

## A-State bowling: behind the pins



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

The bowling team poses with their semi-finalist trophy from the NCAA championship last week. The Red Wolves faced off against No. 2 Vanderbilt and No. 5 Wichita State in their championship run, ultimately falling to both.

EVIE ELLIS

STAFF WRITER

For the seventh time in program history, the Arkansas State Red Wolves bowling team rolled into the final four. The team's impressive season run ultimately came to a close in back-to-back 2-0 losses against Wichita State

and Vanderbilt University. With Arkansas State hosting 16 NCAA Division I varsity teams, the bowling program has continuously stood out as one of the university's most consistent contenders to appear on the national stage. But behind the wins are the athletes who make it all possible.

Victoria Fleming, a first-year graphic design major with a

minor in business from Pinellas Park, Florida, found her passion early in life in her own way.

"I've been bowling since I was 8 years old. A lot of people fall under; their parents bowled, but I went to a friend's birthday party, and I thought, 'I like this,'" Fleming said.

From there, Fleming would go on to bowl in competitions across the United States,

eventually leading her to one of the top bowling programs in the nation: Arkansas State. To compete at the level of athletes like Fleming, it takes more than just physical skill; it requires mental visualization beyond the lanes.

"We do a lot of mental work too," Fleming said. "You don't want to have that state of mind where it's like, 'hopefully we

make it.' You're preparing now because you're going to make it."

Alex-Anne Auclair, a sophomore majoring in exercise science from Laval, Quebec, Canada, said she took a different path in her introduction to bowling.

"I'm the fourth generation," Auclair said. "Someone told my dad to put us in a youth league, and that's pretty much how it started."

Auclair's success quickly followed, becoming a national champion multiple times before making the next big move in her career.

"The next step was really just going to college because I felt like I had done what I could back home," Auclair said.

Though the two athletes found different paths into bowling, both experienced the same community at Arkansas State.

"When I came here, I was kind of more of a shy person, but the bowling team really brought out the extrovert in me. They've become like a family," Fleming said.

The team's bond shows up in their small moments between matches, Fleming said that before tournaments, the team will get together and play games like Rummy. Players can talk and

compete, allowing teammates to get more comfortable with each other's personalities, which carries over into competition.

"Our team is very 'ride or die,' on and off the lane," Auclair said. "When the energy is there, we say 'the pins know it,'" Auclair said.

This energy carried the team through their Final Four run, even in their tensest moments. An individual bowler from Wichita had rolled an almost perfect game, leading up to the match-up against Arkansas State, making it almost impossible for the team to seal a victory.

"There was a point where we knew we weren't going to come back," Fleming said. "But you still need to act like the fight is still on, so when you leave, you can say you fought as hard as you could."

The team's success this season shows how teammates who support one another like family can come together to win games through a shared mindset. With these strong bonds, the team hopes they can come back together to reach the Final Four again next year.

"We were still fighting. Even though the pins didn't go our way, we didn't give up," Auclair said.

## Baseball falls to No. 7 Chanticleers in weekend series

ERIC FLUKE

SPORTS EDITOR

In their second-ranked series match-up in conference play, Arkansas State baseball fell to No. 7 Coastal Carolina Chanticleers 2-1, narrowly avoiding the sweep.

In Friday's series opener, the Red Wolves grabbed a 4-0 advantage by the bottom of the fourth inning. The first inning saw an immediate spark on offense, where shortstop Patrick Engskov and first baseman Cason Campbell hit an RBI double each, followed by a two RBI homer from catcher Kaden Amundson in the fourth.

In his second start this season, pitcher Andrew Allen kept the Chanticleers at bay through 4.2 IP, not allowing a single hit with two strikeouts while giving up only one earned run. However, his four walks tied a season high for the Red Wolves and ultimately led to his benching in the fifth inning after giving up two in the period alone.

That was where the troubles began for A-State.

Immediately following the substitution, CCU scored their first run of the game off a failed stolen base. The Red Wolves found themselves in a rut at-bat until the eighth inning, while the Chanticleers cut the lead to a single run with a solo dinger and sacrifice bunt RBI in the seventh.

