



POSTGAME NOTES

GAME 1 • CHARLESTON SOUTHERN (0-1, 0-0 BSC) AT MISSISSIPPI STATE (1-0, 0-0 SEC) • SEPT. 2, 2017 • DAVIS WADE STADIUM

TEAM NOTABLES

- Mississippi State moves to 84-32-2 all-time in season openers, 58-15-1 in openers in Starkville and 7-2 under Dan Mullen.
- Dan Mullen began his ninth season at the helm of Mississippi State, tying College Football Hall of Famer Allyn McKeen as the second-longest tenured coach in school history.
- With today's victory, Dan Mullen is just three victories away from tying Allyn McKeen for second in MSU history; Mullen is 13 wins shy of tying Jackie Sherrill's school record mark.
- MSU is now 2-0 all-time against Big South opponents. Against FCS opponents, MSU improved to 9-0 during the Dan Mullen era, having outscored opponents 468-126 over that stretch. The Bulldogs have now won 12 in a row over the FCS.
- Mississippi State is now 33-7 against non-conference opponents under Dan Mullen, including a 20-3 record at home.
- The Bulldogs recorded two safeties in the first half of today's game. It was the first time MSU tallied a safety since Oct. 15, 2011, versus South Carolina and the first time the program had recorded multiple safeties in a game since Sept. 30, 2000 against Florida.
- For the 19th time since 2014, MSU tallied 500 or more yards of total offense, which leads the SEC.
- The shutout over Charleston Southern was the first shutout for MSU since topping Vanderbilt 51-0 on Nov. 22, 2014. It was the first season-opening shutout for the Bulldogs since Aug. 30, 2014 when MSU defeated Southern Miss 49-0.
- The MSU defense held Charleston Southern to 18 rushing yards. The last time MSU held an opponent to 25 or fewer yards of rushing was versus Kentucky on Nov. 3, 2001, when MSU held the Wildcats to two rushing yards.
- Charleston Southern averaged 0.7 yards per play on offense, setting a new Mississippi State record for lowest yards-per-play average. The previous record of 1.35 was set against Howard College on Sept. 21, 1963.
- Team captains for Mississippi State: Martin Rankin, Dez Harris, Tolando Cleveland and Donald Gray.
- Four Bulldogs made their first-career starts; two on offense (Stewart Reese, Darryl Williams) and two on defense (Fletcher Adams, Dez Harris).
- A total of 24 Bulldogs saw the field for the first time in their careers: QB Keytaon Thompson, QB Logan Burnett, Allen Perkins, Cameron Miller, Willie Gay Jr., RB Kylin Hill, DB Cameron Dantzler, DB Korey Charles, S C.J. Morgan, S Johnathan Abram, LB Erroll Thompson, K Tucker Day, Steven Adegoke, DE Kobe Jones, OL Dareuan Parker, OL Greg Eiland, TE Dontea Jones, WR Osirus Mitchell, LB Montez Sweat, OL Stewart Reese, Travis O'Connor, WR Reggie Todd and TE Christian Robertson, K Jace Christmann.
- Four true freshmen saw action during the season opener; two on offense (Kylin Hill, Keytaon Thompson), one on defense (Willie Gay Jr.) and one on special teams (Tucker Day).
- Today's attendance was 54,215.

PLAYER NOTABLES

- Nick Fitzgerald opened the contest with a two-yard touchdown rush with 14:02 in the first quarter. The score was his 20th rushing touchdown of his career, tying him for 10th all-time at MSU.
- Fitzgerald tallied two passing touchdowns to push his career total to 26, moving into eighth all-time in MSU history.
- With a total of three touchdowns (two passing, one rushing) in today's game, Nick Fitzgerald moved into a tie with Anthony Dixon (2006-09) for third in MSU history with 46 career touchdowns responsible for.
- Senior wide receiver Gabe Myles reeled in his first touchdown reception since Sept. 9, 2015 at Auburn.
- In his fourth-career start, sophomore defensive lineman Jeffery Simmons tallied the first sack of his career.
- In his collegiate debut, true freshman Tucker Day connected on a 40-yard field goal, the first of his career, to extend MSU's lead to 26-0 with 7:08 remaining in the first half.
- Junior Dontavian Lee scored the first points of the second half with a three-yard touchdown rush to tally his first-career touchdown.
- In his collegiate debut, true freshman Keytaon Thompson went 4-for-7 for 35 yards, including his first-career touchdown pass. Thompson also picked up 36 yards on the ground on six rushes.
- Making his collegiate debut, Kylin Hills rushed for 62 yards on nine attempts to average 6.9 yards per touch.
- Senior linebacker Dez Harris led the defense with a career-high six tackles.



