



# POSTGAME NOTES

GAME 9 • MISSISSIPPI STATE (4-5, 2-3 SEC) VS NO. 4 TEXAS A&M (7-2, 4-2 SEC) • NOV. 5, 2016 • DAVIS WADE STADIUM

## TEAM NOTABLES

- With the 35-28 victory, Mississippi State knotted up the head-to-head series with Texas A&M at 5-5.
- The win against the fourth-ranked Aggies is MSU's highest-ranked win since upsetting No. 2 Auburn on Oct. 11, 2014.
- Under Dan Mullen, the Bulldogs are now 2-3 against the Aggies while winning back-to-back games against TAMU in Starkville.
- The Bulldogs gained 500-plus yards of total offense for the second-consecutive game, the first since 2014's LSU and Texas A&M games.
- The 574 total yards are the 11th most in MSU history for a single game.
- MSU has gained 250-plus yards rushing in three-consecutive games, after Saturday's 365 total.
- The 365 yards are the most rushing yards for MSU this season and the highest total since 2010's 409 earned against Houston.
- The 365 yards rushing by MSU is the most allowed by an Aggie defense this season. The previous high was set by Alabama after the Tide earned 287.
- The 89 plays from scrimmage was MSU's highest of the season, passing the previous high of 86 against BYU.

## PLAYER NOTABLES

- Sophomore Nick Fitzgerald finished the game with 184 yards rushing to earn his third-consecutive contest with 100 or more yards rushing. Fitzgerald has ran over the century mark five times for his career, all coming this season.
- Fitzgerald is now tied for ninth all-time in MSU history for most 100-yard rushing games.
- The Bulldogs' 74-yard touchdown run on MSU's first play from scrimmage tied Fitzgerald's career long rush set against South Carolina (2016), while the touchdown scamper ranks as the longest of his career.
- The 20 carries for Fitzgerald are the most of his career, while the 184 yards rushing are just 11 yards shy of his 195 career best set against South Carolina (2016).
- After racking up 98 yards receiving, senior Fred Ross moved to second place in career receiving yards at MSU. The Bulldog now has 2,252 yards, just 18 yards shy of record holder Chad Bumphis' 2,270 (2009-12).
- With six receptions today, Ross broke Bumphis' record of 30 straight games with a catch. The senior wideout has earned a reception in 31 consecutive games.
- Ross moved into sole possession of third place in MSU history for career receiving touchdowns after his 60-yard score in the second quarter. The senior passed former Bulldogs Justin Jenkins (2000-03) and Eric Moulds (1993-95) after his two-score day to total 19 touchdown grabs for his career.
- The two touchdown performance for Ross tied his career high as the Tyler, Texas native earned his fourth game with multiple touchdown catches.
- After recording four tackles today, Leo Lewis now has 60 tackles in his first season with MSU. The Bulldog now ranks first nationally among Power 5 freshmen.
- Sophomore Aeris Williams became MSU's first running back since Josh Robinson in 2014 (Kentucky) to earn 100-plus yards on the ground. Williams finished the game with 140.
- The 140-yard effort was Williams' first 100-yard rushing game as a Bulldog, his previous high was 81 yards against BYU on Oct. 14, 2016.
- Cornerback Mark McLaurin recorded his first career sack, after the sophomore brought down Jake Hubenak in the third quarter.
- McLaurin's interception to close out the game against the Aggies late in the fourth quarter was his first career pick.
- Freshman Kody Schexnayder made his first appearance for the Bulldogs as he recorded four punts for an 41.0 average.

# TEXAS A&M POSTGAME NOTES

## GAME 9:

**Texas A&M (#4/7/7)**

## at Mississippi State

**Mississippi State 35, Texas A&M 28**

**11 a.m. | Nov. 5, 2016**

**Davis Wade Stadium, Starkville, Miss.**

## ABOUT THE GAME...

- The Aggies fell to 7-2 overall and 4-2 against SEC opponents.
- The loss was the Aggies' second straight away from Kyle Field and second straight loss in Starkville, Miss.
- The loss evens the all-time series between the two schools at 5-5.

## TAKE IT TO THE HOUSE KIRK...

Sophomore WR Christian Kirk has been a game-breaker for the Aggies the past two weeks with three punt return TDs and two receiving scores.

- Kirk fielded a MSU punt inside the TAMU 10 late in the first half and returned it 93 yards for a touchdown. It tied for the third-longest punt return TD in school history.
- The punt return TD was his third of the season, which breaks a school record owned by four players (including himself in 2015 and 2016).
- It brought his career total to five, which improves his own school record.
- Kirk's five career punt returns rank No. 2 among active FBS players even though he needs one more return to qualify for NCAA career statistics.

- Kirk also reeled in a 54-yard TD catch that drew the Aggies within seven points early in the fourth quarter.
- Kirk finished the day with a season-best 144 receiving yards on seven catches and a season-best 237 all-purpose yards. Both were Kirk's second-best single game efforts of his career.