After plateauing for three straight innings, A-State tried to put the game on ice with two home runs totaling three

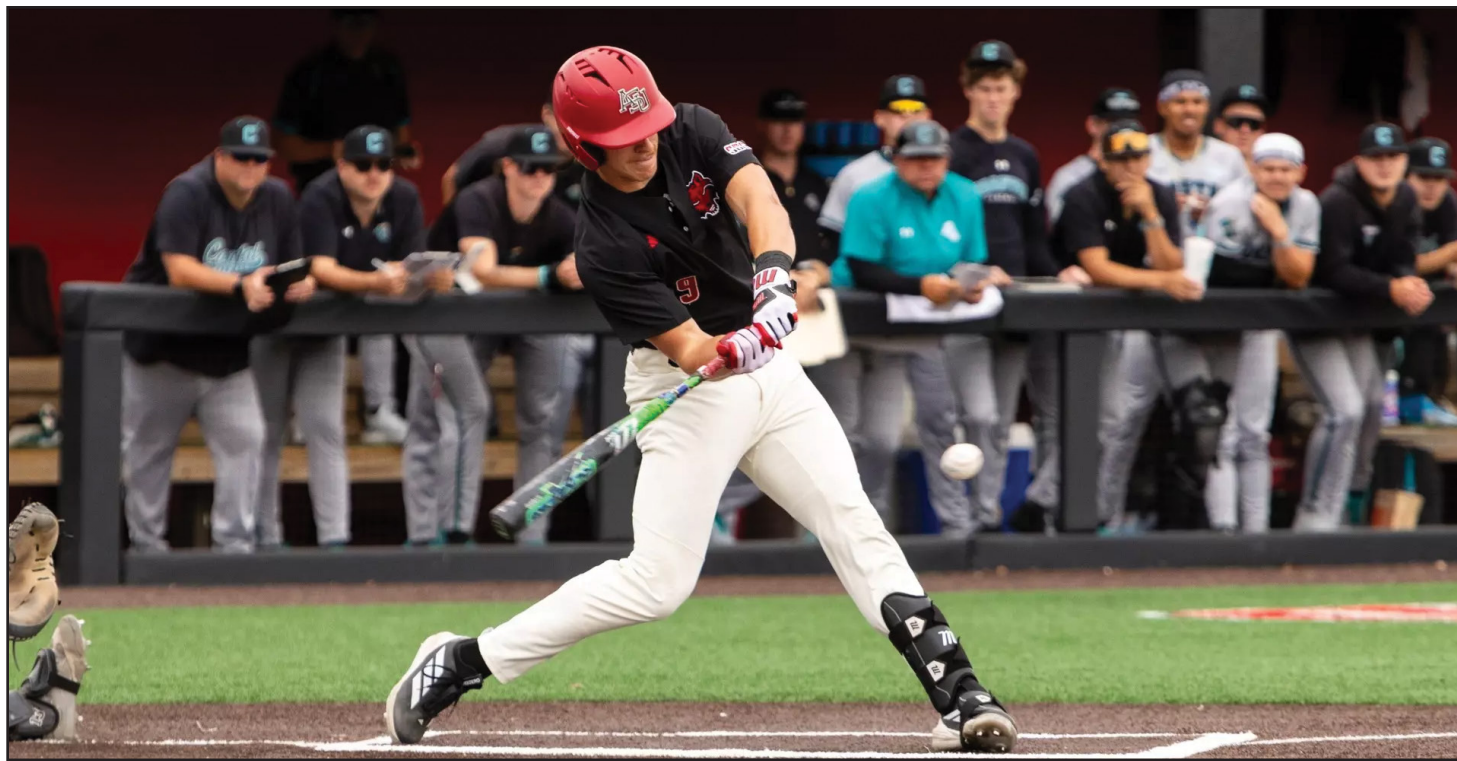


PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

Left fielder Cross Jumper swings for the fences while at-bat. In his single game appearance on Sunday, he made his mark at the plate with an RBI hit at two at-bats.

RBI from second baseman Lane Walton and designated hitter Derek Martinez.

While the Chanticleers cooled down with a single hit in the eighth, it would not take long before they grabbed their first lead of the game in a major way.

Only allowing three runs through the game up until the ninth, the Red Wolves' pitching completely fell apart in the final period, allowing a season high seven runs in the inning alone. The rotation of relief pitchers could not find leverage in the sea of CCU batters, giving up a combined seven earned runs on six hits.

Batting could not find

any success in the bottom of the ninth either, ending the game on a three-and-out dud. Despite leading eight out of the nine innings, A-State completely collapsed on all cylinders to finish out Friday, falling 10-7 to the Chanticleers.

CCU second baseman Blake Barthol led the game with three RBI, including a home run, while Walton charged the Red Wolves with two off his dinger in the eighth.

Continuing the series after a high-scoring opener, game two was a slow-paced stalemate between the two sides. Throughout the game, neither side scored more than once in

an inning, keeping the match close from beginning to end.

The first game of the weekend ended up being the only match in the series where both team hit home runs. All runs minus one from a sacrifice fly out came from singles and doubles on Saturday.

The top two RBI season leaders, Walton and right fielder Evan Griffis, along with Martinez, each scored one to make up the three recorded in this game. Meanwhile, Barthol carried the offense for the Chanticleers with three of his own.

