

# A-State tops Cajuns in season finale



Photo by Sooyeong Choi | Photo Editor

Forward Joey Chamma protects the perimeter against the Cajun offense. Chamma had 2 points and 10 rebounds in Friday's win against Louisiana.

EVIE ELLIS

STAFF WRITER

In front of a packed house on Senior Night, the Arkansas State Red Wolves crushed the Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns 81-58, ending the regular season with a statement win.

The Red Wolves did not disappoint in their second match-up against the Cajuns this season.

The team showed control across the floor, with big contributions from the

entire roster, outscoring the Cajuns' reserves 34-23.

Kicking off the half, both teams opened with strong energy, with the Red Wolves winning the tip. Red Wolves guard Chandler Jackson, however, immediately turned the ball over, giving the Cajuns their first possession.

The Cajuns quickly moved the ball up the court, looking to set up the team's first play, but the Red Wolves pressured the entry pass into the paint, forcing the Cajuns to pull

further away from the basket.

From the right side of the floor, Cajuns Forward Darius Woodson attempted a three-pointer but missed. The Red Wolves secured the defensive rebound, pushing the ball into a fast break.

The play ended in the hands of guard Matt Hayman, who knocked down the first basket of the night from the perimeter.

Despite Hayman's early success, going 3-for-5 in the first half from three-point range, both teams struggled

from beyond the arc overall. The Red Wolves connected on only 11 of 32 attempts, and the Cajuns managed just six of 22, forcing both teams to rely on their taller players to make points near the basket.

Red Wolves guard Joey Chamma saw only half of his typical playing time. At 5-foot-11, he struggled to get clean looks inside against taller defenders, missing every shot attempt made outside of free throws. With the bigger players taking over near the basket, Chamma's usual scoring opportunities were limited, reducing his impact on the floor.

Later in the half, a feed between two Red Wolves players threaded through the Cajuns' defense, setting up the Red Wolves' Forward Jackson Ellingsworth to finish at the rim. These kinds of passes appeared repeatedly throughout the Red Wolves' play and highlighted how the team's ball movement forced the Cajuns to rotate defensively and led to open looks at the basket.

Head coach Ryan Pannone said unselfish ball movement boosts player morale.

"I think ball movement, passing, creates joy for everyone because it makes everyone feel a part," Pannone said. "When

we do it, we are really good."

The Red Wolves' unity as a team helped them close the half 37-22. Returning from the locker room, the Cajuns seemed to have picked up where they left off, yet the Red Wolves came in on overdrive.

Almost as soon as the teams hit the court, five different Red Wolves players contributed to back-to-back early scoring.

The energy in the arena only intensified when, following a defensive rebound, Hayman powered through the Cajuns' defense for a slam dunk.

Hayman's last in-game dunk came two months ago against Texas State, showing just how long it had been since fans had seen him rise above the rim.

"I used to dunk all the time, but I got old," Hayman said.

Guard T.J. Caldwell led the team in scoring with 19 points, fueled by rebound support from the Red Wolves. Three players finished the game with double-digit rebounds, which showed that where the Red Wolves struggled beyond the arc, they made up for it with strong rebounding.

Not only did the Red Wolves excel at defensive rebounding, but they also defended effectively without fouling.

Pannone also said the team

defended the rim well in the team's previous match-up against the Cajuns, committing only two fouls at the rim in that game and three in Friday's win.

Caldwell continued to be a force in the paint, and players like guard Royal Blue Smith also made late contributions, finishing with two assists despite just 11 minutes of playtime.

Momentum from the Red Wolves carried into the final moments, bringing them to their 81-58 victory. This outstanding performance by the Red Wolves not only ended Senior Night on a high note but also marks the program's 20th win of the season.

Ryan Pannone said that this achievement highlights the staff and players on the team.

"Our staff has done a really good job of recruiting good talent and helping coach them up," Pannone said. "Our players have done a really good job of being 15 individuals who have found a way to come together and win games."

The Red Wolves will take this win into the Sun Belt Conference championship, carrying this selflessness and joy as they look to make a strong postseason run with their first tournament game on Thursday.

## Red Wolves cruise to a 87-53 Senior Night win

BENJAMIN MCDOWELL

STAFF WRITER

The Arkansas State Lady Wolves took on the Texas State Lady Bobcats in their final home game of the regular season.

