

WEEK FOUR  
APPALACHIAN ST at NORTH CAROLINA

App State beats North Carolina 34-31 on blocked final FG

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. -- Darrynton Evans and these Appalachian State Mountaineers earned their very own Michigan moment -- complete with a game-ending blocked field goal.

Another thrilling victory over a behemoth of a program? Sure. But these Mountaineers don't count it as much of an upset. Evans rushed for three touchdowns, and Akeem Davis-Gaither blocked a 56-yard field goal attempt on the final play of their 34-31 victory over North Carolina on Saturday in the programs' first meeting in nearly 80 years.

"This wasn't an underdog story," first-year coach Eliah Drinkwitz said. "You're not playing a logo. You're playing a team."

Demetrius Taylor returned a fumble 20 yards for a key score, and Zac Thomas added 224 yards passing and another 57 on the ground to help the Mountaineers (3-0) beat a power-conference opponent for the first time since that unforgettable upset of No. 5 Michigan 12 years ago.

That one ended on a blocked field goal -- and so did this one, with Davis-Gaither getting his right hand on Noah Ruggles' final kick to keep this one from going to overtime.

"You just look back and see if it made the distance or not," Davis-Gaither said. "Then, the celebration was on."

Evans scored on runs of 5, 2 and 3 yards while Chandler Staton kicked early field goals of 31 and 43 yards for Appalachian State, off to its best start since the 2010 team won its first eight games. The Mountaineers were only 2 1/2-point underdogs in this one.

"It wasn't going to be an upset," Drinkwitz said. "We belonged on that football field today and we wanted to prove it."

Sam Howell threw three touchdown passes for the Tar Heels (2-2) -- who trailed entering the fourth quarter for the fourth straight game.

Howell's 2-yard touchdown run with 3:01 left pulled them within three points. North Carolina then took over at its 20 with 30 seconds left after forcing a punt, and Howell hit Dazz Newsome twice to set up Ruggles' long field goal.

Howell finished 27 of 41 for 323 yards with touchdowns of 21 yards to Newsome on the first play from scrimmage, 11 yards to Michael Carter and 12 yards to Carl Tucker. The freshman also had three turnovers -- his first two interceptions and a fumble -- that led to 14 points for App State.

THE TAKEAWAY

Appalachian State: The Mountaineers made their name in Ann Arbor, but they had lost their last 11 against the big-name schools on the schedule -- falling tantalizingly short in each of the last three years. They lost in overtime at Tennessee in 2016, fell by one point at home against Wake Forest in '17 and were beaten in OT at No. 10 Penn State last year. "We, as an offense, kept our foot on the gas" this year, Evans said.

North Carolina: This didn't look like the team that beat South Carolina and Miami to open the season -- in large part because of the growing list of injuries. The Tar Heels, already playing without starting center Nick Polino, were without starting left tackle Charlie Heck (upper-body injury) and starting receiver Antoine Green (lower-body injury). They had a late comeback attempt fall short for the second straight week.

"We're continuing to try to find our identity, and our identity so far is, we start slow, we dig ourselves in a huge hole and we come back and fight," coach Mack Brown said. "The first two weeks, we made the plays to win at the end of a game, and the last two weeks, we've run out of time and didn't have a chance to do the things we need to do."

BIG MAN ON CAMPUS

Taylor's fingerprints were all over this game. First, he popped the ball loose when he sacked Howell on a third-and-7 -- then scooped it up and rumbled into the end zone to put the Mountaineers up 13-7. His interception two possessions later set up Evans' first scoring run, from 5 yards out, and made it 20-7. Taylor forced another fumble from Howell midway through the third quarter but the Tar Heels pounced on that one.

WELCOME BACK

Appalachian State welcomed back top WR Corey Sutton. He had seven catches for 58 yards after missing the first two games for violating team rules.

WHOSE STATE?

North Carolina has lost nine straight games against Instate Bowl Subdivision teams dating to a victory over N.C. State in 2015. Drinkwitz -- who spent the previous three seasons as the Wolfpack's offensive coordinator -- had a hand in four of those defeats.

