Starting off the season 4-0, App State will look to remain undefeated as it takes on the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. In week four, the Mountaineers defeated Coastal Carolina, which was their first game and win in Sun Belt Conference play. App State will have to bring everything it has on defense as the Ragin’ Cajuns are averaging 44.4 points per game and 314 rushing yards per game. Last year, the Mountaineers and Ragin’ Cajuns faced off in the inaugural Sun Belt Championship Game which App State won 30-19.

Game Notes:

Wednesday's game is the second conference game of the season for both teams. Currently, both teams are first in their divisions. The two will battle to keep conference championship dreams alive and make a statement on who runs the Sun Belt.

Sun Belt Showdown

Wednesday's game is the second conference game of the season for both teams. Currently, both teams are first in their divisions. The two will battle to keep conference championship dreams alive and make a statement on who runs the Sun Belt.

History

History shows App State owns the Cajuns. App is 6-0 all-time against Louisiana-Lafayette and looks to continue its success. The ‘Neers largest margin of victory came in 2017 when they defeated the Cajuns 63-14. Louisiana-Lafayette is off to a 4-1 start and looks to dethrone App State from the unbeaten ranks.

Red Zone Defense

From 2015-18, App State's defense was unrivaled in red-zone defensive performance. Over that time, Mountaineer opponents only scored on 75% of their red-zone possessions and converted touchdowns on only 45.3% of those. In 2019, those averages jumped to 92.9% overall, and 78.6% of those scores were touchdowns, so far this season.

PLAYER TO WATCH

#14 Malik Williams

Jr. Wide Receiver

In the last three games, Williams averaged 75.3 receiving yards.

Williams is looking for his first touchdown since Aug. 31 against East Tennessee State University, while Louisiana has only given up one receiving touchdown in the past three weeks.

Williams is averaging six catches and 12.5 yards per catch against Sun Belt Conference teams this season.
DEMETRIUS TAYLOR
TERRORIZING OPPOSING QUARTERBACKS

Dan Davidson | Sports Reporter

After stripping UNC’s quarterback, junior defensive lineman Demetrius “Meech” Taylor scooped up the ball and ran 20 yards into the Carolina blue end zone to score his first career touchdown. As shocked Tar Heel fans looked on, he put a finger up to his mouth to silence the crowd. Taylor had a dominant performance in Chapel Hill, totaling 2.5 sacks, two forced fumbles, a fumble recovery for a touchdown and an interception.

Taylor was born in Florida on May 27, 1999. There, his mother, Yolanda Whitehead, raised him and his brother, Tremaine. Taylor considers his mother’s work ethic and sacrifices his main inspiration to excel in everything he does.

“She raised me and my brother by herself, so watching her struggle influenced me to be better in school, sports and anything I did,” Taylor said. “I hope to pay her back for everything she did for me one day.”

While Taylor had no father in his life, he did have a father figure: his grandfather. “We used to fix cars together, stuff like that. He’d always teach me life lessons about everything. We’d sit down and talk for hours, just talking about life,” Taylor said.

Taylor said he endured tough times during his childhood, but appreciates everything those experiences taught him. “Now, I’m just here enjoying the journey,” Taylor said.

It wasn’t until he was 9 years old that Taylor started playing football. However, Taylor only played three games during his first season because of his weight. It wasn’t until his coach brought him back the next season that football would begin to take off for Taylor.

“I grew to love the game, and every year since then, I’ve been getting better and better,” Taylor said.

Taylor attended Miami Northwestern Senior High School, a school nationally known for its football excellence. The school is home to notable alumni, such as New Orleans Saints quarterback Teddy Bridgewater and Dallas Cowboys wide receiver Amari Cooper.

Taylor received All-Dade County and All-State honors as a senior, but only received a two out of five star rating from major sources like 247Sports and Scout.com. “It’s really been a tough road because I really didn’t get any offers until my senior year,” Taylor said. “App gave me an offer in late May, and stuck with me ever since.”

Taylor was drawn to App State not only for the football and education, but because he wanted a change of setting. He had never left Florida until his official visit to Boone on Oct. 1, 2016. He committed to play football at App State the next day.

“It was just totally different from what I was used to,” Taylor said.

In Taylor’s first two years as a Mountaineer, he received less in-game opportunities than he hoped, amassing 29 total tackles. He spent much of his time on the sidelines as a backup. “It’s been a rough two years for me being behind a couple of guys that had more experience because I felt like I was ready to play the role I’m playing now,” Taylor said.