## Active FBS Career Punt Return TDs

Player, School	TDs
Ryan Switzer, North Carolina	7
<b>Christian Kirk, Texas A&amp;M</b>	5
Dante Pettis, Washington	5
Isaiah McKenzie, Georgia	4
Williams Likely, Maryland	4

## REYNOLDS GRABS NO. 25 ...

The SEC's active receiving TDs leader Josh Reynolds reeled in his 25th career touchdown to pull the Aggies within a touchdown in the fourth quarter.

- The TD catch was the seventh of the season and he's tied with Christian Kirk for the team lead.
- Reynolds now has a receiving TD in four straight games.

## TAMU Career Receiving TDs

Player, Years	TDs
Jeff Fuller, 2008-11	34
<b>Josh Reynolds, 2014-</b>	25
Ryan Swope, 2009-12	24
Uzoma Nwachukwu, 2009-12	19
Bob Long, 1966-68	19

## SEC Active Receiving TDs list

1. <b>25 - Josh Reynolds, TA&amp;M</b>	2014-16
2. 19 - Fred Ross, MSU	2013-16
16 - Keon Hatcher, ARK	2012-16
4. 14 - Christian Kirk, TA&M	2015-16
14 - Evan Ingram, Ole Miss	2013-16

## NOTABLES

- Junior QB Jake Hubenak came off the bench to replace the injured Trevor Knight and responded 222 yards and two touchdowns on 11-of-17 passing.
- Before Knight left the game, he posted his 10th rushing TD of the season. He entered the game as the SEC's rushing TDs leader.
- Junior FS Armani Watts led the team with 12 tackles and senior SS Justin Evans also posted double-digit stops with 11.
- The Aggies rushed for just 117 yards, marking just the second time the offense hasn't rushed for at least 200 yards in 2016. It was three yards off the season low of 114 vs. Alabama.
- The Aggies had two pickoffs, both in the end zone, against the Bulldogs. The interceptions were the first of the season for both Nick Harvey and Donovan Wilson. It was the fourth time Texas A&M has had two or more pickoffs in a game this season.

## GAME CAPTAINS, 12TH MAN

- Game captains for the Aggies were graduate transfer QB Trevor Knight, junior WR Ricky Seals-Jones, senior LB Shaan Washington, DE Myles Garrett and senior DB Alex Sezer Jr. Texas A&M won the toss and elected to receive.
- The Aggies' 12th Man representative was sophomore LB Cullen Gillaspia (Katy, Texas) in his ninth straight start. A former walkon, Gillaspia was awarded a scholarship at the end of fall camp.



## HEAD COACH DAN MULLEN

November 5, 2016

Texas A&M vs. Mississippi State

### *Opening Statement...*

"I want to thank our military people here with us today. Our prayers are with everybody who is overseas and allow us to go live our dreams. I get to live my dream of coaching football here every day in the greatest country in the world. There are a lot of people who have sacrificed for us to afford us the opportunity to go live our dream. I thank our military here and overseas for all of the sacrifices they make for their families and to let all of us live the life that we live. Our prayers are with those all over the country and the world.

I am so proud of our kids. They have faced a lot of adversity this year. We have a young team and they didn't flinch. I thought we had our best week of practice. I think our guys, coaches and defensive staff responded. I tried to get out of their hair a little bit and let them go. They did a great job responding. They were able to make plays today. All year it has been pretty close here and there, and there were a lot of opportunities to make plays that we weren't making. We made a lot of plays today. Guys believed in themselves and continued battling. Offensively we did a great job. The offensive coaches put a great plan together for us to be able to run the ball the way we did. Brian Johnson did an awesome job for us today. He called half of the plays from the box. I couldn't be prouder of our coaches and our players. These fans came out and supported us. A lot of people have been doubting and questioning us. Three times this year we have lost the game on the last play. The fans did a great job today showing up, supporting and believing in this team. That is how we built this program. If the fans show up and create an unbelievable atmosphere, they are going to be rewarded with a great football team. You don't win and then show up, you show up and then win. They did a great job motivating our players out there today. You will always see us play with relentless effort. To me, that is the biggest thing. I wanted them to believe in themselves and each other and to know that they are good enough to make those plays. I think we played that way this weekend. I don't think anybody on our team was shocked with the result of today's game."

### *On the offensive game ...*

"I was worried a little bit. Coming into the game, we knew we had to be able to run the football. They have such skill and pass rush ability off the edge. We didn't want this to be a pass game shootout. We ran the ball. John Hevesy and Greg Knox had those guys ready to go play physical up front. I thought Brian Johnson did a great job in the box keeping the rhythm going. We had great communication with keeping me on check with what was working and staying on that path."

***On today's win ...***

“It was a great win for us. There is going to be a big celebration at the Mullen house tonight. It means a lot to me for these kids. You go, for the third time of the season, into a locker room of kids who tried to give you everything that they have and have it taken away on the final play of the game, you are almost out of things to say. For them to continue to work, believe and fight, I couldn't be prouder of our players.”



