



## MISSISSIPPI STATE FOOTBALL POSTGAME NOTES

### Mississippi State vs. Kentucky

September 21, 2019 | Davis Wade Stadium | Starkville, Miss.

#### Team Notes

- MSU's game captains were QB **Tommy Stevens**, P/H **Kody Schexnayder**, S **Brian Cole II**, LB **Erroll Thompson** and 73 **Darryl Williams**.
- MSU won the toss and elected to defer to its option. Kentucky received the opening kickoff.
- Today's attendance was 54,556.
- Bulldogs making their first career starts today (3 – 3 offense): QB **Garrett Shrader**, WR **Isaiah Zuber**, TE **Geor'quarius Spivey**.
- MSU improved to 24-23 in the all-time series against the Wildcats.
  - The Bulldogs have won 10 of the last 13 meetings over UK dating back to 2007.
  - Six of the 10 victories have come by 10-plus points.
- MSU improved to 14-6 all-time versus Kentucky in games played in Starkville.
  - The Bulldogs have won a series-best five consecutive games since 2010 in Starkville. The previous mark was a four-game run in 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2001.
  - State has outscored Kentucky, 115-36, in the last three meetings in Starkville.
- MSU won its SEC opener for the third time in the last four seasons.
- MSU led 21-3 at the half and improved to 10-1 under **Joe Moorhead** when leading after two quarters.
- The Bulldogs scored first via an interception returned for a TD and bettered its record under **Moorhead** when scoring first to 9-3.
- MSU had two players rush for over 100 yards in RB **Kylin Hill** (26-120/3 TD) and QB **Garrett Shrader** (11/125/0 TD) for the fifth time during the **Moorhead** era.
  - Three of those five outings have come against SEC opponents.

#### Offense

- QB **Garrett Shrader** started at quarterback in place of QB **Tommy Stevens** (did not play today).
- **Shrader** became the fifth MSU true freshman to start at least one game at quarterback since the 1989 season.
  - Others: Keytaon Thompson (2017), Damian Williams (2013), Wesley Carroll (2007), Todd Jordan (1989)
  - Thompson started the 2017 TaxSlayer Bowl vs. Louisville, Williams started the 2013 Egg Bowl vs. Ole Miss and Carroll started in nine games in 2007.
- State's 21 first-half points were the most for the Bulldogs against a SEC opponent since scoring 21 points against Ole Miss in 2018 and 27 points against Ole Miss in 2016.
- The Bulldogs averaged an astounding 9.1 yards per play in the second quarter and 10 of MSU's 14 first downs in the first half came during the second quarter.
- State tallied a season-high six plays of 20+ yards
- MSU's first 20+ yard play from scrimmage was a 21-yard reception by WR **Dedrick Thomas** late in the first quarter. **Thomas** later added a 25-yard catch on third-and-16 late in the third quarter.
- In the first half, **Shrader** completed 13 of 15 passes for 123 yards with an interception.
  - He had a pair of 20+ yard completions and seven first-down completions.
- **Shrader** finished the game 17-of-22 passing for 180 yards against one interception.
- **Shrader** also rushed for 125 yards on 11 carries.
  - He had the two longest rushes of the day for MSU with a 49-yard carry late in the fourth quarter and a 36-yard scamper during the second quarter.
- State's first scoring drive of the day was nine plays, 75 yards in 4:25.
  - The drive was capped by a 12-yard **Kylin Hill** touchdown run.



