



# POSTGAME NOTES

GAME 7 • MISSISSIPPI STATE (2-5, 1-3 SEC) AT KENTUCKY (4-3, 3-2 SEC) • OCT. 22, 2016 • COMMONWEALTH STADIUM

## TEAM NOTABLES

- With the 38-40 defeat, Mississippi State fell to 7-1 against the Wildcats under Dan Mullen.
- This was the first Kentucky victory in the series since 2008 and first in Lexington since 2005.
- The all-time series record now stands tied at 22-22.
- The defeat snapped a five-game win streak for MSU against the SEC East.
- With Jeffery Simmons and Michael Story making their first-career starts tonight, MSU has seen 18 first-time starters in 2016, while 22 have made their debuts.
- 5 freshmen have started for the first time in 2016, including *1 true freshman*. (F. Green, Lewis, Mixon, Story, Simmons)
- Malik Dear's 45-yard rushing touchdown was MSU's longest touchdown from scrimmage in 2016.
- MSU has had three separate offensive line combinations in 2016.
- With Fred Ross taking over as MSU's all-time reception leader, MSU has broken 103 individual and single-game, single-season and career statistical records in the Dan Mullen era.

## PLAYER NOTABLES

- Senior Fred Ross took over as the MSU all-time reception leader with five catches tonight, giving him 166 for his career to move past David Smith (162).
- Ross also moved into fourth in MSU history with 2047 career receiving yards, surpassing Eric Moulds (2022). Ross is the fifth player in MSU history with 2000 receiving yards.
- At the 3:40 minute mark in the first quarter, Jesse Jackson grabbed the first catch of his career.
- Nick Gibson recorded his first-career carry with 1:00 to go in the first quarter.
- On his first-career kick return, Keith Mixon broke a 45-yard run to midfield.
- Sophomore Malik Dear scored his second-career rushing touchdown on a 45-yard run in the second quarter.
- Nick Fitzgerald has rushed for multiple scores on the ground in back-to-back games, the first time for a Bulldog signal caller since Dak Prescott did so over a three-game stretch from Oct. 4-25, 2014 (Texas A&M 3, Auburn 2, at Kentucky 2).
- Nick Fitzgerald's 107 rushing yards put him over the century mark for the third time this season.
- Sophomore Gerri Green and Senior DeAndre Ward each had a career-high eight tackles.
- Senior Johnathan Calvin tied a season-high with two tackles for loss.
- Sophomore Malik Dear had a career-high 77 yards on the ground.

## KENTUCKY POSTGAME NOTES

### Mississippi State at Kentucky

Commonwealth Stadium - Lexington, Ky.

Oct. 22, 2016

**FINAL SCORE: Kentucky 40, Mississippi State 38**

#### Team Records and Series Notes

- Kentucky is 4-3 overall, 3-2 in the Southeastern Conference. Mississippi State is now 2-5, 1-3 in the league.
  - The last time Kentucky was 3-2 in SEC play was 1999.
- Kentucky has won three straight SEC home games for the first since 1996.
  - It is also the first time UK has won its first three conference home games since 1990.
- With the win, Kentucky evens the all-time series between the two schools, 22-22. Kentucky leads the series 13-9 in games played in Lexington. This was Kentucky's first win in the series since 2008 and its first win in Lexington against Mississippi State since 2005.
- Tonight's win was Kentucky's 151st all-time at Commonwealth Stadium.
- Kentucky will return to action Sat. Oct. 29 when it travels to face Missouri in Columbia, Mo., at Noon ET on SEC Network.

#### Kentucky Team Notes

- UK's game captains were senior center **Jon Toth**, junior wide receiver **Jeff Badet**, junior linebacker **Courtney Love** and senior defensive lineman **Courtney Miggins**.
  - This was the fifth time this season that Kentucky has used those four players for captains. UK is 4-1 with Toth, Badet, Love and Miggins as captains.
- Kentucky scored 40 points in the game, which is the most points scored by UK in an SEC game since scoring 45 against South Carolina in 2014.
  - The Wildcats' 40 points scored was the most against Mississippi State since 2003.
  - The 40-point output marked the second time this season that UK has scored over 40 points in a game.
- UK had 26 first downs in the game, which is its second highest total of the season after 28 against New Mexico State.
- The Wildcats rushed for 262 yards in the game, marking the third time this season that UK has rushed for 250 yards or more.
  - UK has rushed for 250 yards or more in each of its last two games.
  - UK's 262 rushing yards was its most against an SEC opponent since Nov. 13, 2010 against Vanderbilt (341).
  - Since at least 1987, Kentucky has rushed for 250+ yards in consecutive conference games.
- Kentucky's 554 yards of total offense was its most against an SEC foe this season.
  - It was the second-best output of the year for UK.
  - It was the most Kentucky has gained against an SEC opponent since Nov. 13, 2010 against Vanderbilt (580 yards).
- Kentucky trailed at the half 14-6 before coming back to claim the win. The come-from-behind victory is only the second time under Mark Stoops that UK has rallied from a halftime deficit. Both games have happened this season.
  - UK is now 12-0 under Mark Stoops when entering the fourth quarter with a lead.
  - Kentucky has now won 30 straight games when leading at the end of the third quarter.
- The Kentucky defense held Mississippi State to 81 yards passing, which marked the first time UK has limited an opponent to 100 yards passing or fewer since allowing 87 vs. Charlotte on Nov. 21, 2015.
  - It was the fewest allowed against an SEC opponent since Oct. 30, 2004 against Mississippi State (79 yards).
- Tonight marked the second time in school history that three players in the same season have reached 1,000 career receiving yards. The last time that happened was 2007 when Stevie Johnson, Dicky Lyons, Jr., Jacob Tamme and Rafael Little accomplished the feat.
- The last time Kentucky had two SEC wins when trailing at halftime was 2010.
- Kentucky is now 6-for-6 on fourth downs in league play this season.
- Kentucky won on a last-second field goal for the first time since Oct. 17, 1998 at LSU (Seth Hanson). Hanson's field goal was 33 yards.

- Kentucky scored 34 points in the second half, which is the most against an SEC opponent since Oct. 25, 2003 against Mississippi State (35 points).
- UK scored 21 points in the third quarter, which is the most against an SEC team since Nov. 2, 2002 against Mississippi State (21 points).
- Kentucky had a 100-yard receiver and 100-yard rusher for only the fourth time in program history against Mississippi State. The last time that was accomplished was Nov. 4, 2000.

### **Kentucky Player Notes**

- Junior kicker **Austin MacGinnis** went 4-for-5 in field goals in the game, including a game-winning 51-yard field goal as time expired.
  - MacGinnis also hit from 46 yards and 32 yards (twice).
  - MacGinnis is now 4-7 in his career from 50+ yards. He is the second player in school history to have at least four career field goals of 51 yards.
  - MacGinnis is the first kicker in school history with two career games of at least 15 points scored.
  - MacGinnis scored 15 points in the game, which is the most points scored by a kicker in an SEC game since Oct. 31, 1992 (Doug Pelfrey).
  - MacGinnis is the third player in school history to reach 200 career points prior to his senior season. He is the first to accomplish that feat since Randall Cobb in 2010.
  - MacGinnis has tied Randall Cobb for quickest to 200 career points (29 games played).
- Junior quarterback **Stephen Johnson** completed 17-of-33 passes for 292 yards and two touchdowns. His 17 completions tied a career high. Johnson also rushed nine times for 20 yards.
  - Johnson was 8-of-11 in the second half for 191 yards and two touchdowns.
- True freshman running back **Benny Snell** led Kentucky in rushing with 19 carries for 128 yards and one touchdown.
  - It was the second career 100+ yard game for Snell, who had 136 yards against New Mexico State.
  - Snell had the sixth most rushing yards in a game against Mississippi State in school history (Nov. 7, 1998 – Derek Homer, 130).
  - Snell had the most rushing yards by a true freshman against an SEC opponent since Nov. 22, 1997 when Derek Homer had 137 yards against Tennessee.
- Junior running back **Stanley “Boom” Williams** rushed 14 times for 99 yards.
  - Williams now has 1,980 career rushing yards, which ranks him eighth all time in program history.
  - Williams is the fourth player in school history to reach 1,900 career rushing yards prior to their senior season. He is the first to accomplish that feat since Rafael Little in 2006.
- Junior wide receiver **Jeff Badet** caught a game-high seven passes for 139 yards and two touchdowns – all of which were season highs.
  - Badet became the 26th player in Kentucky history to reach 1,000 receiving yards in his career with his 44-yard touchdown reception in the second half.
  - Badet currently has 1,107 career receiving yards to rank 25th all-time in career receiving yards.
  - Three current Wildcats have reached 1,000 career receiving yards – Garrett Johnson, Ryan Timmons and Badet.
  - Badet also had three kickoff returns for 77 yards, including a 39-yard return.
  - Badet had the second most receiving yards in a game against Mississippi State in school history. The most was Randall Cobb (171 in 2010).
- Junior wide receiver **Garrett Johnson** had three receptions for 18 yards.
  - Johnson has 90 career receptions for 1,242 yards, ranking him 18th on UK’s career receiving yard list.
- Senior running back **Jojo Kemp** had two carries for 15 yards before leaving the game with an injury.
  - Kemp has 1,505 career receiving yards, which ranks 19th on Kentucky’s career rushing yard list.
- Senior wide receiver **Ryan Timmons** had three catches for a season-high 77 yards in the game.
  - Timmons now has 1,137 career receiving yards, which ranks him 23rd all-time in program history.
- Sophomore cornerback **Derrick Baity** had four tackles in the game, adding a tackle for loss and a pass breakup.
- Sophomore linebacker **Jordan Jones** led Kentucky with 11 tackles, adding a quarterback hurry.
  - The double-digit tackle game is the second of Jones’ career.
  - Jones now leads Kentucky with 77 tackles this season.
- Sophomore defensive end/linebacker **Denzil Ware** had seven tackles and a tackle-for-loss in the game.
  - Ware leads Kentucky with eight tackles-for-loss this season.
- Junior wide receiver **Charles Walker** made his first reception of the season.

- Senior defensive back **Marcus McWilson** made his fourth career interception, his first since his sophomore season.
  - McWilson's interception was returned 45 yards for a touchdown.
  - It was the second time McWilson has returned an interception for a touchdown. His first was against Louisiana-Monroe in 2014.
  - McWilson is the first UK player to return an interception for a touchdown since Fred Tiller vs. Louisville on Nov. 29, 2014.
  - McWilson's interception return was Kentucky's first against a SEC opponent since Oct. 4, 2014 vs. South Carolina (Bud Dupree).

# University of Kentucky Football Media Conference

**Saturday, October 22 2016**

## **Mark Stoops**

COACH STOOPS: And our coaches, from the beginning, and I know it didn't go how we wanted it to all the time, but I really felt very well prepared for this game. I felt like our players were. I felt like our coaches were, and I think they did a heck of a job.

We didn't always execute to perfection. We seemed to like putting some drama in things, but we were really playing some good football and turned it and had a chance to really separate ourselves; and we get the stripped scoop again to put more pressure on our football team.

But once again, we showed that resiliency, and we showed that toughness, and all that stuff I talked about is starting to pay off in the off-season with being physically tougher, mentally tougher, and being able to bounce back from adversity. That's what I'm most proud of.

Again, I felt like we were very well prepared. I felt like our staff did a great job. Our players have been so much fun to coach. We've had a great couple weeks. They are a fun group to work with and we are going to take another step. We're excited about it and ready to move forward to the next challenge.

### **Q. What did you think after Dorian dropped that pass in the end zone?**

COACH STOOPS: I didn't quite see it. I didn't know if it was a drop or not. I heard everybody screaming like we got it and then not, but what are you going to do on the next play? I was hoping he would come down with it, but I just saw it bouncing around back there.

### **Q. Where did that rank as one of the craziest games you've been a part of?**

COACH STOOPS: Yeah, it's right up there. It seems like we have some of those but it's right up there. Yeah, it is up there.

But I was really proud at the end. We practice that play every week, we're nine seconds -- and our players know if there's no timeouts and under three, we have to snap it. We have the play that we go to and we have to get down right there. If he runs around, the game is over.

So we run it, hit the dig and get down on the ground and call a time-out and hopefully make the field goal and it worked. It worked this time. So proud of our coaches. They are prepared for that play. They work it every week. Again, it was nice execution there.

### **Q. Austin missed one early, comes back.**

COACH STOOPS: Yeah, he absolutely did. I had a lot of confidence with him in that last kick, I did. I was good with it either way because I felt like our team, our players played their hearts out; I know our coaches coached their hearts out.

And I have a lot of confidence, I've been telling you guys that I felt like Austin was getting real close to being an elite kicker, getting back to like he is. He did miss one early but I have a lot of confidence in him.

**Q. What was it like when they picked the fumble up --**

COACH STOOPS: I can't talk about that, what goes through my mind right there (laughs) no, but --

**Q. What did you say?**

COACH STOOPS: Well, you have to bounce back. You have to. And that's what we've been practicing and working on and they have done that. And we went right back and put a really good drive together. And I knew we had them on the field for a long time.

So the one bad thing about a scoop-and-score for a defense is you have to go right back out there and, sure enough, they get the big momentum boost and they go right back out there, but our offense drove it down. We only got the three, but it was a big drive.

**Q. What did you actually say to Austin after the game on the field?**

COACH STOOPS: I think we both just looked at each other and I don't even know what we said. Just, you know, I gave him a hug and probably told him I loved him.

**Q. It's been a tough year for him last year.**

COACH STOOPS: It was a brutal -- absolutely. He's a wonderful kid and he works hard, and he's healthy, and our team has a lot of confidence in him. He just told the team that he was just proud to be a part of it and get it for them.

**Q. What did you say to Stephen (Johnson) at half-time and can you talk about Marc McWilson?**

COACH STOOPS: Stephen at halftime, we told the whole group to just go back to executing and play with poise, get the opening kickoff and go score. And we felt like we did not play very good in the first half. We were playing fantastic defense for awhile, but then we got the short fields and the change of possession, I would like to see us do better on that change of possession but two short fields and we are really playing -- I don't think they had a first down for a long time.

But we knew with the mistakes that we made with the special teams and with the fumble, and you're down one possession and didn't play very good, and certainly not very well on offense; but again, we were moving it. Everybody throws the stats in my face when we lose, but we did have a bunch of yards and were controlling the game and that does pay off sometimes, late, and hopefully it did here.

**Q: On Boom Williams' slow start to the game, but having patience and having success at the end.**

COACH STOOPS: I think you can't say enough about what he did, and all of our players. We've talked about being selfless all week, and doing whatever we can do to help this football team play better.

So when you're in the game, it's not about you being the best player out there but it's about making the team play better. And Boom did that and he made some big plays late in the game, and that was good to see.

**Q. Jeff (Badet) had some huge --**

COACH STOOPS: He did. And again, we've been -- Jeff and I talked Friday, must have been Friday, and we were in my office and that's what we needed, him to stay the course, stay patient. We've had our struggles with throwing the ball but that opportunity was going to come and when it comes, you'd better make it and do it and he certainly did.

**Q. A bunch of wrinkles in the offense today; was that through the bye week you planned that?**

COACH STOOPS: Yeah, it was trying to build on some of the success that we had with some of the plays and take it to a new level. Some of it worked a little bit and kept them off balance and it helped. And we did have two weeks. And we needed to create some plays.

**Q. Since you drew it up like this, how does the plan, the adversity -- what does that do for a program?**

COACH STOOPS: I think it gives us an opportunity to take it to the next step. We'll see what we do with it. We'll challenge our team. I just did right there about -- you know, I'm so proud of them, and I love them, and I loved coaching them throughout this whole game and throughout the whole season.

We play early next week, and you know, it's about sacrificing this week, getting home, getting some rest and let's get back to work.

**Q. Your conference play, almost comes down to the last few minutes of every game. What does that say about how the team has finished in close games?**

COACH STOOPS: We're proud of the way we've finished these games. They are never easy. We are not built that way to run away with games, and you know, our league, the difference in wins and losses is as tight as any league outside of the NFL.

So you're going to have some tight games, so you'd better win some.

**Q. They were giving up about 136 yards on the ground -- you got 262. Were you developing the mindset to run the ball?**

COACH STOOPS: Definitely, and again, we were in very good control for a long time. And then -- well, -ish (ph), I should say in the second half. But when you're grinding on people and you're getting all those yards and you've got them on the field for a long time, it can pay dividends for you late in the game. It did today.

This game could have went either way. We know that. But if we don't turn it over, we're in pretty good control, also. We have to be smarter about that, and that situation right there, an extra yard or trying to get too much, is -- that can't happen. Get down, use the clock, go to third down, try to get the touchdown, and if nothing else, we get three and we're in good shape.

**Q. Ryan Timmons had a couple big plays for you.**

COACH STOOPS: Yeah, good to see. I think all of our guys have been fun to coach, and you know, waiting for their opportunity. You know, we weren't built to just throw it around and have all that fun that you like to see. We have some playmakers about you we're learning to grind it out and we have a lot of good players, and again, it's about being selfless and when it's your time, you have to step up and make some plays.

**Q. You admitted -- Marc McWilson, when he made that play --**

COACH STOOPS: Big time. Big time. I tackled him. I hurt him (Laughter).

No, I'm so happy for him. He doesn't realize how much potential he has sometimes and that's why I'm hardest on him.

**Q. Once again, you didn't flinch. That seems to be a common mind-set right now.**

COACH STOOPS: I'm from Youngstown, Ohio. We don't flinch.



**Kentucky Football Postgame Quotes**  
**Kentucky vs. Miss. St.**  
**Commonwealth Stadium – Lexington, Ky.**  
**Oct. 23, 2016**

**UK Student-Athletes**

**#99 Austin MacGinnis, PK**

*On how he was feeling seeing the game-winning kick go through the poles...*

"It felt so good. It felt like relief. It feels so good to get over the hump. We haven't beaten Mississippi State since I've been here, so it felt really good to get the SEC win."

*On putting the first quarter miss behind him...*

"You always have to put any kick behind you. Make or miss, it's always about the next kick. If you're thinking about the last kick, you don't give yourself a chance."

*On what Coach Stoops said to him after the game...*

"He was telling me he was proud of me, that everyone had faith in me and they trusted me. He was glad I made the kick."

**#15 Stephen Johnson, QB**

*On how they ran the offense...*

"Being able to run trick plays and to score touchdowns really helps our offense. It really opens things up and not make it so one- or two-dimensional."

*On how he felt before and after the kick...*

"Before, I don't know. My stomach was everywhere. My mind was everywhere. And after, I was filled with joy. I am still in shock. This is a great feeling."

*On his confidence in Austin MacGinnis to make the field goal...*

"Oh, absolutely. He does it every day in practice. I knew he was going to make it regardless."

*On him and Jeff Badet's offensive chemistry in the second half...*

"All week we've just been practicing and trying to get better. In the first half of the season, we really weren't connecting like we were supposed to, but we definitely connected today. Getting a little extra practice really helped us this week for this game."

**#15 Marcus McWilson, S**

*On how it feels to win a game the way they did...*

"It's definitely a great feeling. I'd say emotions are still high for me, and I'm sure they're still high for everybody else. They made plays, we made plays and we were able to keep our composure. Today we were able to make a little bit more than they were and come out on top. I'm grateful for this win, but now we've got to focus on next week."

*On the interception...*

"You know, I studied film. I knew the routes that were coming and knew what I was going to get. I was able to make a play on the ball, get to the end zone and help our team get up. Again, excitement there was just crazy. I was caught up in the moment and loved it."

*On how tough Coach Stoops was on Marcus and how it motivated him to be better...*

"I definitely had to except the challenge myself and be the player he expected me to be. I had to hold myself to a higher standard and above the standard he even holds me to. They tell us that all the time that a coach is someone that takes you to a place that you cannot get to on your own. So as he pushes me, I push myself, and my teammates all push each other to keep it going."

#### **#26 Benjamin Snell, Jr., RB**

*On the moment he shared with his family after the game...*

"It was just me crying and my dad saying, 'It's ok. You did it.' I'm just really emotional about this game because I just love this game. Everybody on the team loves it. Putting all the pressure on just one guy and him being able to make that play and win the game is just amazing. We just fought so hard and he pulled through. So, I had nothing to do but cry. I was so happy."

*On what a big win like this can do for the team going forward...*

"It's going to give us a lot of encouragement and a lot of good behind us. In the past years, this would be a turning point that would go downhill. This time, we're keeping the winning streak and keeping things alive now."

*On the atmosphere after Mississippi State made the late score...*

"We sighed. We weren't down, but we knew that it was time to execute. Offensive coaches got in our ear, Coach (Eddie) Gran got in our ear and it was time to drive."

#### **#34 Jordan Jones, LB**

*On what this game means to him...*

"I'll be the first one to tell you, we've come a long way. Last year, even the year before that, it was almost like people would just quit and give up after we were down, but today and the past few weeks we've proven everyone wrong. Just fighting, it's been a dog fight."

*On defense keeping it close the first half and offense keeping it close in the second half...*

"We work off of each other. If offense is doing bad, the defense is going to pick the offense up. If defense is doing bad, the offense is going to make plays."

*On difficulty tackling Nick Fitzgerald...*

"He's a big dude, I'm not going to lie. He fought for every yard, and he's a humble guy, too. And he's a pretty good quarterback, but I don't think it was that hard to tackle him, at least for me."

#### **Miss. St. Head Coach Dan Mullen**

*On feelings on the end of the game based on how the second half played out...*

"We just needed to make a play, and credit to them for making the play. I feel bad for our guys. We've lost three games this season on the final play of the game with a really young team. But opportunities are there for us to make plays. We just didn't make enough of them."

*On Nick Fitzgerald driving the field for the last touchdown...*

"It was a great drive. The guys showed a lot of character, especially with overcoming a penalty. We had horrendous penalties upon us during the game that just really hurt. But we were able to overcome it, make some plays and take the lead. But you have to give their kids credit, they made a major play at the end. A 51-yard field goal is a heck of a kick by that kid."

*On momentum change after fumble recovery...*

*"Again, our guys showed a lot of character. We were down by 10 and ended up coming back to take the lead. We just fell short."*

*On Nick and the offense on last minute drives...*

*"Some of the guys made some plays. Fred (Ross) didn't have a big night, but was able to make some plays during key moments of the game. Nick also made some plays at key moments of the game. We had a lot of penalties and holding calls that we can't let happen. I just feel bad for our guys. It's tough on young football players that are working to improve and build themselves to lose three games on the final play of the game. It's tough, but we'll see what we're made of coming back from this."*

*On difference from first to second quarter...*

*"Offensively, I've never seen us play that poorly, fumbling the ball and fumbling snaps. I wish I had an answer. I've never seen us make that many mistakes and errors to start a game off."*

*On playing young guys early in the game...*

*"I like to play a lot of guys, and sometimes we get into the games and don't rotate enough guys early enough. I want to play guys early in the game so they can get into the course and the flow of things. It's hard to throw a guy in during the third quarter, and that's their first time getting a snap that day. I love playing the young guys, but I don't think we've done a great job of doing it throughout the year. The coaches focus on getting guys in that are going to make plays, but I just want to make sure that everyone that's going to be playing is able to get in the game early."*

*On team recovery from this loss...*

*"That's the challenge. We'll see how they bounce back. When you have a lot of young football players, how they respond to this is really going to be huge. Their mindset, how they come to practice tomorrow, just them as a team in general. Here's the thing about football – we get to play another game next weekend. This same group of guys get the opportunity to go experience the feeling that Kentucky just experienced with winning a football game, but it's only going to happen if we shoe up and work our tails off, continue to improve at every position and have a mindset to face adversity, make plays and be a better football team next week than we were this week. If we do, we have the opportunity to get a win. The guys are working and improving so they deserve that feeling."*

*On Darryl (Williams') condition...*

*"I don't know exactly, but I think he was moving his fingers and toes during the injury. Besides that, all we know is that he was alert. I appreciate Mark (Stoops) coming over to check on him. In the giant picture of life, it's just a football game and when stuff like this happens it brings you back to reality. I made sure that our guys knew that he was alert and I believe that Mark told his guys the same. It's tough for anybody to witness that. It's a scary situation for everybody, so hopefully he'll be okay. Our prayers are with him."*

*On what was working well with the run game during the first half...*

*"After the start we had, that's pretty amazing because we started minus 25 yards per carry. To be honest, we just executed. I don't know that anyone made any spectacular runs where they broke a bunch of tackles. We just executed well and moved the ball."*

*On motivating Mark McLaurin during fourth quarter...*

*"I just told him to keep going! He came to play four quarters of football and there was a lot of football left to be played at that moment. They had been making great plays the entire game and then we finally made a play, which reenergized everyone."*

*On their current record being more difficult for older or younger guys...*

*"It's difficult for everybody. We're 5-2 because of three plays and that's hard for everyone because of how much work everybody puts into it. We're 5-2 talking about how great things are, and it feels like the world is collapsing in that locker room. Our guys are competitive. They want to win. So, they work so hard and I just feel bad for them. But we have some good, young leadership on this team, and I'm sure that they will continue to grow and respond the right way."*

### **Miss. St. Student-Athletes**

#### **#7 Nick Fitzgerald, QB**

*On attitude on the sideline when down 10 in 4<sup>th</sup> quarter ...*

*"Well, we were down 10, there is still a lot of football left to play. We knew that whatever we did, we had to do whatever we could to win the game and there was nothing that we could do less than that. Defense came up huge. Put us right back in the game by three, then we get another big stop, we get the ball, we drive down and have a great drive, score and just needed one play, one play short."*

*On being able to lead the team during the last offensive drive ...*

*"Just a good combination of pass and run. Just keeping it myself sometimes, running backs had great blocks and receivers running great routes, it was just clicking that last drive."*

*On rejuvenating sideline ...*

*"We weren't down by any means. We knew that we were still in this game and that we still had a lot of time left in this game. We really thought that we were going to win the game. When (Ross) scored the sideline had extra energy. It was a great play and just really put us back in the game."*

#### **#22 Malik Dear, WR**

*On change in second quarter ...*

*"We just came out slow in the first half, I mean, everything that was happening in the first quarter was just on us. We had just got in a huddle, sat down and talked about it, understood that all the mess-ups and all the errors we had, it was past us now so we just started running the football and they just brought out success."*

*On dynamics of run game ...*

*"It is very dynamic, we just have to get the passing game going so we can get even better runs, even bigger explosive plays."*

*On the losses ...*

*"This is actually my first time experiencing things like this, I mean, it just makes the team stronger. As a team we just have to come together and overcome all of this, all of the losses, and just get ready to go to work tomorrow."*

**#41 Mark McLaurin, DB**

*On the defense's mindset on the final drive...*

"We knew we had to come in and make a stop. We had to go all out to draw a line and stop them."

*On what went through their minds as Kentucky lined up for the 51-yard field goal...*

"Coach just told us to make a play, and to be honest the kicker made a great kick. So, there was nothing we could do about it. It hurts knowing we fought so hard and we knew we came back, but for that 51-yard kick... It hurt watching that."

**#8 Fred Ross, WR**

*On losing the past three games in the final play and what needs to change...*

"Maybe it's just someone at the beginning of the game not making a play they needed to. Losing by one play just means we needed to make one more play."

*On how he bounces back after these losses...*

"We just have to come back to work. We have a lot of young guys in the locker room and I don't think anyone in that locker room has their head down. We just want to get back to practice on Monday."