The Red Wolves had an emotional day, as it was Senior Night, celebrating the success of seniors D'Arrah Allen, Crislyn Rose, Wynter Rodgers, Mia Tarver, Payton Fields, Marlie Dickerson, Mimi McColister, Bella Weary, and Zyion Shannon.

The Lady Wolves got off to a fast start, putting up 26 points to Texas State's nine in the first quarter. The key difference in the two teams' play was forcing steals. The Red Wolves are ranked eighth in the nation in steals, averaging 15.3 per game. The team is second in the nation in forced turnovers, averaging 28.08 per game. The Red Wolves had 10 steals in the first quarter and a total of 14 for the game.

The Lady Wolves shot 8-of-18 from the field and 6-of-12 from 3-point range in the first quarter. Offensively, they were in sync, and their defense turned into easy transition layups.

In the second quarter, the Red Wolves continued their dominance, outscoring the Bobcats 22-14 while shooting 8-of-17 from the field and 44% from 3-point range. They also were a perfect 2-of-2 from the free-throw line.

Texas State ended the half missing six of its final seven field goals while A-State continued to add to its lead. Guard Mia

Tarver led the way at halftime with 15 points, shooting 5-of-7 from the field, along with three rebounds and three assists.

Guard D'Arrah Allen chipped in with seven points, going 1-of-4 from the field and 4-of-4 from the free throw line.

Guard Amyria Walker led the Bobcats with six points, shooting 1-of-4 from the field, 1-of-2 from 3-point range, and 3-of-4 from the free throw line.

It was the Lady Wolves' third quarter that ultimately allowed them to pull away from Texas State. A-State went on a 14-2 run over six minutes and 22 seconds while forcing the Lady Bobcats into four turnovers and four missed shots during the run. The Red Wolves outscored the Bobcats 24-8 in the third quarter.

The Red Wolves used their dominant third quarter to add to their lead and finish the game strong, outscoring the Bobcats 22-15 in the fourth. The Lady Wolves finished with 36 points off Texas State's 26 turnovers and added 41 bench points, showcasing their depth.

The Red Wolves also had 34 points in the paint compared to Texas State's 26, and 14 fast-break points to the Bobcats' 11. Tarver led the Wolves in scoring with 15 points, shooting 5-of-8 from the field and 5-of-8 from 3-point range. She also added five rebounds, one steal and two assists, finishing with a plus-25 on the court.

Allen continued to contribute to the lead with 13 points, five rebounds, two assists and a steal, finishing

with a plus-2 on the court.

After the game, Head Coach Destinee Rogers said she was pleased with her team's dominant Senior Night victory.

"I thought we built great momentum going into the tournament, and it is nice to see us shoot the ball the way we shot it," Rogers said. "Twenty-four assists. We scored 36 points off their turnovers. We got 21 offensive rebounds. I thought we did everything that it takes to win the way we want to win."

Beyond being happy about the win, Rogers said she was satisfied with the send-off for the seniors at their last game in First National Bank Arena.

"I thought the way that we played, we were able to celebrate our seniors the right way. So super happy that we got the win," she said. "These seniors mean the world to me. So happy to send them out the right way on the home floor. But now we know that the job is not done, and we got a job to do, and we know that we're capable of doing it."

Rogers said her team played exactly how she wanted, with freedom, fearlessness and confidence. She said she knows her team is the underdog in the upcoming SBC tournament and that she is excited to be in that position again.

"We played three games in three days," Rogers said. "We've had way harder practices in three days than the games are gonna feel like to them. So we just got to get them ready. We want to be confident. We want them to go in and fight and also



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

Guard Zyion Shannon brushes past Texas State defenders for a lay-in. Shannon scored 7 points and added 4 steals on defense.

believe that you can win it."

Leading scorer Mia Tarver said she is always prepared to score.

"I would just say I have to stay ready to shoot," Tarver said. "I feel like the flow of the game we play at a fast pace, so I can't never not be ready to shoot."

Forward Wynter Rogers said her relationship with Rogers, her sister and coach, has grown over the last few years and that it means the world to her to have played for her at A-State.

