



# POSTGAME NOTES

GAME 6 • MISSISSIPPI STATE (4-2, 1-2 SEC) VS. BYU (1-6) • OCT. 14, 2017 • DAVIS WADE STADIUM

## TEAM NOTABLES

- Mississippi State won the toss and elected to defer until the second half. MSU has won the toss in four of six contests this season.
- With this afternoon's victory, Dan Mullen ties College Football Hall of Famer Allyn McKeen for the second-most wins in MSU history at 65; Mullen is 10 wins away from tying Jackie Sherrill's school-record mark.
- State's victory evened the series against BYU to 2-2. The win was the first over BYU since a 44-28 triumph in Provo, Utah, on Sept. 14, 2000.
- On its first possession, MSU drove 89 yards for a score to record the longest drive of the season for the Bulldogs. The previous long of 80 was set in the season opener against Charleston Southern.
- MSU totaled 35 first downs against BYU, marking the first time the Bulldogs had 30 or more first downs in a game since Sept. 24, 2016 at UMass.
- State totaled 546 yards of offense in a game for the second time this season. MSU has racked up 20 games of 500+ yards of total offense since 2014, which leads the SEC.
- For the second time this season, Nick Fitzgerald and Aeris Williams both rushed for over 100 yards in a game. It's the fourth time in their career that the duo have both rushed for over 100 yards in the same game.
- Greg Eiland became the eighth overall first-time starter this season and the third on offense with his start at left tackle.
- Today's attendance was 54,866.

## PLAYER NOTABLES

- Returning from injury and playing in his first game since Sept. 16 against No. 11 LSU, wide receiver Gabe Myles tallied one catch for a total of 20 yards.
- Nick Fitzgerald recorded four touchdowns against BYU to bring his career total for TD responsible for to 60. He racked up 344 yards of offense against the Cougars to move into fifth in MSU history with 5,630 career yards of offense.
- Fitzgerald's two rushing scores brought his career total to 26, moving him to fifth outright in MSU history. He becomes the second Bulldog in MSU school history - the first since Dak Prescott (2012-15) - to rush for 25 career TDs and pass for 25 career TDs.
- Fitzgerald also moved into a tie for fourth in MSU history with Wayne Madkin (1998-01) as his two passing touchdowns brought his career total to 34.
- Totalling 103 yards on 15 carries, Nick Fitzgerald recorded his 10th game of 100 or more rushing yards to set the Mississippi State quarterback record. The previous record of nine was held by Dak Prescott.
- Aeris Williams rushed for 114 yards on 23 carries for his fifth-career game of 100 or more rushing yards and his third of the season. He is the first MSU running back to have at least three games of 100+ yards of rushing in a season since Josh Robinson tallied four over the 2014 season.
- Logan Cooke booted three punts for 50 or more yards against BYU to bring his total to 10 punts of 50+ yards over the first six games of the season. He closed the 2016 season with nine total 50+ yard punts.
- With 10:08 remaining in the second quarter, Jeffery Simmons forced the second fumble of the season; Marquiss Spencer recovered for his first fumble recovery of the season.
- As BYU drove towards the endzone with 13:55 in the fourth, Brandon Bryant recorded his first interception of the season near the goal line, returning the pick for 30 yards.



AMERICAN FLAG BEARER: Isaiah Kaufusi (LB)

TEAM FLAGS: Creed Richardson (RB), Riggs Powell (LB), Mitch Harris (LS), Nate Sampson (TE)

ALUMNI FLAG BEARERS: Greg Kite (Basketball, 1979-83), Nathan Gibbs (OL 1989, 91-94), Chad Lewis (TE 1993-96), Lee Johnson (P, 1980-84)

### TEAM NOTES

#### Series

With the loss, BYU and Mississippi State are an even 2-2 in the series now. Both teams are 1-1 on the road.

#### 1-6

BYU drops to 1-6 with the first six-game losing streak since 1968. The Cougars lost seven in a row that season, finishing 2-8 on the year.

#### Power-5 winning streak at risk

The Cougars no longer have any Power 5 teams on the remainder of the schedule. Unless the team makes a bowl and defeats a Power 5 opponent, BYU's streak of 11 consecutive seasons with a win over a Power 5 opponent will come to an end.

### PLAYER NOTES

#### Dayan Ghanwoloku

With two interceptions and 105 return yards, he is now at 218 interception return yards, No. 5 in career interception return yards at BYU. Last season he had returns of 50, 49 and 14 in his freshman campaign to go along with today's 67-yard career high and 38-yarder later on. It was also his first career two-pick game.

