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Georgia Southern University

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Hart Breaks Eagle Hearts, State Gets Past Southern 21-17
The Eagles travel to Appalachian State Thursday night.
Marc Gignac
Football
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STATESBORO – Penny Hart caught a 9-yard touchdown pass from Conner Manning for the game-winning score with 2:31 remaining, and Georgia State hung on for a 21-17 Sun Belt Conference football victory over Georgia Southern Saturday afternoon in Paulson Stadium.

A 10-yard run by Shai Werts and a 15-yard pass interference call helped the Eagles move the ball down to the 15-yard line with 19 seconds left. After an 11-yard pass from Werts to Darion Anderson for a first down, Southern was flagged for a false start while trying to kill the clock and had to use its final timeout to avoid the 10-second runoff. Werts had to throw it out of bounds on the next play, and on 2nd down, the redshirt freshman was forced out of the pocket and tackled trying to scramble as time ran out.

Hart finished with eight receptions for 191 yards, including a 70-yard reception and a 53-yard catch for Georgia State (5-3, 4-1). Manning completed 22-of-37 passes for 319 yards and two touchdowns. Glenn Smith ran 11 times for 49 yards and caught eight balls for 58 yards.

Werts threw for 147 yards and a touchdown on 22-of-28 passing and ran for 63 yards and a score for Georgia Southern (0-8, 0-4). Wesley Fields carried 14 times for 57 yards, and Malik Henry caught eight passes for 47 yards. The Southern defense registered four sacks and an interception and held the Panthers to 3-of-13 on third down but could not overcome three Southern turnovers that turned into 14 State points.

State earns two points in the Southern vs. State Rivalry Series and leads it 4.5-.5.

The story
Georgia Southern led 17-14 midway through the fourth quarter but fumbled on two straight possessions. After the first miscue, Hart broke loose for a 53-yard reception on 3rd-and-10 from the Panther 28-yard line to pick up a huge first down. The Eagle defense held and forced a Brandon Wright 53-yard field goal try, and the kick sailed wide left.

The second turnover came on the Eagles' ensuing possession and gave the Panthers the ball on the Southern 31-yard line. A Manning pass to Smith for 16 yards put State inside the 10, and Manning found Hart on the corner route on 3rd-and-goal.

Werts gave the Eagles a 17-7 cushion late in the third quarter with a 5-yard touchdown run around the right side on 4th-and-goal. Southern took over at its own 20-yard line after a missed field goal by the Panthers and spent over seven minutes on an 80-yard drive. A 10-yard run by Monteo Garrett on a pitch to the right on 4th-and-1 kept
the Eagle offense on the field.

Manning came right back and hit Hart with a 70-yard pass over the top to move the ball to the 10-yard line. Manning found Roger Carter for a 4-yard touchdown pass two plays later, cutting the lead to 17-14.

Panther corner Chandon Sullivan picked up an Eagle fumble on their first play of the game and raced 28 yards for a touchdown, but Georgia Southern answered with a methodical scoring drive. The Eagles went 80 yards in 17 plays and tied the score on a 12-yard touchdown pass from Werts to Myles Campbell.

The defenses from both teams took over from there until Southern mounted a drive late in the first half. Wesley Kennedy III gave the Eagles great field position with a 25-yard punt return, and Tyler Bass gave Southern a 10-7 halftime advantage with a career-long 48-yard field goal with 15 seconds to go.

Quotables

Interim Head Coach Chad Lunsford
On what he told team in the locker room
"The first thing we had to address is the turnovers. We put ourselves in position to win a ball game and hurt ourselves with turnovers, and it really started on the first play of the ball game. We have to get back to our plan to win - the things we say are important that we need to take care of. If we take care of little things, we will be able to finish and win ball games."

On the rest of the season
"The goal has not been to go 6-0 or 5-1 after the Troy game, but to send the seniors out with that winning feeling again – what they expected when they came to Southern. Then, we need to pass that on to the young guys so that they learn how to win again. I'm proud of these players and coaches because they have gone to work every day. They believe, and I expect no different tomorrow."

Senior linebacker Chris DeLaRosa
On what you say to the guys in the locker room as a senior leader
"We just have to remind them that we have to set the tone for next season. We can't be going out like this. Everybody is hungry for a win so it's not hard to get the guys motivated. We want to win, and we expect to win. We just have to emphasize ball security on both sides of the ball."

Senior slot receiver Myles Campbell
On the touchdown
"It was a perfect play. Everybody got their guy, and I just took the lane and ran it in."

On team morale
"We just have to stay together and keep fighting. That's all we can do. If we keep fighting, we'll get results."

Next up

The Eagles have a short week before traveling to Appalachian State Thursday, Nov. 9. Kickoff is set for 7:30 p.m., and the game will be broadcast live on ESPNU.

Georgia Southern Athletics provides current information on all its sports through its official website, GSEagles.com, which is fully responsive across all mobile devices. Information on Eagle athletics can also be found through social media channels facebook.com/GSAthletics, twitter.com/GSAthletics and Instagram.com/GSAthletics. To purchase tickets to Georgia Southern athletics events, visit GSEagles.com/tickets.

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