"I texted her the other day, I was like, just thanking her," Rogers said. "Like, these were, like, some of the three

best years of my life. Just like playing for her and just being her at A-State. So, you know, all thanks to her, all thanks to the other people, all the people around me. You know, all y'all. I'm just very thankful to be able to play for her."

Rogers said the experience has been special for her as well.

"I didn't get to spend a lot of time with Wynter when she was growing up," Rogers said. "So to get these three years where we see each other every day, if she needs something, she calls me, just the relationship that we've built here in three years is something that I think

has made us closer than ever."

While the night called for celebration, Rogers said she still wanted to hold off getting too caught up in the joy.

"I love all these seniors to death," she said. "But I think the thing for me was I was trying not to be too emotional, because I know there's more in the tank, and the emotions that I want to show with this group is to win another championship."

Coach Rogers and her team will begin their chase for back-to-back SBC titles Saturday as they await the winner of game six in the Sun Belt Conference tournament.

## Snapshots

More of the happenings in the world of sports at A-State!



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

Infielder Derek Martinez prepares his batting stance against the University of Arkansas - Pine Bluff Lions. A-State completed a series sweep against UAPB this past weekend, dominating the Lions in total runs through three matches 38-5.



Photo by Shay Sayeed | Opinion Editor

The seventh nationally ranked A-State rugby team battled against seventeenth ranked Davenport University and came out on top in a 46-24 win this past Saturday. In a near one-to-one copy of their game against DU on Halloween 2025, A-State dominated the visitors.



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

Women's tennis team member Meghna Arun Kumar rallies the ball between her opponent in a singles match against the University of Tulsa. Kumar won her match 7-5 and 6-2, but ultimately was unable to help the team win the day as A-State fell to Tulsa 4-3.

## Tanking hides a bigger issue in the NBA

ERIC FLUKE

SPORTS EDITOR

The 2026 NBA draft is set to be stacked with potential stars, such as AJ Dybantsa, Darryn Peterson, Cameron Boozer and Arkansas' own Darius Acuff Jr. lining the top prospects this year. With this amount of talent, teams are doing whatever it takes to get a chance to add them to their roster.

Including, unfortunately, purposefully losing games to boost draft odds.

Also known as tanking, this tactic has gained much more traction during the 2025-26 NBA season due to the sheer amount of talent in the draft. From resting healthy players to minute restrictions on players even when they do suit up, fans across the league who pay hard-earned money to watch their favorite players are infuriated at what has been deemed an unethical way to gain success in the NBA.

During a press conference preceding this year's NBA All-Star game, league commissioner Adam Silver announced his campaign to fight against tanking, creating rules for



PHOTO COURTESY OF AP PHOTO

NBA commissioner Adam Silver speaks at a press conference during the 2026 All-Star Weekend. Silver has been extremely adamant about eliminating tanking through any means necessary.

next season that outline ways intended to prevent intentional losing. In terms of pushing back against it this season, he's already dealt out fines towards the Utah Jazz and Indiana Pacers for resting players the league deemed healthy for play.

However, this is fighting a scapegoat that is more complicated than what is being targeted. While intentionally losing cheapens the entertainment that fans

pay a pretty penny for, there is an issue behind the tactic that has more of an impact on the league: the 82-game, nine-month NBA season.

With so many games and a season that spans almost three quarters of the calendar year, the league effectively lessens the competitive value of each contest. Losing two games in an NBA season is not a big deal compared to the NFL's shorter season, where two

games can spell a team's doom when it comes to making the playoffs. There isn't as much pressure to win during the regular season when there are 82 opportunities to climb the conference standings.

Shortening the season would give more incentive for teams to go out and try to win as there is more importance placed on each individual game.

Read the full article at [astatetheherald.com](http://astatetheherald.com)!

## Eric Fluke's SBC B-Ball Tournament Predictions



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF THE SUN BELT CONFERENCE

Sports Editor Eric Fluke's predictions for the women's Sun Belt Conference championships. The Red Wolves will play their first game during the quarterfinals of the tournament at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday. Tune into ESPN+ to cheer on the Red Wolves!



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF THE SUN BELT CONFERENCE

Sports editor Eric Fluke's predictions for the men's Sun Belt Conference championships. A-State will play their first game at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday.