

WEEK ONE
EAST TENNESSE ST at APPALACHIAN ST

App State Opens Season With Win In Drinkwitz’s Debut

BOONE, N.C. — Zac Thomas accounted for three touchdowns, including two through the air to Malik Williams and Thomas Hennigan, as Appalachian State won 42-7 against visiting East Tennessee State in the FBS head coaching debut for Eliah Drinkwitz on Saturday.

On the day App State celebrated the 30th anniversary of Hall of Fame coach Jerry Moore’s arrival in Boone, Drinkwitz picked up his first victory in his first game since being hired in December 2018.

Starting a season at home for the first time since 2015, the Mountaineers increased their lead to 21-0 on the opening drive of the third quarter against the FCS-level Buccaneers.

“When you win, it’s a lot of fun,” said Drinkwitz, who is also App State’s offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. “There were a couple times I was sitting back there talking, and I forgot that I needed to be watching the defense. It was different. I had a couple of times that I needed to lock in and flip over to defense to make sure I was on top of that. When I was a seventh-grade coach, I coached both offense and defense, so I never had to switch over the headsets, but this was a little bit different.”

Darrynton Evans and receiver Jalen Virgil joined Thomas in rushing for one touchdown apiece, and Jacob Huesman threw a fourth-quarter touchdown pass to true freshman Christian Wells.

Hennigan made a career-high seven catches for 79 yards to lead the offense, and Evans rushed 14 times for 99 yards as the Mountaineers totaled 277 yards on the ground. Thomas completed 16 of his 24 passes for 150 yards.

Defensively, the Mountaineers allowed just a third-quarter touchdown and 292 total yards. Desmond Franklin tied Akeem Davis-Gaither for the team lead with seven tackles apiece, Shaun Jolly had six tackles in his first career start at cornerback and defensive tackle E.J. Scott produced two big stops behind the line of scrimmage. In the final minute, Kaleb Dawson recovered a fumble forced by Hansky Paillant.

“I think we had a good day,” senior safety Josh Thomas said. “We stopped the run for the most part trying to contain (Quay) Holmes, their No. 1. He’s a good strong back, and we had to really gang tackle. I felt like they were going to spread us out on the perimeter, and I think we did good with our corners making tackles.”

App State led 14-0 at halftime thanks to Thomas’ 1-yard quarterback keeper for a touchdown with 2:58 left in the first quarter and Thomas’ 6-yard touchdown pass to Williams with 6:06 remaining before halftime.

Thomas’ touchdown run on the Mountaineers’ second drive capped a 13-play, 84-yard series. Evans’ 23-yard run moved the ball into ETSU territory, and Thomas’ TD followed a 10-yard completion to Hennigan in a third-and-4 scenario from the 11.

Xavier Subotsch’s 54-yard punt to pin the Buccaneers at their 8 set up a three-and-out possession that allowed App State to begin its next series at the ETSU 48. Daetrich Harrington opened the series with a 9-yard run, and pass interference in the end zone preceded Thomas’ short touchdown pass to a sliding Williams.

ETSU kicked off to App State to begin the second half, and the Mountaineers marched 75 yards in 11 plays to claim a 21-0 lead. An 11-yard run by Evans and 15-yard pass to Keishawn Watson on third down moved the chains before Camerun Peoples gained 17 yards on a carry to the ETSU 13. Evans sprinted into the end zone on the next play.

After ETSU posted its first points on a 5-yard touchdown reception with 4:35 left in the third quarter, App State answered with a 75-yard touchdown drive. Evans’ 24-yard reception to open the series was bookended by Thomas’ 31-yard TD pass to Hennigan late in the third quarter.

Thomas absorbed a blind-side hit while releasing the ball to a well-guarded Hennigan, who made a tough catch among two defenders, shook off both of them at the 5-yard line and headed to the end zone.

“We had been working on that look all week,” Hennigan said. “If the outside backer was to expand like he did, I was supposed to just run a straight seam route. If he was going to go inside, I was supposed to do a cop-route on the safety. So, he was outside of me, and I just kept it straight down the field. Zac threw me a great ball and gave me an opportunity to make a play.”