- MSU's second scoring drive was its fifth of 10+ plays this season and went for 80 yards and lasted 5:51.
  - The drive featured four first downs, including a 36-yard run by Shrader and a 13-yard catch for WR **JaVonta Payton**, and ended with a 2-yard TD run by **Hill**.
- The SEC's leading rusher this season, **Hill** recorded his seventh career 100-yard rushing game. It marked his fourth straight game with 100+ yards on the ground.
- **Hill** finished with 120 yards on 26 carries and a career-best three touchdowns.
  - **Hill's** three rushing TDs are the most for a MSU player during a SEC game since QB Nick Fitzgerald secured four rushing TDs against Arkansas in 2016.
  - **Hill** became the first MSU running back with at least three rushing touchdowns in a single game since Vick Ballard had three in 2011 at Memphis.
  - **Hill's** three rushing scores today marked the first time since Ballard in 2010 vs. Arkansas that a Bulldog running back has found the end zone three times against an SEC opponent.
  - The three rushing scores for **Hill** brought his career total to 11 TDs.
- **Hill** is the only MSU player to rush for 100+ yards in each of the first four games of a season since at least 1990.
  - The last MSU player to have four straight 100-yard rushing games was QB Nick Fitzgerald against BYU (15-103/2 TD), against Kentucky (12-115/2 TD), at Texas A&M (18-105/1 TD) and versus UMass (17-135/2 TD) in 2017.
  - The last MSU running back to have four consecutive 100-yard rushing games was Anthony Dixon who had a streak of five straight games at Vanderbilt (21-123/0 TD), against LSU (27-106/2 TD), against Georgia Tech (18-106/0 TD), against Houston (21-134/2 TD) and at Middle Tennessee (27-135/2 TD) in 2009.
- **Hill** needs two more rushing games to enter MSU's career top 10 in 100-yard rushing games
- **Hill** has scored a touchdown rushing in three of four games this season and has found the end zone at least once through the air or on the ground in five of the last six games, dating back to the 2018 season.
- WR **Osirus Mitchell** had multiple receptions for the third straight week.
- MSU rushed for 200+ yards for the 29th time since 2016 and is 23-6 in those games.
  - The Bulldogs have topped 200 yards on the ground for the fourth straight week and the 12th time in their last 17 games.
- The Bulldogs logged 400+ yards of total offense (421) for the ninth time under **Moorhead**.
  - It was the second 400+ yard game this season for MSU.
  - State is 9-0 in those games.

## Defense

- LB **Willie Gay Jr.** returned an interception 52 yards for a touchdown on the game-opening drive.
  - It was MSU's first pickoff returned for a score since 2017 against UMass (J.T. Gray, 58 yards).
  - It was MSU's first defensive TD since Gray's 58-yard INT return for a TD in 2017 against UMass.
- **Gay** now has an interception in each of his last two games played. Prior to today, his last interception was vs. Iowa in the 2019 Outback Bowl. He has three career interceptions (two have come in SEC games).
- **Gay** became the fourth different Bulldog with an interception this season.
- MSU extended its streak of consecutive games with a takeaway to 20, which was the second longest streak in the nation heading into today's game.
- State has recorded at least one interception in 15 of its last 17 games.
- MSU extended its streak of consecutive games with at least one sack to 26.
- Five different Bulldogs recorded a tackle for loss.
- S **C.J. Morgan** led the Bulldogs with a career-high nine tackles and career-best two pass breakups.
- LB **Tim Washington** recorded his first career sack.
- DT **Lee Autry** recorded a career-high 1.0 tackle for loss.
- DE **Fletcher Adams** had 1.0 sack for the second time in his career and first time since at Kansas State last season.
  - He also forced a fumble for the second time in his career.

## KENTUCKY POSTGAME NOTES

Kentucky at Mississippi State

Davis Wade Stadium, Starkville, Miss.

Sept. 21, 2019

**FINAL SCORE: Mississippi State 28, Kentucky 13**

### Team Records and Series Information

- Kentucky is 2-2, 0-2 in the Southeastern Conference. Mississippi State is 3-1, 1-0 in the league.
- Mississippi State leads the series, 24-23.
- Next for Kentucky: the Wildcats have their only back-to-back road games of the season as UK visits South Carolina on Saturday at 7:30 p.m. It will be televised on the SEC Network.