CLOSE CALLS

The Tar Heels' first four games have each been decided by six or fewer points -- the first time that's happened since 1978 and just the second time it's happened in program history.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
APP	13	14	7	0	34
UNC	7	10	7	7	31

Scoring Summary -----

	APP	UNC
<b>FIRST QUARTER</b>		
UNC TD 14:43 Dazz Newsome 21 Yd pass from Sam Howell (Noah Ruggles Kick)		
1 play, 21 yards, 0:17	0	7
APP FG 11:06 Chandler Staton 31 Yd Field Goal		
8 plays, 51 yards, 3:37	3	7
APP FG 4:42 Chandler Staton 43 Yd Field Goal		
10 plays, 54 yards, 4:40	6	7
APP TD 3:39 Demetrius Taylor 20 Yd Fumble Return (Chandler Staton Kick)		
4 plays, 0 yards, 0:58	13	7
<b>SECOND QUARTER</b>		
APP TD 12:29 Darrynton Evans 5 Yd Run (Chandler Staton Kick)		
4 plays, 26 yards, 1:10	20	7
UNC FG 6:57 Noah Ruggles 25 Yd Field Goal		
15 plays, 61 yards, 5:27	20	10
APP TD 2:56 Darrynton Evans 2 Yd Run (Chandler Staton Kick)		
10 plays, 79 yards, 3:56	27	10
UNC TD 0:01 Michael Carter 11 Yd pass from Sam Howell (Noah Ruggles Kick)		
9 plays, 75 yards, 2:55	27	17
<b>THIRD QUARTER</b>		
UNC TD 4:18 Carl Tucker 12 Yd pass from Sam Howell (Noah Ruggles Kick)		
15 plays, 98 yards, 5:45	27	24
APP TD 2:11 Darrynton Evans 3 Yd Run (Chandler Staton Kick)		
5 plays, 75 yards, 2:07	34	24
<b>FOURTH QUARTER</b>		
UNC TD 3:01 Sam Howell 2 Yd Run (Noah Ruggles Kick)		
8 plays, 80 yards, 2:31	34	31

Team Stats	APP	UNC
First Downs	16	29
Passes for First	8	17
Rushes for First	7	10
Penalties for First	1	2
Third Down Efficiency	7-15	7-16
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	2-2
Total Yards	385	469
Total Plays	64	82
Avg Gain Per Play	6.0	5.7
Net Yards Rushing	161	146
Rushes	35	40
Yards Per Rush	4.6	3.7
Net Yards Passing	224	323
Comp-Att	20-29	27-42
Yards Per Pass	7.7	7.7
Times Sacked	3	2
Yds Lost To Sacks	-21	-13
Interceptions	1	2
Punts	5	4
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	6	5
Penalty Yards	50	40
Fumbles	0	2
Fumbles Lost	0	1
Time of Poss	29:29	30:31

Individual Stats

RUSHING							
APPALACHIAN ST	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Darrynton Evans	19	78	4.1	3	31		
Zac Thomas	6	57	9.5	0	50		
Daetrich Harrington	6	15	2.5	0	5		
Marcus Williams Jr.	4	11	2.8	0	6		
NORTH CAROLINA	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Javonte Williams	16	94	5.9	0	21		
Sam Howell	11	24	2.2	1	15		
Michael Carter	8	17	2.1	0	6		
Rontavious Groves	1	5	5.0	0	5		
Antonio Williams	3	5	1.7	0	2		
Jace Ruder	1	1	1.0	0	1		
PASSING							
APPALACHIAN ST	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Zac Thomas	20	29	224	7.7	0	1	87.8
NORTH CAROLINA	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Sam Howell	27	41	323	7.9	3	2	58.2
RECEIVING							
APPALACHIAN ST	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Thomas Hennigan	6	90	15.0	0	35		
Malik Williams	6	78	13.0	0	43		
Corey Xavier Sutton	7	58	8.3	0	14		
Jalen Virgil	1	-2	-2.0	0	0		
NORTH CAROLINA	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Dazz Newsome	6	88	14.7	1	24		
Beau Corrales	6	84	14.0	0	24		
Dyami Brown	4	51	12.8	0	18		
Rontavious Groves	4	37	9.3	0	20		
Carl Tucker	3	34	11.3	1	15		
Michael Carter	1	11	11.0	1	11		
Javonte Williams	2	11	5.5	0	8		
Antonio Williams	1	7	7.0	0	7		