



POSTGAME NOTES

GAME 8 • MISSISSIPPI STATE (3-5, 1-3 SEC) VS SAMFORD (6-2, 4-1 SOCON) • OCT. 29, 2016 • DAVIS WADE STADIUM

TEAM NOTABLES

- Mississippi State set a new school record with 669 total yards, surpassing the previous mark of 647 against Northwestern State on Sept. 19, 2015.
- With the 56-41 victory, Mississippi State improved to 17-1-1 all-time against Samford, including a 14-0-1 mark in Starkville.
- MSU has now won nine-straight against the Bulldogs of Samford.
- Under Dan Mullen, the Bulldogs now own a spotless 8-0 record against the FCS, and have won the last 12 straight
- The 54-point scoring barrage from the Bulldogs is the first 50-plus game since 51 scored against N.C. State in the Belk Bowl.
- The Bulldogs set a new school record with 29 first downs.
- The 417 passing yards is the sixth highest total in MSU history.
- MSU has now earned back-to-back games with 250-plus yards rushing, after earning 252 on Saturday
- The 81 plays run by the Bulldogs were the most since 86 against BYU on Oct. 14, 2016
- MSU's 21 first-quarter points were the most since Oct. 10, 2015 against Troy, while the 28 first half points were the most

PLAYER NOTABLES

- With 417 passing yards and 119 rushing yards, Nick Fitzgerald is the third quarterback in SEC history to earn a 400/100 game, joining Johnny Manziel (2012: 453 passing, 104 rushing) and Archie Manning (1969: 436 passing, 104 rushing).
- After accounting for seven total touchdowns, Nick Fitzgerald is tied for first with Dak Prescott who set the record against Arkansas on Nov. 21, 2015 with seven touchdowns.
- Additionally, Nick Fitzgerald's five passing touchdowns today tied the school record set by Dak Prescott at Arkansas Nov. 21, 2015.
- Nick Fitzgerald's 536 total yards gained on Saturday rank second in MSU history behind Dak Prescott's 554 earned against Arkansas on Nov. 21, 2015.
- Junior Donald Gray's three touchdown catches tied the single-game school record held by Chad Bumphis and Sammy Milner.
- With nine receptions today, MSU all-time receptions leader Fred Ross has now caught a pass in 30 consecutive games. That ties the school record currently held by Chad Bumphis.
- With 107 yards tonight, Fred Ross set the school record with nine games over the century mark.
- Ross also moved into a tie for third place in MSU history with 17 career receiving touchdowns, catching former Bulldogs Justin Jenkins and Eric Moulds.
- Sophomore Malik Dear snagged his first receiving touchdown of the season and third of his career in the first quarter, a 25-yard strike from Nick Fitzgerald.
- Junior Donald Gray grabbed his second touchdown of the season in the first quarter, his first since Sept. 10 against South Carolina. He took it a career-long 71 yards.
- Donald Gray's 207 receiving yards were a career-high and the most by a Bulldog since Jameon Lewis had 220 against Rice on Dec. 31, 2015
- Sophomore Brandon Bryant grabbed the fourth interception of his career and the first since Dec. 30, 2015 against.
- Nick Fitzgerald's 301 total yards in the first half were the most since Dak Prescott accounted for 317 at Arkansas on Nov. 15, 2015
- Nelson Adam's blocked PAT was the second time a Bulldog has done so this season. The last Bulldog to do so was Johnathan Calvin at LSU Sept. 17.
- Senior and former walk-on DeAndre Ward grabbed the first interception of his career in the third quarter and returned it 35 yards for a touchdown. It was the first "pick-six" by a Bulldog since Jamoral Graham took one back at UMass on Sept. 24



HEAD COACH DAN MULLEN

October 29, 2016

Samford vs. Mississippi State

Opening Statement

“It’s great to get a win. I know our guys are fired up. They were fired up downstairs. I don’t know any team in the country that’s appreciating a win more than our guys and what we’ve been through, to lose three games on the final play of the game. Our guys were juiced up, fired up and loving it. I’m really happy for our guys. There are a lot of things we can improve on, but a lot of guys made some great plays during the course of the game to win today. It feels good. We’ve got a tough closing stretch on the schedule, but it feels good to head into that on a win.”

On the defensive performance...

“I’m disappointed in certain things on the defense that we’ve got to get cleaned up. We had way too many missed tackles, and that was really disappointing. But we knew they were a good offense, a super high-tempo offense that’s going to throw the ball all over the place. We’ve got to clean up some of our tackling, and we’ve got to be able to get off the field on third down defensively. But there were times in the game where we made some really big plays on defense. You’ve got younger players that are starting to make some big plays. That really picks up the spirit of the team.”

On Fred Ross’ record performance...

“Fred believed in what we’re doing here and came here. He’s got a tremendous work ethic in what he does and constantly works. He’s very much a student of the game; he knows all the situations and what’s going on and why things are happening on the field. He’s going to leave one of the most decorated receivers in school history. He made a great decision to come back for his senior year and continue to improve.”

On how injuries have affected the team...

“It’s challenging when you’re already really young and then you compound tons of injuries on to your team. It bodes well for the guys who are getting experience for the future. It’s tough now, but guys are getting lots of opportunities. It’s part of life. You’re given opportunities in life, and those opportunities will define who you are.”



