



POSTGAME NOTES

GAME 3 • #17/19 MISSISSIPPI STATE (3-1, 1-1 SEC) AT #11/12 GEORGIA (4-0, 1-0 SEC) • SEPT. 23, 2017 • DAVIS WADE STADIUM

TEAM NOTABLES

- Georgia won the toss and deferred to the second half. It was just the second time this season that State opened a game receiving the ball on offense.
- UGA pushed its series lead to 18-6 with the victory. Under Dan Mullen, the Bulldogs are now 14-6 against the SEC East and have won five of its last seven games against East opponents.

PLAYER NOTABLES

- Logan Cooke's first-quarter punt with 5:10 remaining on the clock traveled 68 yards, the longest punt by MSU since Cooke booted a 68-yard punt against South Carolina on Sept. 10, 2016.
- With 10:39 remaining in the second quarter, Dez Harris forced the third fumble of his career to stop the UGA drive. Jamal Peters scooped the ball for his career-first fumble recovery.
- Jace Christmann put MSU on the board with a 26-yard field goal with 1:14 remaining in the second half to cut UGA's lead to 14-3. He has now made four consecutive FG.
- Nick Gibson closed the game with a career-high and team-leading 52 rushing yards on five attempts, including a career-long carry of 39 yards.
- With a game-leading 12 tackles, Dez Harris set a new career high for total tackles and forced a fumble.

#11 Georgia Postgame Notes vs. #17 MSU - Sept. 23, Athens, Ga. (Sanford Stadium)

***Defense Stellar Versus MSU:** No. 17 MSU came into the game averaging 47.7 points/game (No. 1 in SEC/No. 9 nationally) and 493 yards/game and tonight was held to just 3 points and 280 yards of total offense, the first time in the Dan Mullen era they've been held under 300 yards. In the first half, Georgia limited MSU to only 133 yards and a field goal. Also, the game ended with a stop by the UGA defense at the 2. Redshirt sophomore DB **J.R. Reed** led the Bulldogs with a career-high 10 stops while junior ILB **Roquan Smith** had eight stops.

Junior DB **Deandre Baker** snagged the Bulldogs' first interception of the year and the third of his career late in the third quarter. His pick led to Georgia's fourth touchdown of the game to put UGA up 28-3. Senior S **Dominick Sanders** went airborne to catch his first interception of the year after **J.R. Reed** tipped a pass on MSU's next possession. Sanders now has 13 interceptions in his career, tying him for the top spot on the NCAA active list and with head coach **Kirby Smart** and three others for fifth in the school record books. Sanders returned the pick 15 yards. He now stands No. 2 on the school's all-time list with 311 return yards behind Hall of Famer Jake Scott (315).

***Series History:** For the first time in the series, both teams entered the game ranked in the top 25, and it was No. 11 Georgia with a 31-3 victory over #17 MSU. Georgia leads the all-time series 18-6 including 10 in a row in Athens. Tonight marked the biggest margin of victory over MSU since a 47-0 shutout here in 1997.

***QUICK Strike:** Freshman QB **Jake Fromm** connected with junior WR **Terry Godwin** for a 59-yard touchdown on the Bulldogs' first play from the line of scrimmage and Georgia never looked back. The pass came after Fromm handed off to senior TB **Nick Chubb** and he tossed it back to Fromm. This was a career long for both Fromm and Godwin. This was the first time the Bulldogs scored on the game's opening play since current Denver Bronco Isaiah McKenzie took a handoff 55 yards for a score in 2016 against Louisiana. The last time Georgia scored on a passing play on the first snap was in 2014 when Hutson Mason hit current Kansas City Chief Chris Conley for a 35-yard strike versus Charleston Southern in 2014. The Bulldogs won both of those aforementioned contests (35-21 and 55-9, respectively).

Godwin finished with two catches for 80 yards. Fromm completed the first two quarters a perfect 8-for-8 for 160 yards and a touchdown and finished the game 9-for-12 for a career high 201 yards and 2 TDs. He threw his first incomplete pass on his first attempt of the third quarter.

