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Eagles Fly Past Jaguars, 78-71, For First Sun Belt Win Of Season

Georgia Southern University

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Georgia Southern women's basketball overcame a six-point halftime deficit by shooting 51.9% from the field in the second half to down South Alabama, 78-71, in Sun Belt Conference action on Saturday afternoon at the Mitchell Center.

The Eagles move to 5-4 overall and 1-1 in the Sun Belt with the win, while South Alabama falls to 4-4 overall and 1-1 in the league. Georgia Southern snapped a six-game losing streak to the Jaguars and picked up its third win in Mobile against USA since joining the league.

South Alabama jumped out to a 20-7 lead in the first quarter against the Eagles, but Georgia Southern closed to within eight at the end of the first quarter, where the Jaguars led 22-14.

The Eagles quickly erased that deficit starting the second quarter, as back-to-back three-pointers by freshman Daeja Holmes and sophomore Mya Burns capped an 8-0 run that tied the score at 22-all. The score was tied at 30-all halfway through the second quarter, but the Jaguars ended the half on a 10-4 run to take a six-point halftime lead, 40-34.

Georgia Southern took control of the contest in the third quarter with a 13-0 run that covered three and a half minutes as a fastbreak layup by Holmes pushing the Eagles to a 49-45 lead with 3:36 left in the period.

South Alabama got to within two, 73-71, on a three-pointer by Mahogany Vaught with 34 seconds left, but the Eagles went 5-of-6 from the free throw line to clinch the victory. It was the first game this season in which the Eagles picked up the victory while trailing at halftime.

Senior A'Tyanna Gaulden notched 15 points to lead the Eagles offensively, while Holmes added 13 points. Sophomore Shondell Vickers collected 12 points to go with nine rebounds. South Alabama placed four players in double figures, led by Antoinette Lewis' 18 points. Vaught added 15 points, while Jayla Morrow and Devyn Lowe each chipped in 11.

Eagle of the Game
Freshman Lydia Freeman had an outstanding second half for the Eagles, scoring nine points, grabbing three rebounds and blocking a pair of shots in 12 minutes of action. Georgia Southern was +15 on the scoreboard while Freeman was in the lineup and she helped lock down the paint to thwart the Jaguars comeback.
Stat of the Game
The Eagles hit 21-of-28 shots from the free throw line, shooting 75% for the game. Georgia Southern improved to 5-1 this season when shooting 70% or better from the charity stripe. South Alabama shot just 64% (16-of-25) in the contest.

Quotables • LISTEN TO FULL POSTGAME COMMENTS HERE
Head Coach Anita Howard on the third quarter and the play of Lydia Freeman
"Our third quarter is typically our best quarter. I thought that yesterday, we did an ok job. Hats off to South Alabama. This is a team that I dread playing again and again, but I think we match up well with them. Especially with the post presence. I think Lydia Freeman did an awesome job on the inside. That's why we recruited her. We needed her to help deal with Antoinette Lewis. And Lydia wanted that challenge. For a freshman to want to take on someone as good as Lewis, it really says a lot about what the future is going to be like for Georgia Southern women's basketball."

About the guard play of Daeja Holmes and A'Tyanna Gaulden
"Daeja, we call her Hollywood or the logo. She can shoot it from the logo. Her and A'Tyanna did a good job in the backcourt of figuring it out down the stretch and settling down. Yesterday we didn't do a good job executing on the offensive end. I'm really pleased at how we bounced back from a day ago."

Next Up
The Eagles return to Hanner Fieldhouse to host Appalachian State in Sun Belt Conference action on Friday, January 8, at 6 p.m.

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