



POSTGAME NOTES

GAME 9 • MISSISSIPPI STATE (7-2, 3-2 SEC) VS. UMASS (2-7) • NOV. 4, 2017 • DAVIS WADE STADIUM

TEAM NOTABLES

- MSU won the toss and elected to defer until the second half. MSU has won the toss in six of nine contests this season.
- Redshirt freshman wide receiver Reggie Todd made his first-career start in Saturday's game. He is the 10th first-time starter this season. MSU has had five first-time starters on offense and five on defense.
- For the third consecutive game, MSU returned an interception for a touchdown, marking the first time since the 2007 season that MSU tallied a "pick six" in three straight contests. Over MSU's four-game winning streak, the Bulldogs have recorded seven interceptions. State has tallied four defensive touchdowns this season, which leads the SEC.
- Deddrick Thomas returned an 83-yard punt for a score. It was MSU's first punt return for a touchdown since Fred Ross returned a punt 77 yards for a score against Troy on Sept. 15, 2015.
- MSU offense has not lost a fumble this season to bring its streak to 40 consecutive quarters without losing a fumble on an offensive possession.
- MSU has rushed for at least 250 yards seven times as a team this season and holds a 7-0 record in those contests.
- For the fifth time in their career and the third time this season, Nick Fitzgerald and Aeris Williams both rushed for over 100 yards in the same game. MSU is undefeated when the duo both break 100-yards rushing in a game.
- MSU has scored at least 34 points in the last four games and in all five home games this season. Over the win streak, MSU has outscored opponents 149-54. At home this season, MSU has outscored opponents 200-47.
- Dan Mullen earned his 68 victory of his career as head coach of the Bulldogs; he is now seven shy from tying Jackie Sherrill's school-record mark.
- MSU improved to 2-0 against UMass. The Bulldogs earned a 47-35 victory at Gillette Stadium last season.
- State is now 36-7 in non-conference games under Dan Mullen, including a 22-3 record at home.
- With today's victory, State improved its season record to 7-2. This is the fourth time in the past six seasons MSU has held a 7-2 record or better.
- The victory was the 32 for the senior class as they improve to 32-16, which ties the 2014 senior class for the fourth most wins by a senior class.
- Today's attendance was 57,374.

PLAYER NOTABLES

- On the opening drive, J.T. Gray intercepted his first-career pass and returned it 58 yards for a score [13:42 1Q]. The score extended MSU's "pick six" streak to three consecutive games.
- Jace Christmann booted a 28-yard and a 25-yard field goals in the first half to push his streak to eight consecutive made field goals. He leads the SEC with a 1.000 field-goal percentage (8-for-8).
- Defensively for MSU, Willie Gay, Jr. forced his first-career fumble, Jeffery Simmons recorded a career-high eight tackles and Fletcher Adams grabbed a season-high four tackles.
- Deddrick Thomas saw his first special teams action of his career as a punt returner for the Bulldogs. He had four returns for 104 yards, including an 83-yard return for a touchdown. It was MSU's first punt return for a touchdown since 2015 and tied Kevin Prentiss' 83-yard punt against Tennessee on Dec. 5, 1998 for the fifth longest punt in MSU history.
- Cornerback Jamal Peters saw his first offensive action of his career with an 8-yard rush in the second half.
- Nick Fitzgerald rushed for 135 yards on 17 carries to average 7.9 yards per touch. He improved his career rushing total to 2,303 yards and surpassed Johnny Manziel and John Bond to rank fourth in SEC career rushing yards by a quarterback. His 2,303 career yards also puts Fitzgerald on MSU's career rushing charts at ninth passing Dennis Johnson (1974-77).
- Fitzgerald has rushed for over 100 yards in four consecutive games to bring his total for the season to five, which ranks in a five-way tie for 10th in MSU single-season history. It was the 13th 100-yard rushing game of his career, which ties Jerious Norwood (2002-05) for second in MSU history.
- Aeris Williams racked up 114 yards rushing on 24 carries for his sixth career 100-yard rushing game and his fourth of the season.
- Fitzgerald scored two rushing touchdowns in the second half to bring his career total to 31, passing Vick Ballard (2010-11) for third place in MSU history. His 12 rushing touchdowns this season ties Anthony Dixon (2009) and James Johnson (1998, 1997) for 10th in MSU single-season history.