### Player Notes

- UK's game capt: OG [Logan Stenberg](#), DL [Calvin Taylor](#), LB [Josh Paschal](#) and athlete [Lynn Bowden Jr.](#)
- Junior athlete [Lynn Bowden Jr.](#) caught seven passes for 129 yards, his first 100-yard game of the season and second of his career.
  - Now has 1,285 career receiving yards, moving past seven players for 18<sup>th</sup> place on the UK career receiving yardage list.
  - Now has 111 career receptions, moving into 15<sup>th</sup> place on the UK career list.
  - He is the first UK player with at least six receptions in each of the first four games since James Whalen in 1999.
  - Has caught a pass in 18 consecutive games.
  - Also rushed three times for 37 yards and had 210 all-purpose yards on the day.
- Junior WR [Josh Ali](#) caught five passes for 61 yards, both career highs.
- Redshirt freshman RB [Kavosiey Smoke](#) rushed for 25 yards, including a two-yard touchdown run in the third quarter.
- Junior RB [Asim "AJ" Rose](#) rushed nine times for 105 yards, averaging 11.7 yards per carry.
  - It is his first 100-yard game of the season and third of his career.
- Junior CB [Brandin Echols](#) got a sack/caused fumble in the third quarter, his first for both plays at Kentucky. He had a career-high 10 tackles.
  - Redshirt freshman CB [Jamari Brown](#) recovered the fumble, his first as a Wildcat.
- Sophomore S [Yusuf Corker](#) had the first two pass breakups of his career and tied his career high for tackles with seven.
- Sophomore LB [DeAndre Square](#) had nine tackles, including 1.5 tackles for loss and a sack.
- Junior DE [Kordell Looney](#) and junior S [Quandre Mosely](#) made their first collegiate starts.
  - Mosely made his first UK interception in the second quarter, with a 39-yard return.

**Mississippi State vs. Kentucky**  
**MSU Head Coach Joe Moorhead**  
**September 21, 2019 | Davis Wade Stadium**

***Opening Statement***

JM: “Very proud of our guys. We said heading into the game it was going to take poise, passion and precision. We certainly saw a lot of it. At times, little left to be desired than others. At the end of the day, it was the complementary offense, defense and the special teams game, and it was good enough to win. We knew heading into this season we are going to have to fight, scratch, claw and do whatever we need to do to go 1-0 on a weekly basis. We challenged the kids on Sunday; they responded. I am very proud.”

***Q: How big of a lift was it to have the full complement of guys out there with all the guys you missed the first three games?***

JM: “It helped from a game day and performance context. It helped morale and practice depth. Certainly, when you are at full strength it helps you prepare better and helps you play better.”

***Q: This defensive seems like a bend and not break defense. Every time Kentucky tried to get in the red zone we stopped them, how gutsy did you think those guys were to get off the field?***

JM: “I think you’re seeing an elevated performance from the veteran guys who have played a lot and seeing incremental performance from the younger guys, particularly our interior [defensive] line. Defenses like last year don’t come around very often. We knew it wasn’t going to be that, but Coach [Bob] Shoop and the defensive staff do a great job putting the kids in position to be successful. They’ve really bonded into the fact that our culture and the little things, like how we practice during the week, is going to give us the opportunity to be successful. So, we just keep thinking small gains every week in all three phases, then we’ll give ourselves a chance to be successful on Saturdays.”

***Q: Along those lines, but more so on an injury standpoint, how helpful was it to have the whole offensive line in full strength?***

JM: “Marcus [Johnson] does a great job of rotating those guys and dual-training them in multiple positions, but when you’re playing a big, physical front like Kentucky or any SEC opponent, you’re going to need all those guys. I would guess eight or nine probably cycled through. It was good to get all the offensive lineman healthy, as well.”

***Q: I know you only got about a quarter and a half with Willie Gay Jr., but how does he add to that defense?***

JM: "I think Willie [Gay Jr.] is one of the top linebackers in the conference and in the country. He's big. He's fast. He's strong. He's athletic. He plays with great passion. Sometimes misguided, but we'll get him going in the right direction. He's a local kid and decided to stay home. He'll have a great career. He played a great game today...He's a kid who loves Mississippi State. He loves this football team. I wish we had 100 Willie's."

***Q: Garrett [Shrader] made his first start at quarterback today, can you comment on his decision making and what you thought throughout?***

JM: "[He was] 17-for-22 for 180 [yards]. He ran for 125 [rushing yards]. The interception in the first half wasn't a bad decision. He threw it to the right guy, he just threw it high. I think there were probably a couple times in the red zone. When you take the first drive down and we come away with three or seven there, it's a different game. He had Lee [Witherspoon] open, but it got broken up. From a history of coaching quarterbacks, something that we say in the red zone is 'avoid the sack and preserve the field goal.' We didn't do that there, but we put a true-freshman quarterback in that situation, the way he played, we'll fix the mistakes. Some of the other stuff, you can't teach. This was three or four years of recruiting, [building] relationships, and belief coming to fruition. I don't know if there's any other true freshman quarterback playing like that."