Despite a slow start to his college career, Taylor has burst onto the scene as a junior. He accumulated as many sacks as he had all of last season in just the first four games and is second in the nation in forced fumbles with three. Taylor is 10th in the country in tackles for loss, with 6.5 and 15th in sacks with four.

“It’s probably just having a made-up mind. Having a made-up mind that he wants to be the best. He wants to go out every week and perform at his best,” said defensive line coach Anwar Stewart.

Stewart said he has high expectations for Taylor and expects him to step into more of a leadership role.

“’I’m really looking for him to be the alpha male of this team and the D-line. The sky’s the limit for him,” Stewart said. “He’s a guy that can really step it up big time. He’s athletic, he’s fast, he’s strong, and so I’m very excited for him.”

Taylor said finally seeing these opportunities come his way is a long-awaited payoff for all of the years of hard work he put in.

“I just want to continue to get better as my career continues here,” Taylor said.

Taylor said he hopes, by the end of his time with the Mountaineers, he will earn his degree and make it to the NFL.

“I just want to enjoy everything this game brings to me, all the traveling, all the practices, and, hopefully, make it to the next league,” Taylor said.

Junior defensive lineman Demetrius “Meech” Taylor is receiving local and national attention for his stellar performance in the Mountaineers’ victory against UNC Chapel Hill. Taylor is from Florida, and leads the nation in forced fumbles and is not far behind in sacks per game.

Megan McCulloh
Students in the athletic training program at App State can rotate which team they assist each semester. Sometimes, a trainer might stay more than one semester with a team if they want to and the numbers allow.

“My last word

Volleyball’s new season starts now

Brooks Maynard | Columnist

The volleyball team had a rocky start to the season, posting a 4-9 record in its first 13 matches. It’s seen some tough competition, such as Duke, Maryland and nationally ranked Arizona. During this rough stretch, head coach Matt Ginipro said the team has had its opportunities to win, but it’s just not capitalizing frequently enough.

This past weekend, the Mountaineers opened up Sun Belt Conference play with a win against the Georgia State Panthers, three sets to one.

Next, they knocked off Georgia Southern to open their conference slate 2-0.

The new volleyball season starts now. Forget the 4-9 non-conference record. They’re now 2-0 in the Sun Belt. They can still finish the season out strong by playing well in the Sun Belt; winning the conference is huge for making the NCAA Tournament in volleyball. And all signs point to the Mountaineers having a strong conference season: they have players ranked in the top three in the Sun Belt in five of the six major statistical categories, including sophomore libero Grace Kinsch’s league-best 1.50 service ace average. If they can keep up this strong Sun Belt play, 2019 is wide open.
Zack Antrum | Reporter

Their names might not be heard through the stadium speakers on game day, and they might not put up the most stats, but their work ethic, desire and dedication can turn a good team into a great team.

For college teams around the country, the walk-ons are often the unsung heroes of the team.

Walk-ons are members of college athletic teams who do not receive athletic scholarships for playing on the team.

Those who tend to walk on to a college team were good players during their prep or high school careers. Some receive scholarship offers from different schools but choose to turn them down to play for a school that offers them different opportunities, whether academic or personal.

Every year, however, some walk-ons are surprised with scholarships as a reward for the work they put in. The App State football team is one of many teams across the country with walk-ons who have received scholarships.

Junior center Ivan Reyes and junior defensive lineman Tommy Dawkins were walk-ons who both received scholarships at the beginning of the 2019 season.

Head coach Eliah Drinkwitz told them they needed to stay after practice to discuss their meal plans before they were officially awarded scholarships by the coaching staff, according to AppStateSports.com.

Reyes redshirted his freshman year and made his debut against Savannah State in 2017, and has appeared in five games since.

When Reyes learned of his scholarship, he said it was a very special moment for him.

“I couldn’t control my emotions. It was an unbelievable feeling,” Reyes said. “All that hard work, to see it finally pay off in that moment, it just all came to me at once, and it was amazing.”

Dawkins has played in 13 career games, including three this season, and has recorded seven total tackles. For him, receiving the scholarship showed his effort was worth.

“It was definitely exciting,” Dawkins said. “It shows my hard work paid off.”

Even though both players earned their scholarships, they know they must keep the team-first attitude that got them to where they are, if they want to have a successful season.

“Winning as a team is bigger than yourself. The team is bigger than yourself,” Reyes said.

“My dream would be just going there and wining my fourth conference championship. Being part of that is truly amazing.”

Junior center Ivan Reyes (right) is one of the many walk-ons for App State football this season. Reyes redshirted his freshman year and has appeared in five games since 2017, including Saturday’s win against Coastal Carolina.

Megan McCullough