HEAD COACH DAN MULLEN QUOTES

November 4, 2017

UMass vs. Mississippi State

Opening Statement...

“Great win by our team today. We’ve not really been in a lot of tight games this year. Coming in to today, we knew we were in for a battle. I knew all week we were playing an excellent football team. They come in and played with a chip on their shoulder. Head coach Mark Whipple is a great football coach, and I’ve known him for a long time. They have been outscored by five total points on the season, and there are teams that are 6-2 and have outscored opponents by two points. We knew we would have our hands full. They came in and did a good job, so give them a lot of credit. We came in and made some mistakes that you cannot make. We turned the ball over. We gave up explosive plays and penalties at critical moments during the game that killed us. I really am proud of how our guys battled for four quarters. They came out in the second half and continued to make plays. We found ways to make plays to win there at the end.”

On MSU’s first-half performance...

“We had a good week at practice. I don’t know what it was; they are 18-22 year old kids. One of the things is you have to come out and continue to grind and play even better from one week to the next. I thought we prepared real well. We had a good week of practice. We came out and didn’t perform to our standards in that first half. It happens for kids sometimes, but they buckled down for the second half.”

On preparing for today’s game versus next Saturday vs. Alabama...

“With college football being how it is today, if you don’t bring your A-game there’s a chance you’re going to put yourself at jeopardy. I don’t think for the whole game today that we brought our A-game. At times we really did, like the punt return at the end. When we needed returns we had returns. When we needed drives to start the second half, we had drives to start the second half. When we needed a stop on defense, we got a stop on defense. We played well, but were a little inconsistent at times, but that’s college football.”

On the blocking ability that Aeris Williams provides ...

“When you look at him he has 24 carries and 114 yards. He might not get all the glory the other guys get, but he’s the guy that makes it roll. In the game we know Aeris continues to carry the load opening up the explosive plays for us.”



HEAD COACH MARK WHIPPLE QUOTES

November 4, 2017

UMass vs. Mississippi State

Opening Statement...

“I thought our coaches got our players ready to go. We got where we wanted to go, but Mississippi State was just too tough. The punt return really hurt us at the end. Obviously, we were down to our third quarterback at the end. Our guys competed, and we made some good plays on both sides of the ball. I figured we had to. They are a hard team to drive the ball on. They’ve won a lot of games, and I see why they are ranked as high as they are. It hurts a little bit when Tyler Hayes goes out of the game because he played his best game. Credit to Mississippi State, they got the W.”

On stopping Mississippi State’s offense...

“Our guys had a good plan. Coach Pinkham had a good plan. Fitzgerald was a little bit off his throw game. We made a couple plays. Obviously the pick-six was big and gave our guys a little confidence on that side. The plan was to get in at halftime with a lead which we did. We wanted to make sure they had a long field. We played good in the red zone on defense. It went the way I hoped it would go. Credit goes to those guys. They came out in the second half and ran the ball pretty well on us. With Fitzgerald, it’s kind of his best thing.”

On Mississippi State’s defensive aggression...

“They got us on some things. We thought we had some matchups we could exploit. Unfortunately, I thought they got a little greedy. We thought we could get something on short yardage situations as aggressive as their back end was. We had a few others where we called the right defense, but didn’t get the right looks for a couple of things. Probably the red zone is what hurt us. 4th-and-1, we had something there. We got down there before, and Ross was really excited to play. He lost his mind a little on the sack. It wasn’t as good of a call as it should have been. You can’t get sacked on that. They played good red zone defense on us. They’re a hard team to play. The cowbells and all the other paraphernalia playing in the SEC makes it tough. ”



MISSISSIPPI STATE PLAYER QUOTES

November 4, 2017

UMass vs. Mississippi State

QB – Nick Fitzgerald – Jr.

