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Three first-half goals spark the Eagles to the Sun Belt win over the Bison

Men's Soccer
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STATESBORO, Ga. - The Georgia Southern men's soccer team tallied three first-half goals en route to a 4-2 Sun Belt Conference victory over visiting Howard University on Senior Night, Saturday at Eagle Field.

The Eagles (8-7, 2-2 SBC) matched their win total from a season ago and also gained three important points in the Sun Belt standings with the victory over the Bison (1-13-2, 0-2-1 SBC), who dropped their third straight. Georgia Southern wraps up the 2017 regular season on Saturday, November 4th, traveling to Appalachian State for a 7 p.m. Sun Belt showdown in Boone, N.C.

Georgia Southern scored quickly as Javier Carbonell dribbled down to the end line on the left side of the goal, then passed to senior Blake Wilson in front of the net for the easy finish in the fourth minute.
In the 20th minute, Wilson tallied his second goal of the match as fellow senior Adam Abdellaoui took the ball from a Howard defender near the top of the box, sent a toe pass in to Wilson, whose one-touch finish beat Bison goalkeeper Carlos Caro for the two-goal lead. It was the first multi-goal match for Wilson this season and the fourth of his career.

Carbonell then staked the Eagles to a three-goal lead as a ball sent into the box hit off of a Howard defender and ricocheted straight to the junior, who finished inside the near post for his third goal of the season. The Eagles would outshoot Howard 11-1 heading into halftime.

The Bison climbed back into the match with two goals in a 12-minute stretch midway through the second half. A scramble in the box by Howard resulted in a ball coming out to Joel Cunningham, whose try from 27 yards out found the back of the net for the first goal.

Off of a free kick in the 67th minute, an initial ball sent in was pushed to the right by Georgia Southern goalkeeper Robert Flott, but Andres Gomez charged from the near post and tapped it in from a hard angle to make the score 3-2.

The Eagles clinched the match in the 83rd minute as Sam Choi was fouled in the right side of the box, drawing a penalty. Senior Nick Wells stepped to the spot and converted for his first goal of the season and the final 4-2 tally.

"We come out and score three goals in the first half, which is unusual at this level," Head Coach John Murphy said. "But goals change games. They score to make it 3-1 and you get a little bit of a wobble, then they start getting momentum. All of a sudden 3-2 and you're scrambling a bit.

"We were happy to get the penalty at the end to open it up," Coach Murphy said. "I didn't feel at any time we were under any threat to lose the game, but it goes to show you that you have to play a complete game, especially at this time of the year. I'm always impressed with how Howard works, they work all the way to the last whistle, and they play the game properly with a lot of fight. Even though the score may look that way, it was not an easy game."

The Eagles finished the night with a 15-6 edge in shots, as well as a 10-3 edge in shots on goal. Caro made six saves in net for Howard, while Flott made one save for the Eagles. Georgia Southern had a 7-0 edge in corner kicks and were whistled for nine fouls, compared to six for the Bison. The Eagles were offsides six times on the night and Howard was offsides twice.

Prior to the match, the Eagles honored six players playing in their final regular season home matches for the team - Wilson, Wells, Abdellaoui, Flott, Chase Herzog and Thor Sveinbjornsson.

"We're happy," Coach Murphy said of his seniors. "Blake gets two goals, Nick scores the penalty. Adam's energy throughout was very good, and I was very pleased Chase got in the game late. Robert started and was solid despite conceding the two goals. The only person we couldn't get on the field was Thor because of injuries, but I told him we have bigger games to go - the last game of the regular season against Appalachian State, then Sun Belt games, so there's a lot more to play for."