



POSTGAME NOTES

GAME 8 • MISSISSIPPI STATE (6-2, 3-2 SEC) AT #24 TEXAS A& (5-3, 3-2) • OCT. 28, 2017 • KYLE FIED

TEAM NOTABLES

- Texas A&M won the toss and elected to defer to the second half, marking just the third time this season MSU has not won the opening toss.
- Dan Mullen earned his 67 victory of his career as head coach of the Bulldogs; he is now eight wins shy from tying Jackie Sherrill's school-record mark.
- With the victory, MSU took the edge in the all-time series history with a 6-5 mark against the Aggies. In just the fourth meeting in College State, MSU earned its first victory in College Station since Nov. 1, 1913. This is the first time in the last five meetings that the away team earned the win in the series.
- With the victory, MSU improved to 6-2 over the first eight games of the season to become bowl eligible for a school-record eighth straight year.
- MSU's first scoring drive of the game was the longest of the season for State in terms of plays (16) and time (8:13).
- Kylin Hill's second-quarter fumble was MSU's first fumble on an offensive possession this year, ending a streak of 341 consecutive carries without a fumble.
- State's defense held Texas A&M to just 33 yards of total offense over the first half, the fewest for the Aggies since 2008.
- MSU's XX-point margin of victory was the largest in the series history against Texas A&M. The previous high of 17 was set on Oct. 4, 2014 when State earned a 48-31 over the Aggies in Starkville.

PLAYER NOTABLES

- With 3:34 remaining in the first quarter, Nick Fitzgerald rushed for a two-yard score for the first points of the game. It was his 29th rushing TD of his career moving him into a tie with Vick Ballard (2010-11) for third all-time in school history.
- Fitzgerald closed the game with 105 rushing yards on 18 attempts, including a season-long rush of 45 yards during a scoring drive in the second quarter, for his 12th 100-yard rushing game of his career to set the SEC quarterback record.
- Nick Fitzgerald added two passing touchdowns to bring his career total to 37 and his season total to 13, which moves Fitzgerald in a tie for ninth with Chris Relf (2010) and Tony Shell (1988) on Mississippi State's single-season passing touchdown chart.
- In his two starts against Texas A&M, Fitzgerald has gone 30-for-52 for 350 yard passing with four touchdowns while adding 293 yards on the ground on 38 attempts to average 7.7 yards per touch with three rushing scores.
- Donald Gray reeled in his 10th career touchdown reception and his third of the season with an 8-yard catch with 3:30 remaining in the first half to push MSU's lead to 14-0.
- With 11:47 in the third quarter, Nick Fitzgerald connected with Jordan Thomas on a 10-yard TD reception to extend MSU's lead to 21-0, marking the first time Thomas has reeled in TD passes in back-to-back games in his career.
- Nick Gibson scored his career-first touchdown on a 14-yard rush with 5:00 remaining in the third quarter to push MSU's lead back to three scores at 28-7.
- Defensive lineman Cory Thomas made his return from injury against the Aggies. It was his first action since Sept. 9 against Louisiana Tech.
- Jesse Jackson caught a career-high four passes for a career-best 39 yards receiving against the Aggies.
- Aeris Williams fumbled for the first time this season during the third quarter against Texas A&M. It was his first fumble in 305 consecutive carries.
- Mark McLaurin recorded his team-leading second interception of the season when he grabbed a pass batted by Jamal Peters and returned it three yards to the MSU 47 with 5:04 remaining in the first half. It was McLaurin's fourth interception of his career.
- Larshard Durr added his first-career interception with 6:04 remaining in the third quarter as he scooped a pass bobbled by Tolando Cleveland and returned it 20 yards to set up an MSU scoring drive.
- With 7:23 remaining in the game, Jamal Peter snagged his first interception of the season and returned it 90 yards for his first-career "pick six."
- Defensively, Montez Sweat set a career-high with 2.0 sacks while Leo Lewis led the team and tied his season high with eight tackles.