On MSU improving to 7-2 on the season...

“It’s great! It was a close game, closer than anything else we’ve had. They were a very good team, we knew that coming in, stressed that all week in practice. They’re not a 2-6 team. They’re a lot better than their record, and they showed it in the first half. We didn’t come in fired up, we didn’t come out executing the way we needed to, but I’m glad it’s over, glad to be 7-2.”

On breaking records...

“Honestly I just play. I’m sure once I’m done, once I look back at it, it’ll hit me and I’ll be able to really process it all, but right now I’m focused on the next day, focused on our next opponent, just trying to get better.”

On pairing with running back Aeris Williams...

“It’s huge. Anytime you have a running back that’s always going to get you yards, always going to run hard, really good at reading holes, he’s a great running back and it really helps because guys have to respect him.”

WR – Dedrick Thomas – So.

On this game being a redemption game compared to last week...

“[I saw] a lot of space, great blocking from my teammates. I saw the coverage team going to the other side and wanted to run away from them. After I broke the tackle, I was like, ‘Oh yeah, I’m gone.’”

“When I caught it, there was just space, and I broke one tackle and it was just grass and my blockers from there on out.

DL – Jeffery Simmons – So.

On being able to put points on the board on the defensive side...

“It is what we are supposed to do. We take away what they do best, and they were pretty balanced. They knew they were not going to be able to run the ball on us, so they had to throw the ball. When we are in the right spot and doing our job, we can cause defensive interceptions and fumbles.”

On passion and edge for playing defense...

“I play with a lot of passion. I have been playing the game since I was 6-years-old, and have continued to fall in love with the game ever since. Every time I go out there, I play with the utmost passion.”

On why the team is ready for next week's challenge...

“It is just another game where we have the chance to prove ourselves. We have one of the best defenses and offenses in the country, and we want to take those roles and go with them.

Defensively, we need to play our game. Last year they got a good perimeter on the edge and that is something we have to stop this year. If we can hit the quarterback and continue to hit him, we have better chances of winning the game.”



UMASS PLAYER QUOTES

November 4, 2017

UMass vs. Mississippi State

RB – Marquis Young – Jr.

On the play of the offense...

“We made some mistakes during critical times. We also made some big plays today. We just got to stick together and work a little bit harder.”

On the difference with the Mississippi State red zone defense...

“Mississippi State is a tough team. We made mistakes during critical times. We got to make sure we hold people accountable. They were able to get a little bit more pressure from the inside and outside man to man.”

On where to go after this game...

“We don’t want moral victories. We don’t want ‘we almost had them,’ we want the win. We come out here and work hard every week at practice and we respect our opponent we respect who we’re playing. We respect the SEC.”

On the momentum shift after halftime...

“Up at halftime it was good feeling to be up a score at half but they came out firing. They had momentum and what we needed to do was stop them on first down.”

LB – Jarell Addo – Jr.

On the UMass defensive performance...

“I feel like the defense stepped up and made great plays. Isaiah Rodgers came up early with the pick six in the first half and other interception he had. We had a few key three and out stops. It was a good first half to have complementary football and get the offense going.”

On the ability to shut down the Mississippi State offense...

“Throughout the week we knew the quarterback No. 7, that’s the go to guy so we were keying on him a lot ends and paid attention to their keys that lead everybody to the right spot to make a play.”

On the game plan coming into the game...

“Key on Fitz and (our) defensive staff, they really know how to game plan against offenses so we were locked in after Appalachian State game was over and already over to State the next day ready to go so we had a great week of practice and unfortunately the game ended how it went but the defense was in the right spot.”