**APP STATE WINS ANOTHER THRILLER AT CAMELLIA BOWL**

**By Tim Gayle**

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**MONTGOMERY –** Each year, the Raycom Media Camellia Bowl has to live up to the hype of its predecessor.

The inaugural game was decided in the final 64 seconds. The second game was won by a field goal as time expired.

There were no last-minute heroics in the 2016 game, just an exciting game that featured a back-and-forth scoring battle that wasn’t  decided until a final field goal attempt sailed wide right with 1:48 remaining that allowed Appalachian State to pull out a 31-28 win in front of an estimated crowd of 20,300 at Cramton Bowl on Saturday night.

“I’m really, really proud of our guys,” Appalachian State coach Scott Satterfield said. “We had so much fight and so much integrity in our football team. They do things right on and off the field and you can’t win close games like this if you don’t do things right on and off the field.”

Appalachian State finished 10-3, winning 21 games and a pair of Camellia Bowls in their first two years of FBS bowl eligibility.

“I made the comment every time we scored, they answered, but that’s the mark of a great team,” Satterfield said. “It was really a wild game, an entertaining game for the fans and for ESPN and everybody watching. It was a great college football game.”

Toledo finished 9-4, losing the Mid-American West title to Western Michigan 55-35, then to the Mountaineers to put a damper on the 2016 season.

“At the end of the day we had a chance to go down and tie the game and we just didn’t convert,” Toledo coach Jason Candle said. “For the most part, I thought we played pretty decent. A lot of credit to App State. Really good defense.

“To go 9-4 in a season is something special. We wanted to get a 10th win, but ultimately we had a pretty good season and we’re looking forward to next season.”

Both of the first two games featured comebacks by one of the participants but that wasn’t the case on Saturday as the score was tied at the end of each of the first three quarters.

“That was a great Toledo team,” said Appalachian State junior quarterback Taylor Lamb, who won the Bart Starr MVP Award. “We knew it wasn’t going to be easy, it was going to be a four-quarter battle. I think we’ve embraced that all year. You just have to play four quarters and I think our defense did a great job of shutting them down in the second half.”

Much of the pre-game focus was on the matchup between Appalachian State’s vaunted defense and Toledo quarterback Logan Woodside, who leads the NCAA with 45 passing touchdowns this season.

Woodside lived up to the billing, setting a bowl record by completing 69.2 percent of his passes, going 18 of 26 for 247 yards and two touchdowns.

If Appalachian State was going to win with its offense, most analysts would have concluded, it would have been behind the tailback tandem of Marcus Cox and Jalin Moore. And while Cox did finish with 143 yards and a touchdown on 22 carries to become the only Mountaineer to ever gain 1,000 yards in four consecutive seasons and the 22nd player to reach the 5,000-yard career plateau, he was overshadowed by the feet of his quarterback.

Lamb rushed for a career-high 126 yards and a touchdown on just nine carries, repeatedly turning third-and-long plays into crucial first downs.

The Mountaineers’ first scoring drive featured two third-and-long conversions with Lamb’s arm, another touchdown came on Lamb’s 13-yard run at left end and a third came on Darrynton Evans’ 94-yard kickoff return.

Each time, the Rockets answered, never taking the lead but tying the game after every Appalachian State touchdown.

Finally, a Mountaineer drive stalled and freshman Michael Rubino kicked a 39-yard field goal with 5:14 remaining. When the Rockets faced the same situation minutes later, Candle took a delay penalty to set up a 30-yard attempt by Jameson Vest, but the sophomore pushed the kick wide right.

“Let him back up a little bit and trust our players,” Candle said of the decision. “If we had to go out and do it again, I’d kick the field goal again. Trust in our kicker, trust in our protection and hopefully we make it. That wasn’t the reason we lost the game. Give App a lot of credit. They are a great team. They play a physical brand of football. They come right at you and they force you to make mistakes. They put the pressure on you.”

Satterfield, who defeated Ohio on a last-second field goal last year, figured he still had some Camellia Bowl magic left. As it turned out, he was able to simply run out the clock.

“Even if he had made it, I felt good about it because we had about two minutes left to go down and kick another field goal to win the game,” Satterfield said. “I loved the game, it was a fun game, a back-and-forth game. I enjoyed this one because we never were behind.”