The pitching from A-State improved from their collapse on Friday, with starting pitcher Jack

Nelson throwing eight strikeouts and only giving up three runs in 5.0 IP. CCU kept up the pace at the mound, with pitcher Norman Ross throwing six strikeouts while allowing three runs in the same time frame.

Tied at 3-3 in the final inning, the Chanticleers sealed their victory with an RBI single from third baseman Mitchell Walker. Once again, A-State went down in the bottom of the ninth with a three-and-out, unable to respond to a smaller deficit than Friday in the final moments of the 4-3 loss.

With the series already clinched for CCU, A-State took their last shot at a win

against one of the top teams in the country in game three and came out on top.

A scoreless beginning ended after two innings on Sunday, where the game was tied in the third at 1-1. The meat of the game's action came during the fifth inning, where both teams scored their last runs of the match and series.

After loading the bases, the Chanticleers sent two of their runners home off an RBI double from center fielder Dean Mihos, but their success was short-lived as two outs immediately followed the scores.

At the bottom of the inning, A-State set up a similar bases-loaded situation, but kept the momentum going for much longer, scoring on five of the next six at-bats once runners filled the field. Once a strikeout ended the hot streak for the Red Wolves, the final score of the match was set as both teams came up empty for the rest of the game.

This time around, A-State's relief pitching came in clutch to help close out the game with pitcher Brett Foss redeeming himself from Friday's ending. He helped shut out the Chanticleers' offense with three strikeouts and only one allowed hit in 2.1 IP.

After the tough loss against the highest-ranked Sun Belt Conference team, the Red Wolves look towards getting a win against the University of Louisiana-Monroe Warhawks in their next conference series match-up this weekend.

## SNAPSHOTS



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

The men's golf team poses with their trophies from their A-State Spring Invitational win at the RidgePointe Country Club in Jonesboro. Thomas Schmidt placed first while Jake Wallis and Cole Kirby tied for second in the individual rankings. The team will be competing in the Sun Belt Conference championship starting on April 27.



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

The women's tennis team poses around senior Sarah Millard as they celebrate her last regular season match of her collegiate career. The team won 4-1 against Texas State on Sunday to close out their regular season schedule. The Red Wolves will compete in the Sun Belt Conference championship starting on April 22.



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

Track and field member Colby Eddowes participates in the long jump at the Bryan Clay Multis meet on Thursday in Azusa, California. Eddowes and Kercher Herring competed in the men's decathlon for the first time this season at the competition. The Red Wolves will be hosting their own meet on campus on April 17.



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

Mary Beth Bailey runs the 3000m steeplechase at the Joe Walker Invitational. Bailey placed first in the event and ran a time of 11:26.87 while her teammates Gracie Jacobs and Kat Schaefer followed up with second and third place.

## Creating a super team out of 2026 NBA Draft prospects



PHOTO COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES

### Point Guard: Darius Acuff Jr.

Learning from one of the greatest mentors college basketball has to offer, it is no shock that Acuff is the one I would want to lead my team with the experience he has gained under John Calipari. His ability to pick up the load on scoring and create opportunities at the basket for his teammates shined through Arkansas' run through the NCAA tournament, making him my pick for the floor general.

### Shooting Guard: Cameron Carr

One of the worries in making this team was having too many players who need the ball to make plays. Cameron Carr is one who thrives with off-ball movement and shooting, making him perfect for working with rim attackers like Dybansta and Boozer. While those two generate focus in the paint, it will leave Carr with plenty of open shots from the arc. Meanwhile, his build will work nicely on defense, giving the team a disruptor on the wing.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRO FOOTBALL AND SPORTS NETWORK

### Small Forward: AJ Dybansta

This was the biggest no-brainer out of the five players I chose. The projected number one pick in the 2026 NBA Draft: he has the athleticism and shot-making skills to create a hellish nightmare for the opposing defense. Even if he's lacking the confidence or having an off night, Dybansta can still find a way to work the ball around to the open man. He is the center piece of the scoring for this team and with Acuff commanding ball movement, he'll have plenty more chances to pour in the points and lead the charge at the basket.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KSL SPORTS

### Power Forward: Cameron Boozer

One of the best rebounders in the country this season, Boozer will be the anchor in the paint for the team. With two great shooters from beyond the arc, an off night will be no problem if there is a big man in the paint who can easily maneuver his way to the glass to grab misses and get that extra possession on offense. Not only that, having an extra threat to the paint will wear down defenses and give more open shots to the wings.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FORBES

### Center: Yaxel Lendeborg

The Michigan star who played a major role in their national championship win in late March is the big man for my dream team. His defense is what makes him such a major part of this lineup, but there is more to his game than that. He can fit into the offense whatever way he is needed, which is key to being on a team with multiple dominant scorers. Whether it's creating opportunities for himself or others on offense or applying pressure on the defensive end, Lendeborg is a perfect fit in this team of studs.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOOPS HQ