34, marking his personal best in the race.

Sports

The NCAA is a broken mess

ERIC FLUKE

SPORTS EDITOR

Compared to the NBA, college basketball feels like a breath of fresh air. Teams are kept together for years and build a strong bond with each other, while student athletes pursue their education.

However, the joke of an organization that is the NCAA has decided they have more authority over the power of friendship with one simple possession: cold, hard cash.

As a disclaimer, I fully believe college players should be paid for the level of basketball they compete at. What I don't believe in is whatever the NCAA has decided is "best" for the league.

The Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) deals are a great way for players to be compensated for their talent. However, the college overlords have essentially turned a developmental period in a player's life and career into a way to pump out more money for themselves while disrupting education.

Scholarships have been used as bargaining chips to lure players to a school, but the incentive behind NIL deals ends up changing priorities for athletes when planning their future.

Choosing a college should be based on which program seems the most suitable for a player's



PHOTO COURTESY OF IMAGN IMAGES

Center Charles Bediako is a former G-League player who is attempting a return to collegiate play after three seasons in a professional league.

growth and can help further their career whether it ends up being in basketball or a different field. It should not depend on how much money you can squeeze out of a desperate athletic director's team.

After rolling back a rule that pushed players from attempting to transfer, the NCAA has given free rein to students to continuously move between whatever college is

willing to offer them the most amount of money. While this is extremely similar to how the NBA works in its player deals, I believe that this soils what made college basketball so special.

A player's time in college is vital. It acts as a time of development for them to form the mindset of a professional and work on honing their talent.

Watching a scrawny 1-star recruit sprout into a top 10

pick in the NBA draft is one of the most satisfying experiences in the sport. This is the sort of magic that the NCAA is trying to take away.

When I watch my favorite college team, I want to see these players develop with each other and work together to not only win it all in the tournament, but also make it to the NBA and share their bonds. The NCAA is attempting to ruin this through

its blatant mishandling of player compensation and transfer rules.

Beyond that, the development of players is in even more immediate danger from the NCAA's complete incompetence in regulating pro athletes trying to return to college after declaring for the draft early.

I don't even have to argue my case when it is aired out by legendary coaches who see how this is ruining the collegiate scene.

Arkansas Razorback Head Coach John Calipari ranted in a post-game press conference in December 2025 about the consequences of the NCAA's lack of rules pertaining to these "G-League Dropouts".

"Who other than dumb people like me are going to recruit high school kids? I get so much satisfaction out of coaching young kids and seeing them grow and make it and their family and life changes that I'm going to keep doing it," Calipari said. "But why would anybody else, if you can get NBA players, G League players, guys that are 28 years old, guys from Europe?"

While Calipari and other coaches continue to make their stance on this issue known, others such as Alabama coach Nate Oats deepen the issue even if it is considered to be legal in the NCAA's rulebook.

It is completely

understandable that sometimes in order to win, you need to bend the rules a bit, but this is not one of those cases. In allowing former G-League player Charles Bediako to join his team, Oats has opened the flood gates to allow more professional players to take away roster spots from high school prospects.

He set a precedent that this should be normal in the league, even if his words say otherwise. The league may have gotten itself a win in its battle against itself when Bediako was denied eligibility after playing under a temporary restraining order, but there is still a long way to go.

This situation has shown how the NCAA has dug itself a massive hole that it needs to dig itself out of. In its rush to compensate players while trying to add more entertainment value to the league, they ended up creating a watered-down version of the NBA that doesn't emphasize the value of development.

It won't end until this dysfunctional administration can find a way to undo its own stupidity while keeping the integrity of its league together and rightfully paying its players in a way that does not compromise what makes college basketball so special in the first place.

Way too early, totally unbiased, Super Bowl LXI predictions

ERIC FLUKE

SPORTS EDITOR

This may be biased as a Colts fan, but I believe that this team has the blueprint for success if Daniel Jones comes back with the same level of play as last season. When he's on the field, it opens up the field for Jonathan Taylor to completely dominate the run game. With Alec Pierce roaming downfield along with Josh Downs, the offense will be on point. The defense may be shaky, but I believe that Lou Anarumo will fix this defense this offseason and have the tools to adjust to any offense that opposing teams will throw at them. He's got Sauce Gardner for coverage and a defensive line anchored by DeForest Buckner. On the other side, the Bears' jump from Cancun last season to the second round of the playoffs this year definitely doesn't feel like a lucky shot. Caleb Williams is developing into an elite quarterback and I fully expect that offense to improve this offseason into one of the best in the NFL.

Prediction: Colts vs. Bears



ALLIE CARSON

NEWS EDITOR

Although the NFL season just ended, the Denver Broncos will be playing the Los Angeles Rams in Super Bowl LXI at the Ram's home stadium. However, it will be the Broncos who take home the Lombardi trophy, led by a healthy Bo Nix. The Broncos ended the 2025-2026 regular season as the number one seed because, unlike the New England Patriots, they can actually beat the Las Vegas Raiders and the only reason the Broncos' season ended before the Super Bowl is because Nix got hurt against the Bills and Jarrett Stidham had a pitiful game against the Patriots in the conference championship. However, once this upcoming season starts, Nix will be good as new, the Broncos will have new coordinators, including a promoted Davis Webb at offensive coordinator and old Arkansas State offensive analyst Logan Kilgore, previous Broncos offensive quality control coach, inherited Webb's QB coach job. Under Webb, Nix became the only quarterback in NFL history to throw for 7,500 yards and 50 touchdowns while winning at least 20 games in his first two seasons. Injuries were what screwed over the Broncos this season, most, if not all, of their best players got hurt at some point during the season, including a top 5 running back in JK Dobbins.

A healthy Broncos team definitely would've gone 14-2 this past season, beaten the Patriots and maybe have beaten the Seahawks in the Super Bowl. So, yeah, there's nothing and nobody stopping the Broncos from going 14-3 or even 15-2 and winning the Super Bowl except if all of their players get hurt... again.

Prediction: Broncos vs. Rams