TEXAS A&M POSTGAME NOTES

GAME 8:

Mississippi State at Texas A&M

Miss. St. 35, Texas A&M 14

6:20 p.m. | Oct. 28, 2017

Kyle Field, College Station, Texas

ABOUT THE GAME ...

- The Aggies fell to 5-3 overall and 3-2 in SEC play.

NOTABLES ...

- Junior LB Otar Alaka, the SEC leader in tackles for loss entering today's game, logged his first career interception on a deflected pass on the Bulldogs' initial drive of the game.
- Sophomore LB Tyrel Dodson logged his third straight double-digit tackle game with a game-high 12 stops vs. the Bulldogs. Dodson also contributed a 0.5 tackle for loss and a QB hurry. Dodson's previous 10+ tackle games were a career-high 16 vs. Alabama and 11 vs. Florida.

- Junior WR Christian Kirk became the sixth player and first wide receiver to surpass the 4,000-yard plateau in all-purpose yardage in program history. Kirk joins Cyrus Gray, Darren Lewis, Curtis Dickey, Dante Hall and Leeland McElroy to reach 4,000.
- QB Kellen Mond connected on 8-of-26 passes as he became the fourth Aggie freshman to log 100 completions in a season.
- QB Nick Starkel replaced an injured Mond to lead the Aggies with 133 yards through the air. The RS-Freshman was 8-for-15 and completed a career-long 70 yard TD pass to freshman WR Camron Buckley.
- Buckley led the Aggies with 88 receiving yards against the Bulldogs, his first time to lead Texas A&M in yards in a game this season. The Cedar Hill, TX native, has recorded a reception in four straight games. The touchdown grab was his second-career scoring grab.
- Senior DB Armani Watts tallied 11 tackles to become the third Texas A&M defensive back to reach the 300-tackle plateau. The milestone was previously reached by Jaxon Appel (348 from 2002-05) and Trent Hunter (302 from 2008-11).
- The Aggie defense, who came into the game with a FBS-best 28.0 QB sacks, had two sacks against the Bulldogs and have had at least two QB sacks in every game in 2017.

GAME CAPTAINS, 12TH MAN

- Game captains for the Aggies were Cullen Gillaspia, Christian Kirk, Trayveon Williams and Armani Watts. The Aggies won the toss and chose to receive the opening kickoff.
- The Aggies' 12th Man representative was junior LB Cullen Gillaspia (Katy, Texas) in his 21th straight start.

Post Game Quotes

Mississippi State 35, Texas A&M 14

October 28, 2017

Kevin Sumlin, Texas A&M Head Coach

On tonight's game...

"I thought we were ready to go. I thought we started with energy. Obviously our execution was not where it needed to be offensively. We missed the first two big plays. After starting fast with the turnover coming out of the gate, with field position and then giving up a long drive. The start of the game was fast. We didn't continue with the way we started the game. We didn't do enough offensively in the first half to really get things done. There were a lot of three-and-outs and a lot of things there that execution-wise left a lot to be desired."

On what happened to Kellen Mond and his decision to take him out...

"I didn't like the way he looked when he got hit. On the personal foul he got hit up high and he laid there for a little bit and then got up and I didn't like the way he looked so I made him take a knee and gave Nick [Starkel] some time to warm up. He got in there and got some snaps and did some things. It didn't really change anything from our depth chart, it all started with the personal foul."

On the defense against Nick Fitzgerald...

"When he has been successful, they've been successful. He had 105 rushing yards and that was one thing, to try to contain him but he was also able to throw some balls that he completed. There was one on a third down in the middle of the field in between two or three people. He made some big-time throws. He played well tonight. When he's been successful this year, they've been successful. Not to take away from the other part of the team but there's direct correlation between his play and their success. He was successful tonight."

Connor Lanfear, Texas A&M Junior Offensive Lineman

On how the offensive line has played the last few weeks...

"I think we've done a good job of preparing and having a good game plan in place and executing. Of course we want to come away with those types of wins but for the most part I think the offensive line has played well as a unit."