HEAD COACH DAN MULLEN QUOTES

September 2, 2017

Charleston Southern vs. Mississippi State

Opening Statement

“Good day today. I will start by thanking our fans. Everybody came and stayed. I know we were not jam-packed for the full four quarters today, but a lot of people stayed. I thank all of them for that. I think it shows in energy our team plays with, and they’re such an important part of this program. I thank our students and all of our fans for the work they did for staying for all four quarters cheering this team on. Pleased with our defense play today. For me, that’s the type of defense I expect. I know Todd Grantham did a fantastic job with the scheme, coaches putting guys in the right positions to go make plays. I am most pleased with watching how our guys ran the football. Eleven guys playing as hard as they can every single snap. That was a big challenge. I’m talking about with a minute left in the game, eleven guys flying to the football as hard as they can. That’s the kind of defense we expect to see. That’s the kind of defense people here have grown accustomed to seeing. I’m really pleased with how they played and how they performed today. Great job by our coaching staff and players on the defensive side of the ball. Offensively, good, solid day. We missed some things here. We didn’t click quite as perfectly as I would like us to. I thought we were efficient at times during the day. Just some little mistakes we’ve got to get cleaned up and fix. Just a little cleaner execution both running and throwing the ball. Six to eight inches here and there is a big difference offensively. We’ll get that fixed as we move forward because we have a huge challenge next week, going on the road to a Louisiana Tech team that’s supposed to go win their conference championship. It will be a big challenge for our guys, but I’m excited about how we played.”

On deciding to play Keytaon Thompson...

“We were talking this week, and we sat down and talked with him. I know Brett Elliott had a conversation with his family, and he wanted play. He wanted to get in there, but as the number two quarterback right now for us, and being a true freshman, he’s a snap away from being the guy, being the starter. As you even see with him from his first two or three plays to his last two or three plays, there was a little bit of difference. For him to get those reps, to get that experience and to get on the field, I want to see him to grow and develop in play.”

On the offensive line...

“The offensive line today, not bad. Couple of little mistakes here and there. Some new faces in there. Guys got experience. It was good to get the two’s in and get those guys in. There’s a lot of new faces there to get them some reps and get them some experience moving forward, that second group of offensive linemen. You saw a lot from those guys. For many of them, it’s their first time playing. Their first couple of plays weren’t great, and as the game goes on, they settle in. That’s just experience. Getting the opportunity to be on the field and know what it’s like to be out here when it counts.”



MISSISSIPPI STATE PLAYER QUOTES

September 2, 2017

Charleston Southern vs. Mississippi State

DL – Jeffrey Simmons – So.

On the effort of the defensive line during this afternoon's victory

"Coming out, I had that mindset, playing with relentless effort. It's like I told my [defensive line], 'I'm playing for you guys'. So like I said we have to play every snap with relentless effort."

On the responsibility of the nose guard when stopping the triple option

"Basically all the job was [to stop] the dive. It simple. Take care of the dive and go to the ball after that. I thought we did pretty good. They only had thirty something rushing yards. We did pretty good."

On his first career sack at Mississippi State

"It felt good. I'm still bragging about it to my guys. My first college sack, like I said before the season started, that's something that I wanted to do this season. It felt great."

LB – Willie Gay, Jr. – Fr.

On playing in his first collegiate football game

"Oh yeah. I remember when I used to sit up in the nose bleeds, thinking about this moment, and now that it's here, it feels unreal."

On Mississippi State's depth on the defensive side of the ball

"Really, it's like a two-deep thing. Around college football, that's how it works. So between our first-string and second-string group, I think we're pretty good."

QB – Nick Fitzgerald – Jr.

On the differences between his first start last season and his first start this season

"Last year, going into it, I thought that I was going to have two series, and then [Damian Williams] was going to have two series, and then we were going to see who could play after that. The first two series, I was tense. This season going into it, I was the starter. Go out and lead your team and play as well as you can. Go set a standard for everybody build on it for next year."

On his impressions of the offense

"I think at times we were moving the ball very well and very efficiently, and at other times we were inefficient. You know, I have to be a more accurate passer. We just have some small things that we need to tweak. That's just the first game. We have eleven more, at least."