App State defensive end Caleb Spurlin ended an ETSU scoring threat by batting down a fourth-down pass, and the Mountaineers responded with a 10-play scoring drive that concluded with Virgil’s first career touchdown run. He scored on an 11-yard end-around, and the margin increased to 42-7 on Huesman’s 17-yard touchdown pass to Wells with 5:52 remaining.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
ETSU	0	0	7	0	7
APP	7	7	14	14	42

Scoring Summary -----

	ETSU	APP
FIRST QUARTER		
APP TD 2:58 Zac Thomas 1 Yd Run (Chandler Staton Kick)	0	7
13 plays, 84 yards, 4:59		
SECOND QUARTER		
APP TD 6:06 Malik Williams 6 Yd pass from Zac Thomas (Chandler Staton Kick)	0	14
7 plays, 48 yards, 2:27		
THIRD QUARTER		
APP TD 11:35 Darrynton Evans 13 Yd Run (Chandler Staton Kick)	0	21
11 plays, 75 yards, 3:25		
ETSU TD 4:35 Nate Adkins 5 Yd pass from Trey Mitchell (Tyler Keltner Kick)	7	21
12 plays, 86 yards, 6:56		
APP TD 0:51 Thomas Hennigan 31 Yd pass from Zac Thomas (Chandler Staton Kick)	7	28
8 plays, 75 yards, 3:44		
FOURTH QUARTER		
APP TD 9:34 Jalen Virgil 15 Yd Run (Chandler Staton Kick)	7	35
10 plays, 67 yards, 4:40		
APP TD 5:52 Christian Wells 17 Yd pass from Jacob Huesman (Chandler Staton Kick)	7	42
4 plays, 40 yards, 2:13		

Team Stats	ETSU	APP
First Downs	17	25
Passes for First	7	11
Rushes for First	8	13
Penalties for First	2	1
Third Down Efficiency	6-15	6-10
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-2	1-1
Total Yards	283	444
Total Plays	64	66
Avg Gain Per Play	4.4	6.7
Net Yards Rushing	131	277
Rushes	37	41
Yards Per Rush	3.5	6.8
Stat Name		
Net Yards Passing	152	167
Comp-Att	17-27	17-25
Yards Per Pass	5.6	6.7
Times Sacked	0	2
Yds Lost To Sacks	0	-6
Interceptions	0	0
Punts	6	3
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	7	5
Penalty Yards	60	58
Fumbles	3	0
Fumbles Lost	1	0
Time of Poss	33:38	26:22

Individual Stats

RUSHING							
EAST TENNESSEE ST	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Quay Holmes	19	68	3.6	0	15		
Cameron Lewis	6	30	5.0	0	12		
Dj Twitty	2	21	10.5	0	19		
Chance Thrasher	3	12	4.0	0	12		
Anthony Spagnoletti	1	8	8.0	0	8		
Trey Mitchell	2	0	0.0	0	2		
Jacob Saylor	3	0	0.0	0	1		
Malik McGue	1	-8	-8.0	0	0		
APPALACHIAN ST	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Darrynton Evans	14	99	7.1	1	23		
Daetrich Harrington	6	48	8.0	0	18		
Marcus Williams Jr.	7	41	5.9	0	21		
Zac Thomas	5	32	6.4	1	27		
Camerun Peoples	3	23	7.7	0	17		
Nakendrick Clark	3	14	4.7	0	12		
Jalen Virgil	2	13	6.5	1	15		
Trey Cobb	1	7	7.0	0	7		
PASSING							
EAST TENNESSEE ST	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Trey Mitchell	12	19	117	6.2	1	0	--
Chance Thrasher	4	6	29	4.8	0	0	--
Cameron Lewis	1	2	15	7.5	0	0	--
APPALACHIAN ST	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Zac Thomas	16	24	150	6.3	2	0	86.9
Jacob Huesman	1	1	17	17.0	1	0	100.0
RECEIVING							
EAST TENNESSEE ST	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Braxton Richburg	4	77	19.3	0	30		
Keith Coffee	5	24	4.8	0	9		
Nate Adkins	3	21	7.0	1	10		
Malik McGue	1	15	15.0	0	15		
Anthony Spagnoletti	1	13	13.0	0	13		
Jamal Couch	1	11	11.0	0	11		
Quay Holmes	2	0	0.0	0	5		
APPALACHIAN ST	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Thomas Hennigan	7	79	11.3	1	31		
Keishawn Watson	2	22	11.0	0	15		
Darrynton Evans	2	21	10.5	0	24		
Christian Wells	1	17	17.0	1	17		
Henry Pearson	2	12	6.0	0	11		
Jalen Virgil	2	10	5.0	0	5		
Malik Williams	1	6	6.0	1	6		