#### El-Bakri Backfield

Brothers, Brayden El-Bakri and Bracken El-Bakri lined up for the first time together in the backfield with Brayden as a running back and Bracken at fullback. Brayden ran for a career highs with five carries and 20 yards.

#### Aleva Hifo

Hifo caught a career-best 43-yard reception in the first half. He also grabbed his first touchdown on a 27-yard strike from Tanner Mangum. His 77 yards and five receptions set new career highs.

### CAREER HIGHS and FIRSTS (Notable career highs and firsts from today's game)

Rushing yards: Brayden El-Bakri (20)

Rushing attempts: Brayden El-Bakri (5)

Receiving yards: Aleva Hifo (75)

Receptions: Aleva Hifo (5)

Touchdown: Aleva Hifo (1)

Interceptions: Dayan Ghanwoloku (2)

Interception return yards: Dayan Ghanwoloku (105)

Forced fumble: Andrew Mikkelsen (1)

Fumble recovery: Akile Davis (1)

Tackles: Sione Takitaki (10), Zayne Anderson (9 - tied), Corbin Kaufusi (9)



## HEAD COACH DAN MULLEN QUOTES

October 14, 2017

BYU vs. Mississippi State

### *Opening statement...*

“I like the approach our guys had today. They came out with a real workman like attitude. We did some silly things and made some mistakes that didn’t make me happy, obviously turning the ball over in the red zone. We had a couple of silly penalties. We missed a couple tackles on defense. Those are things we have to get corrected. Overall, I like the performance our guys came out with despite coming off a bye week and the early kickoff. BYU is team we talked about being very physical on both lines of scrimmage. I thought we came out and played hard on defense. We made plays; holding them to 10 points. We were able to control the line of scrimmage on offense and wear them down. I don’t think it was this warm in Provo, and it was a hot week of practice. We were able to get the tempo going offensively and run the ball. We stayed pretty well balanced. Now we have to get ready; we have a lot of things we have to improve on. I want to thank all the fans for coming out today. We need a wilder environment next week as we enter back into SEC play. We need to make sure we have that home field advantage that we need to make it really hard on opposing teams.”

### *On Aeris Williams...*

“Aeris is a guy who we knew was going to be a good player for us. You can see it. It is just him growing into the position, growing into the reads, patience in his runs, understanding how plays are going to hit, understanding pass protection and understanding the routes. People get lost on that sometimes. It is not about just handing him the ball and him running. You can see how he has matured. His big plays today were picking up pass protections and coming out of the backfield to catch passes and keep the drive alive. You look at the 23-114. Grinding out between the tackles. Some of the other plays you don’t really see a lot, that’s what he has really grown into.”

### *On BYU’s screen game...*

“We adjusted to it. They hadn’t shown that a lot coming into the game. Their quarterback is a little bit banged up. They wanted to help him out early in the game by getting the ball out of his hands and get us mixed up. I thought Todd (Grantham) and the staff, in addition to the players, did a really nice job adjusting to that defensively.”

### *On the wide receivers...*

“They did well. We are trying to get that depth where we can roll those guys through. I think each guy did a little something different to make plays down the field. I thought we did a decent job blocking on the perimeter. Donald (Gray) made some nice contested catches with guys draped over him.”

***On the offensive line play...***

“Obviously, I’m pleased with those guys. Especially having to play the two freshmen tackles, with Martinas (Rankin) and Michael Story being out again this week. The first guy in the game is out, and one of your starters is out. You are pretty thin but they stepped up. BYU is a tough, physical group. You are always going to get tough, physical guys inside. We were able to block them. I was pretty pleased with that. BYU gave us some different looks they hadn’t shown a lot, but our guys handled it well.”



## HEAD COACH KALANI SITAKE QUOTES

October 14, 2017

BYU vs. Mississippi State

### ***Opening Statement...***

“To start, congratulations to Mississippi State, it was a good win for them, and obviously I am not happy with the results on our side. There were some positives, but not enough. If it did not feel like our backs are up against a wall before, it does now. We head east next week, and we have to be ready for East Carolina. Hopefully we can get things fixed and perform better by then.”

### ***On being surprised by defensive struggles...***

“There were definitely some run issues, especially when you have to defend nearly fifty plays within the first half. If we were looking at play discrepancy, they had 84 plays when we only had 46. It is tough to play defense when you are out there quite a bit. We gave them leads, long drives, and the one play where Ula Tolutau fumbled the ball, it becomes tough to defend when we are not doing much on the other side. Not to make excuses for our defense because there was mistakes there. I believe we handled the upfront better on runs, but they also put it to us upfront. We need to play more stout upfront in order to have the chance to succeed, and stop the run. Third downs seemed to be the biggest struggle, and that is something I need to fix.”