On the importance of a season-opening victory

“Start the season off with the win. That’s always great, compared to last season. That was a big deflator, a big let-down. This season, we got a big defensive game, they had like ten yards on offense. That’s huge. It’s a big confidence builder. We have good things to work on when we go to the film room. We’ll see what we need to fix and get better next week.”

On the play of true freshman quarterback Keytaon Thompson

“I love Keytaon. I am so grateful for him. I was so proud that he got to get out there and score a touchdown. That was awesome. He’s worked his butt off since he’s been here. Very football-smart. Very talented guy. You’ll see a lot more of him.”

On the play of junior center Elgton Jenkins

“I think it was fine. I think that every snap was manageable. I didn’t think it was anything I couldn’t handle. If I can manage the snap, it’s a good snap. I think he did fine, did a good job.”

On the play of the Bulldog running backs in tonight’s win

“Y’all saw it. We always have a lot of talent back there, guys that can really run the rock. They can read blocks, make people miss and go make big plays. They can jump over people, whatever they have to do. They’re going to fight for every yard.”

On walk-on quarterback Logan Burnett’s playing opportunity against the Buccaneers

“I was so excited for him, so happy. They told him to go out there and not throw the ball, but in my heart, I was like, ‘Please just throw the ball.’ I wanted to see him pass it. I’m sure he’s excited. We’re all happy for him.”

RB - Aeris Williams - Jr.

On his 2017 season debut

"I got back into the swing of things. We went out there and just had fun. I mean I felt pretty good."

On the potential of the tail backs for the 2017 season

"If we go out there and just handle our business, the sky is the limit. I promise you that."

On the advice that he gives freshman running back Kylin Hill

"Oh yes sir. Yes sir. I know what he can do. So when he gets out there on the field, I just tell him calm down and just make his plays because he's a great athlete."

On his thought process when Kylin Hill was in the game

"Keep going. Keep going. Oh yeah [I wanted him to stay in and score]. I just told him to keep on going and to calm down and just play ball. Because when he does that, the sky's the limit for him."

On Kylin Hill's strengths as a running back

"He's powerful. That man is just strong, man. I just promise you. He came in just strong. I promise you. That man is too strong."



HEAD COACH MARK TUCKER QUOTES

September 2, 2017

Charleston Southern vs. Mississippi State

Opening Statement...

“We struggled at times. We are not where we need to be execution wise. We’ve played our fair share of these games. When we executed, we’ve moved the ball fairly well. We have some youth, we have some experience, but we had a hard time matching up inside the box, especially at the linebacker level. I felt like both of our quarterbacks are young redshirt sophomores, as well as Robert (Mitchell) at the end executed some things very well. This is a high efficiency, everybody on the same page, premium on execution, type of offense. Obviously, that didn’t happen today. We put our kids in some good positions. We just got a little out-matched in speed. At times, we executed poorly for the most part, up front. We will match up must better in the weeks to come. It’s an SEC football team that’s going to compete for the West (Division). That means they can compete with the best schools, if not all of the best schools in the country. They have SEC speed. The quarterback is a very impressive player. The youngster is a very athletic young man. I understand why he’s as talented as he was. I imagine they feel pretty good about the future in that position. The back is a quality back and they leaned on us, but really proud of our kids defensively, all of them. We had quite a few young kids that got an opportunity to play. Some kids that in time are going to be some very good football players. Today’s not a really great measuring stick for what those men will become in time. Our kicking game, and I don’t want to be glib, but we probably set a school record today for most punts in a game. Very proud with our special teams’ phases. A fairly mistake free game from a standpoint of turnovers and penalties. From a penalty perspective, it wasn’t a nightmare for everyone to watch from both sides of the ball. Other than that, fairly clean. We have a long way to go, collectively. We are going to be who we feel like we can be. But, we need to make major strides. Most programs, most teams have their greatest improvements from week one to week two. We’ve been treated exceptionally well by the people who housed us in Columbus. The people here at Mississippi State have been exceptionally kind and gracious, especially Coach Mullen. I wish them great success in the SEC West.

Moving forward...

“Well, I don’t want to take anything for granted. We flat need to improve in a lot of places up front. We need to improve a little bit in the perimeter. We need to improve with the quarterback and the efficiency of our reads. Your margin of error decreases to almost nothing. We’ve just got a lot of improvement to make. It’s not clean. It’s not like we don’t know where to go. We just got to do a lot better. It’s not that difficult. Very proud of our kids defensively and proud of our kids across the board. We will evaluate everything that we do. Starting with me, it’s not all on the kids.”