***Ground & Air Combo Makes It 14-0:** On the UGA's second series, a trio of Bulldog backs ran for 41 yards, including **Nick Chubb's** 7-yard scoring scamper to put Georgia up 14-0 at the 6:16 mark in the first period. Overall, The Bulldogs stayed perfect in the Red Zone this season, scoring all 13 times. However, Fromm mixed in a 16-yard strike to senior WR **Javon Wims** and a 21-yard pass to Godwin (on a 3rd-and-5 situation) on the drive. Chubb took a direct snap on a 3rd-and-1 situation during Georgia's first possession of the third quarter and ran 28 yards for his second touchdown of the game. Chubb now has 39 career touchdowns, which is third in UGA history, and is fourth with 35 career rushing touchdowns. Chubb finished the game with 15 carries for 81 yards and two scores.

***Kicking Continues:** The Bulldogs have benefitted from their kickoffs and punts through four games this season. On Saturday night, redshirt sophomore PK **Rodrigo Blankenship** extended his streak to 14 straight touchbacks on kickoffs dating back to his final kick of the Notre Dame victory. Opponents have just 99 kickoff return yards on five returns through a total of 22 kickoffs this season. In addition to four extra points, Blankenship also matched his longest field goal with a 49 yarder at the end of the third quarter to put Georgia up 31-3. Graduate transfer P **Cameron Nizialek** launched his first punt 46 yards and with the help of **Sony Michel** and **Mecole Hardman's** coverage, MSU called for a fair catch at its own 10-yard line. Nizialek had a 44-yard punt on his second try and MSU fair caught that one as well at its 40-yard line. He had a game-long punt of 53 yards in the fourth quarter and MSU called for a fair catch. Opponents still have just four returns for -4 yards in 2017.

***Back In Action:** Senior DB **Malkom Parrish** saw his first action of the season for the Bulldog defense. He sustained a foot injury before Georgia's opener. Senior TB **Sony Michel**, who sat out the Samford game with an ankle injury, also returned.

***Turnovers:** Georgia is -1 in Turnover Margin this season. Opponents have forced six turnovers and turned them into 17 points while the Bulldogs have forced five turnovers and registered 14 points. Freshman TB **D'Andre Swift** caught Fromm's seventh consecutive completion to start the game and then fumbled. MSU failed to score in its next series and punted to the Bulldogs. **Deandre Baker** picked off the third pass of his career (first for the Bulldogs this season) late in the third quarter. Georgia scored a touchdown on the next series. On MSU's next series, **J.R. Reed** tipped a pass that **Dominick Sanders** caught for an interception. **Rodrigo Blankenship** sent a 49-yard field goal through on Georgia's next possession, matching his career long.

***Next Up:** The Bulldogs (4-0, 1-0 SEC) go to Tennessee (3-1, 0-1 SEC) on Saturday and CBS will televise it at 3:30 p.m.

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Mississippi State Head Coach Dan Mullen

On his impression of the Georgia team...

"They've got a ridiculous amount of talent, that's evident."

On the caliber of the Southeastern Conference...

"The great thing about the Southeastern Conference is you usually end up playing a better team the next week. It's not always about the one game in this league. It's multiple games. Can you get through? They said we had one of the toughest schedules in the country to start out the season, and on the road against a top-10 team this week, and on the road against a top-10 again next week. Kind of funny to hear about how down the SEC is. Everybody talks about how down the SEC is, well we're playing our third straight top-15 team, all conference games. I don't know how down the league is, not in our schedule."

On the overall Mississippi State performance...

"Two interceptions hurt us, those are drive killers. You know what you need to do, you come on the road against a great team, and you got to win, and you lose the turnover battle, you don't tackle extremely well, the first half they won the kicking game, with the punt yardage early in the game. It's all the little things that you need to win on the road that we didn't really do today."

On taking advantage of opportunities...

"We know they have excellent running backs, and they're all top running backs. So we know they have excellent backs coming in, and I don't think we capitalized as well as we have been the past couple weeks. Just little things like that we'll get fixed up and coached up from our guys and refocus."

On the team's response to the first touchdown...

"We had poor communication in the back, and we didn't get in the right coverage."

Junior Quarterback No. 7 Nick Fitzgerald

On the game...

"I think we came out with a good attitude. We played hard, there's no doubt about [that]. We didn't go out there with a bad attitude, bad mindset. We just have to execute."

On the lack of execution...

"I saw it throughout the week at practice, having to redo a lot of plays a lot of stuff, missing a block, it rolled over into the game."

Adjusting to Georgia's speed...

"We knew they were going to be fast and we knew they were going to be physical just like last week. We just have to execute. They're fast, physical, and they're a very good defense and they executed very well. We just didn't go out and play a good game."

On playing at Sanford...