### ***On what was the encouraging factor coming into this game...***

“We beat them last year and we are familiar with them, there were a few changes, but for the most part everyone is just a bit older now. Fitzgerald is a good player and last year we were able to contain him, but this game he got away with things like QB run. It was not a secret that Fitzgerald could run and that is what we practiced for. Although, when you know what is coming, but you are not able to stop it, it becomes discouraging.

### ***On thoughts about when Fred Warner got hurt...***

“Our best player is hurt, he is a fighter and he will be fine, but I was nervous for him. Football is a physical game, Fred does not like to come out and he goes through several plays. This time, I guess he just got tired. He will be evaluated a little bit more, but he will bounce back.

### ***On message to team after game...***

“We have to make sure to focus on the little details in order to get things done. I did not sugar coat anything because these seniors want to go to a bowl game. We have to win the next game; you do not win them all until you win the one. Now the focus is to get a win next week. The coaches, players, and everyone involved need to be creative in how we are going to score points, and as for defense, we have to stop the run.”



## MISSISSIPPI STATE PLAYER QUOTES

October 14, 2017

BYU vs. Mississippi State

**QB – Nick Fitzgerald – Jr.**

***On offensive line...***

“I think they played great. Whenever their number was called, they stepped up big, came in and they’ve played good.”

***On Aeris Williams...***

“He’s a big-time guy on our offense. He runs the ball really hard. He’s always going to get you an extra yard. He’s always going to fall forward. He’s great at blocking. He’s great on the perimeter catching the ball. He’s all around a great player. It’s awesome to have him back there with me.”

**RB – Aeris Williams – Jr.**

***On defining a good game...***

“When I did everything that I could to help the team win.”

***On good running by Nick Fitzgerald...***

“It helped me out a lot, because they have to control him too. Well, try to control him because he can run.”

**DB - Brandon Bryant – Jr.**

***On preparing for BYU’s offense...***

“We knew that they had quarterbacks that weren’t strong passers. They weren’t able to get the ball down the field like they should. We prepared for everything they had. We studied tough, because we owed them from last season. We had to come out here, execute and do what we had to do.”

***On his interception in the third quarter...***

“We were just playing our coverage. I saw the quarterback’s eyes, and then he threw the ball. I was going down the sidelines thinking that J.T. [Gray] was going to block for me, but it is what it is. An interception is an interception.”

***On how the defense and offense work together...***

“Coach Grantham always preaches sudden change to us. Whenever something bad happens, we have to be ready to go at all cylinders. We stopped the run and defended the pass, which does a lot for us and gives the offense energy. They play off us.”

***On avenging last season's loss to BYU in Provo, Utah....***

“It feels great. They're a team that we don't like too much, because we don't like many teams that we lose to. We came after them really hard. We came out and played physical from the first snap to the last snap. That's what we had to do to come out here and win the game.”



## BYU PLAYER QUOTES

October 14, 2017  
BYU vs. Mississippi State

**QB – Tanner Mangum – Jr.**

***On the game plan...***

“We wanted to keep the ball moving and get the ball in the hands of our playmakers keeping the drives going. I feel like we sustained some drives, but just couldn’t finish. That’s on us. We have to be able to convert on third down and fourth down in some instances. We did some good things and had some good plays here and there. We just have to be more consistent especially in throws down field. I could be more accurate to give guys chances to make plays on it.”

***On the touchdown pass...***

“It was a good play. It was one-on-one with the safety on a post route. We got what we wanted. They didn’t bring much pressure. The protection was good. They were on the covers that we expected. Aleva did a good job on setting his man up. That was good. Everything clicked on that one. With the protection and the route, that was a good play, a momentum booster. Hopefully we can do more things like that.”

***On where the season stands...***

“Right now, our backs are against the wall. We know we have to go on a run right now and be up for the challenge. We have to take it one game at a time and give it our absolute all, all of heart and all of our effort. We know we have to come back Monday ready to go because we know we have to fight. We have a fight ahead of us. I’m excited about it, and the guys are excited about it. There’s no other option other than getting back to work and keep fighting.”

**DB – Dayan Ghanwooku – So.**

***On his interception...***

“I saw two receivers go deep, and the safety was up top. I stayed in the middle, and let the quarterback choose. I just broke off on both of them on the same play. One of the tight ends ran post so I just stayed on top.”

***On running the interception back ...***

“I was a little tired on that. I saw the open field, and I said ‘I’m taking it to the house,’ but unfortunately it didn’t go as planned. I tried following my blocks. But it is what it is.”