**TEXAS A&M HEAD COACH KEVIN SUMLIN**  
**November 5, 2016**  
**Texas A&M vs. Mississippi State**

***Opening Statement***

“We got whipped. It just came down to Mississippi State did a lot better job at running the ball. We couldn’t stop the run today, and we couldn’t run. Those are the numbers. We kept them in some real short-yardage situations, and they were 11-of-18 on third down. We were 4-of-15, so we didn’t stay on the field, either. It came down to that. They were able to run it, and we weren’t. They dictated play today.”

***On the supposed lack of energy...***

“I don’t think there was a lack of energy. I think there were some busts. Their quarterback played extremely well today. He ran it, but he also was extremely accurate when he threw it. He made some plays into tight coverage. A lack of energy would have shown up in a worse score, I’ll put it that way. All the way down to the end, we’ve got guys that are trying to get the thing to overtime. It’s more of a lack of execution.”

***On the message given at halftime...***

“It was not a panic situation at halftime. I thought our coaches all year have done a great job of making adjustments at halftime. We’ve been an explosive third-quarter team, and so to settle the guys down, we’re a two-score game and we’re kicking off to them. Our defense needs to come out and shut them down, and we need to get back on the board. And we didn’t, right away. It was too little, too late.”

***On if the No. 4 College Football Playoff ranking affected the team...***

“People are probably going to say that, and I don’t think these guys acted like it. I didn’t see that reaction internally or outwardly from guys, so no. I don’t think so.”

***On Mississippi State QB Nick Fitzgerald...***

“He’s been up and down throwing the football as a young guy, and he’s getting better. He’s got a live arm, he’s a big guy and a really good athlete. He was highly accurate today. He threw some balls into some really tight coverage today, some slants and some things like that. He was the best player on the field today.”

***On Texas A&M backup QB Jake Hubenak...***

“I thought that was a bright spot. I thought that Jake’s demeanor lends itself to these situations. He’s never too excited; he’s never overly-hyped up. To come in on the road, cowbells ringing, to be down two touchdowns and operate the way he did – he was 11-for-17. 11-for-17, two touchdowns, and 222 yards is pretty good for a guy that was just standing over there without a helmet. And then all of a sudden, you’re in, and in an SEC road game and down. He really gave us a chance at the end of the game to tie it. He was a bright spot today, and we’ve got confidence in Jake going forward.”



## MSU PLAYER QUOTES

November 5, 2016

Texas A&M vs. Mississippi State

**LB – Richie Brown – Sr.**

*On the environment in the locker room after this win...*

“One of the best I’ve ever seen. This is up there with beating Auburn at No. 2 and Texas A&M the year we went No. 1. Honestly this is better because this team is so hungry for a win that we’re not taking it for granted. I think the guys are more excited about this than when we were ranked at No. 1.”

**WR – Fred Ross – Sr.**

*On Nick Fitzgerald...*

“Each and every week he’s going to get better. He’s young, and this is his first year starting at quarterback. Every week I look for him to improve, and he’s done that.”

**QB – Nick Fitzgerald – So.**

*On scoring 11 touchdowns in two games...*

“As the season is going I’ve gotten more experience as a starter, and I’m feeling more and more comfortable. Me and my teammates are learning from each other every day, like knowing exact tendencies and things like that. We’re all just finally clicking.”

*On how big of a win this was for the team...*

“Huge. With the season we’ve had with all the ups and downs, to come in and beat such a good team like this in front of our home crowd, it’s just phenomenal.”

*On the final Mississippi State touchdown of the day...*

“Honestly, I saw a hole during the play so I took it. There was only one guy on me in the end, and my team worked so hard for me all day. There was no way I wasn’t going to score that for them.”



## TEXAS A&M PLAYER QUOTES

November 5, 2016

Texas A&M vs. Mississippi State

**QB – Jake Hubenak – Jr.**

*On a possible lack of focus with so much on the line...*

“I wouldn’t say it was a lack of focus, I think everyone was prepared today. We just didn’t execute and they had a great game plan. In the end, I think they just played better than us.”

*On the mood after the game...*

“The coaches told us to keep our heads up. This is the strongest team I have ever been around in my life. Obviously we are all disappointed, this is not how we wanted it to go, but we all love each other and we all care about each other. It meant the world to me to have my teammates come up to me and just tell me that I did a good job after the game. We did want it to end differently but I love those guys, the way they treated me after the game was amazing.”

**WR – Christian Kirk – So.**

*On what led to their slow start ...*

“First off, I think it was execution. We went out there and saw a lot of things that were open that we prepared for all week long. We were prepared for these things to come, but I think we just lacked the execution that we had during practice.”

*On if their College Football Playoff ranking got to their heads ...*

“No sir, I think we did a good job this week of not buying into all of that. If anything, we knew that people still weren’t giving us the respect that we thought we deserved and we tried to go out there today and prove that. Obviously we did not do what we needed to do, due to a lack of execution, Coach Sumlin said something like ‘how are we going to respond on Monday and go back to work to put this in the past and move onto the future,’ and that is what I am interested in as well.”