On how the offense moved differently with Nick Starkel in...

"It wasn't that much different from an offensive lineman's perspective. You get a play and you execute it and you hope for the best result. Nick is more of a pocket passer so that benefits us but for the most part, as an offensive lineman, you can't tell that much of a difference"

On why it was tough to move the ball in the first half...

"They showed us a lot of fronts that we weren't anticipating them to bring. We had a great week of film study and really evaluated their defense. We had a successful game plan in place. It's part of the game. Any given Saturday anything can happen and they brought some fronts that we weren't expecting to see as much of so it took us some time to adjust to that and get the correct people blocked."

Landis Durham, Texas A&M Junior Defensive End

On the loss...

"It was a tough loss. Mississippi State played good. We just have things we need to fix on both sides of the ball. That is pretty much the bottom line, and we have to do better next week. It's hard to say what

was different. We just have to do our jobs better. We knew what they were about. They did exactly what we said they were going to do."

On moving forward...

"We have to go in Monday and see what we did, what we did good and what we did bad. We have to come back next week. Next week we have a game at 11 against Auburn here, so that will be our focus come Monday."

Dan Mullen, Mississippi State Head Coach

Opening statement...

"I'm really proud of our guys and the way we approached the week. I thought we had a great week of practice. I thought coaches did a great job putting a game plan together, both offense and defense. Players believed in it and had a great week executing the game plan especially on defense by not letting (Texas A&M) get any rhythm going and not them seize moment with the crowd. I'm really proud of our guys and their attitude with which they approached the game and went and performed. You guys know me and I wanted to finish a little cleaner than the way we did especially on offense late in the game and even that one big play on defense. You ask all our coaches and we all have pretty high standards. We are very, very pleased. That's a good Texas A&M team. They have talent. They are having to play a true freshman quarterback which is always hard. He has some starts under his belt but he is still a true freshman quarterback, I think our defensive staff did a good job to put him in some uncomfortable positions over the course of the game and limit what he usually does well. You are always in the game with them because they have so many explosive athletes. You look at their kids and with what Kevin (Sumlin) does. You know they are going to compete to the final whistle. It was a great win for us."

Third down stops...

"Yeah that was pretty good. I think the plan worked. When you're facing a freshman quarterback is to get him in some third and longs. The longer the better. The more you can disguise the more confusing looks you can give him. I think we were able to do that on defense tonight."

On hitting the six-win mark...

"We made their predictions come true. I guess we hit that. You know what, you got six wins but there is a lot of football left to be played. The great thing is we have three out of four at home down the stretch. You look at the environments. That's the thing about the Southeastern Conference, we need that home-field environment. We've got an early kick next week. We went out and played a tough UMass team, last year was a battle. They always play with a little chip on their shoulder and we need that home-field advantage. Six wins means to our teams and our guys that you are rewarded with one more game. Hopefully we'll get some more but we at least got ourselves an opportunity for one more at the end of the season."

Nick Fitzgerald, Mississippi State Junior Quarterback

On the game plan...

"We had a great game plan going in. We knew if we could move them up front and we could run the ball, that's what we were going to do. Obviously, it worked out for us."

On scoring off turnovers...

"That's what you have to do. If your defense is going to come up big with stops, you have to that into points. If you are going to win big games, you have to turn turnovers into points."

On the team maturing...

"I think after the first three games, we were riding really high. The next two knocked us back down, back to where we needed to be. We reevaluated where we were as a team, and since then we've played pretty well."

Mark McLaurin, Mississippi State Junior Safety

On his interception...

"I was very excited. I saw the receiver come back behind me and try to strip it, so I had to make sure I secured it."

On the putting pressure on the QB...

"Credit to our defensive line, they were giving us a lot of pressure on the quarterback, and we were just doing what we were supposed to do on the back end."

On winning on the road...

"We knew tonight was going to be very important for us to come here and get a road win. We really needed it. Everybody knows we haven't been playing great on the road. Tonight was a great win for us."