SAMFORD COACH QUOTES

October 29, 2016

Samford vs. Mississippi State

Head Coach Chris Hatcher

Opening Statement

"I am just really proud of our football team. We came in and fought extremely hard on a very hot afternoon. We ran out of gas a couple of times and somehow the guys ended up filling their tanks back up. I think defensively we played tight early and we made some big stops. Offensively we were able to have some good drives and then at the end, we cut it to eight and unfortunately we just couldn't muster up one more drive to maybe make the game a tad closer at the end, but we were in the game all the way until the end. We gave ourselves a chance to win in the fourth quarter. I am really proud of effort and I am just excited our boys overcame a 23-point deficit in the third quarter where it really looked like the game could have gotten out of hand and all of a sudden we caught our second wind and got a chance to win at the end. (It's) never fun getting beat, but considering the circumstances and the opponent, we played today, I thought our team played really hard and played with great effort and I am proud of them for that."

On the offense for both teams...

"I think we have a pretty good football team in general and offensively our quarterback is a really good player. We got some good receivers; Karel Hamilton and Kelvin McKnight are outstanding players and I was really proud of Andrew Harris. He has been a backup when Emmanuel Obajimi got hurt last week; he is our third leading receiver. He did not play and Andrew came in and made some big plays for us, but I think the tell-tale thing for us tonight was the offense line, we held them out a little more than I anticipated and we were able to run the ball good when we were able to. Those guys played well, but in a game like this, you have to score just about every time you get it and we couldn't quite muster one more good drive in the fourth quarter."

On the Mississippi State defense...

"They started dropping eight on us at the end of the game and when you do that, you kind of cover all of the zones and then you force us to run the football. At that point of the game, time was not on our side. We had the good last drive where we moved it all the way down and we probably could have moved it down and possibly had scored, but I was concerned we wouldn't have enough time to get the ball back with an onside kick. Once we got under a minute, I started trying to take some shots at them and that is difficult to do when you have a team dropping eight on you, but those are some big guys out there. We are not used to leaning on big guys like that for as long as we did today, but our special teams were solid and I think we did some really great things. The most important thing is I think our guys were having fun out there today and we do not get to play in that atmosphere that often, but today being able to do that was a treat for our team and I think we gave them all they wanted, but it just wasn't quite enough at the end."



MISSISSIPPI STATE PLAYER QUOTES

October 29, 2016

Samford vs. Mississippi State

Senior Linebacker DeAndre Ware

On meaning of win...

"It was a great job by the team to find a way to win. We have been on the short side with a lot of great teams. It was just great to be on the other side and win this."

On any talk about Smitherman fumbling and getting a stop...

"Not really just go out there and play defense and not letting them score every drive. Really that is all that was said."

On scoring a rushing TD for first time since high school...

"It was my senior year in high school. It has been a long time. My teammate actually said it had been a long time since I was in the end zone and it felt great."

Sophomore quarterback Nick Fitzgerald

On record-breaking performance...

"Honestly, as guys go make plays they are open and I was able to just put it where it needed to be. A lot of time I throw the ball and guys are normally blocking, but not tonight. Guys were getting open and I was just able to find a way to get it to them and they did the rest."

On breaking Dak Prescott's records...

"It is awesome. He is obviously a phenomenal player now in the NFL, so it is always big when you can do something as close as he did it."

On getting Donald Gray involved in the offense...

"Oh I love Donald Gray. He works his butt off every day and it is great to see he had a game where he could show out."

Donald Gray

On approach to game

"I did nothing different just same preparation. Also, asking God for patience."

On contributing to offense

"It felt good. I just did my job and my assignment and did it spectacular. That's how we practice all week."

On having to come back for Nick Fitzgerald's throw...

“I just wanted to make the play more than they did. Also, opportunities do not come too often so you just have to trust the quarterback with it and put your life on the line to do what you have to do. I just really wanted to make that play.”

On having a break out game...

“It feels awesome. I just have to keep working. I have waited a long time for this.”



SAMFORD PLAYER QUOTES

October 29, 2016

Samford vs. Mississippi State

QB – Devlin Hodges – So.

On the outcome of the game...

“I’m proud of the team, we left it all on the field, I’m proud of the offensive line, receivers and defense – they stepped up when we needed them to make big plays. It’s not what we wanted, but we fought and left it all on the field so tomorrow we have to wake up and get ready for Citadel.”

On the confidence taken from having been in a one-score game in the fourth quarter...

“It’s like coach says every week, we play a faceless opponent and we came (here) not worrying about what Mississippi State was going to do, just worrying about us, so obviously confidence will build from this but we just have to continue to work.”

WR – Karel Hamilton– Sr.

On the outcome...

“Definitely proud of the team, we just played a team in the top conference in college football. We know they were going to be a tough opponent, we fought back and made big plays, we played a hard game. I’m really proud of the offense and defense, now we just have to keep our heads up as we go against Citadel.”

On confidence going against SEC opponent...

“A lot of confidence for this team, especially for our offense moving the ball the way we did, the defense had some great plays. That was just a great team and being able to fight toe-to-toe with them was great and the environment and atmosphere, playing in that energy was a great feeling.”