"Growing up, you know hear the fight song all the time. I'm pretty sure my alarm clock was part of the fight song. So it kind of just brought me back to when I was younger but I mean, I said all week its another game that I had to come out and win and it just didn't happen."

On the interceptions...

"Good defense. They made a good break on the ball on the first one and threw it a little wide of the receiver on the second one and popped up in the air and intercepted it."

Defensive Linebacker Braxton Hoyett No. 95

On the game...

"We just didn't get it done up front tonight. I feel we came out a little flat. We were ready but I just feel like we're a little complacent at times. It led to this loss but we're going to bounce back and go to practice on Monday."

On the first defensive play of the game

"It's just something we should have expected honestly. We knew coming up the game they were going to try something. I felt like we were prepared for it, [but] it happened. I can't even make an excuse for it. They came out with a trick play and they were gone."

Complacency in practice...

"We were trying to get ourselves together and I felt toward the end of the week we got ourselves together. I feel like we came with a game plan and if everyone would have done their jobs we would have won this game. Everybody didn't execute like we needed them to today."

On playing today...

"I feel like we played hard, we played well today, some unbelievable effort today, but I feel like it came down to execution and just the middle part of the game."

On the Georgia backs

"Their backs were good, we knew that coming into the game we had to tackle their backs and we just didn't do a good job with that tonight. Basically our job was to make the quarterback throw tonight and he really didn't have to anything much because we were missing tackles so it's something we have to work on in practice."

Georgia vs. Miss. State – September 23, 2017

Post-Game Quotes

Georgia head coach Kirby Smart

On the win:

“We came out and played with a lot of toughness. Our mantra all week was discipline, discipline, discipline. I thought we executed pretty well.”

On the first offensive play of the game:

“I had gone to Jim (Chaney) and told him I’d like to open with that and he said they had been talking about the same thing. We felt like there would be some players peeking in the backfield, and Terry (Godwin) got behind them.”

On the defense:

“We finally had a couple of turnovers. It’s been a long time coming. I can’t say enough about our defensive staff. They have worked really hard with the defensive group.”

On Jake Fromm:

“The kid is stepping up. He’s starting to play. He’s always had that in him. He’s a good leader. He did a good job managing the game.”

On Tennessee:

“Humility is a week away. Whether we’d won or lost this one, we’d have to refocus and concentrate and get ready to do it again.”

On being physical:

“It’s important to be physical. You can’t fake physical. You have to live it, breathe it, eat it.”

On the fans:

“The crowd was electric. The students were awesome. They were there in pregame warm-ups and that was really good to see. We need to keep doing that.”

Junior DB #18 DeAndre Baker

On recording the team’s first interception of the season and the third of his career...

“It felt good. It came from a good rush from the D-line and the linebackers dropping in their zones, so [MSU quarterback Nick Fitzgerald] had to put a little bit of air on it. I thank those guys... We knew it was coming eventually.”

On Dominick Sanders’ 13th career interception — which tied the school record and the record among active FBS players — which came right after...

“We have a saying in the defensive back room that “turnovers come in bunches”. So I knew it would eventually come sooner or later.”

On the early 14-0 lead surmounted by the Georgia offense...

“That was big. That gave the defense a little cushion, but we don’t really worry about the offense. We want to make sure that we stay focused and worry about our defensive assignment.”

Senior OLB #17 Davin Bellamy

On holding the Mississippi State offense with no touchdowns...

“That was big, big. We wanted to make a statement. This team that we have is a very humble team and we’re very disciplined. We knew that would come down to the winner of this game, and we wanted to make a statement with our helmets instead of our mouths.”

On the confidence level among the defense after the win...

“It’s the same that it was last week, just with how we practiced. We practiced physical every day, full padded-up. You saw the results of it. The team right now... in this league you’ve gotta be ready every week. We can’t be too high on this win, because we’ve got to go to a tough environment next week and play some football.”

Senior TB #27 Nick Chubb

On what this win means for the program...

“It’s a great win. Every win is great, but we’ve got to enjoy it for tonight and prepare for next week.”

On playing at Tennessee for the first time since a season-ending knee injury in 2015...

“Yeah, I’m ready for it... It’s a blessing. Last time I went up there, all that happened. It’s a blessing for me to go up there and be able to run like I always have been. I’m looking forward to it.”

On achieving offensive balance with 201 yards passing and 203 yards rushing...

“[Balance] is pretty much always the game plan. We take what they give. I thought we did a great job with that. We just look forward to carrying it on.”