***Q: How do you feel like Coach [Bob] Shoop has been able to mold this defense a little bit different than last year?***

JM: "Something in all three phases that we talked about is if you're planning to use [a scheme] in the game is, 'is it sound, can we teach it, and can we execute it.' We know what they can execute. I think part of being an effective coordinator is understanding the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of your players. Bob [Shoop] is one of the best defensive coordinators in the country, and we continue to grow as a staff."

***Q: How close were Tommy [Stevens] and [Stephen] Guidry to playing today and how late did you know they weren't able to go?***

JM: "We were holding out hope. [Stephen] Guidry kind of came down to the last day. We felt like we didn't want to do something to re-aggravate that. Tommy [Stevens] worked and progressed. They were both end of the week kind of things, nothing super early. Kind of had a feel on Tommy [Stevens] pretty early, but [Stephen] Guidry was more of a today or yesterday thing."

**Mississippi State vs. Kentucky**  
**MSU Student-Athlete Quotes**  
**September 21, 2019 | Davis Wade Stadium**

***Offensive Student-Athletes***

**QB Garrett Shrader**

***Q: You are 1-0 as a Mississippi State starting quarterback. How does it feel?***

**GS:** "It feels good. It was not the prettiest, but we got it done. It felt good to win."

***Q: You were 17-of-22 in the passing game. What was clicking for you?***

**GS:** "I was struggling early, and then started to really see what they were doing and was just taking what they were giving me and not forcing anything. It all turned out alright."

***Q: What did you see on the interception?***

**GS:** "That was a play we repped twice this week. Actually, on my call sheet, I put it in yellow, and I just stepped out of the pocket and should have taken something off of it. It is definitely one I wish I had back, because we were moving the ball at that point in time. It would have been good to get a score before half."

**RB Kylin Hill**

***Q: How do you feel with today's win?***

**KH:** "It was incredible. We have a couple of pieces back, and at the end of the day, we have to give the credit to the big guys. Without them pushing, there would be no 100-yard game for me or four straight 100-yard games for me, so I give all of the credit to them."

***Q: What was it like having Willie Gay, Jr. back out there today?***

**KH:** "It was huge. Willie contributes so much. His energy is stellar, and he is a very energized guy. Everyone just feeds off of him. He came in with a lot of energy and played with a lot of energy. Before the game, I told him he would get a pick six, and he got it."

***Q: There has not been a Mississippi State running back to rush for more than 100 yards in four straight games in 10 years. When you become the first guy to do that in a while, what does it feel like to break that school mark?***

**KH:** "Huge. I have dreamed of moments like this. I want to give a big shout out to my mom for keeping me levelheaded through my freshman year, hard times and last year. She just told me to keep balling and God has me."

## ***Defensive Student-Athletes***

### **CB Cam Dantzler**

#### ***Q: How difficult was it to defend [Lynn] Bowden today?***

CD: "We knew he was one of their best receivers, so we keyed in on him the whole week. One of the great guys on [Kentucky's] team was Bowden, so we just tried to prepare for him as best we could. He made his plays, and we still did a good job covering him and the ball."

#### ***Q: How different was it this game with certain players on the field that hadn't been on before?***

CD: "We just had to come together as all 11 of us. We talked about our style of play: hard, offensive and aggressive. We just made plays today."

#### ***Q: How big of a factor was it to have those guys that hadn't played on the field this year?***

CD: "We missed those guys. They came back with a chip on their shoulder and were amped up to play. All of them were amped up to play, and we need those guys who came in to be there for us."

#### ***Q: What did you see on Willie Gay Jr.'s interception?***

CD: "To be honest, I was in the zone. I just saw him catch the ball and ran behind saying, 'Go! Go!' I was just very excited for him, because he's sat out a few games, and for him to make a big play for us, I was very excited for him."

#### ***Q: How much energy did Willie Gay Jr. bring out on the field today?***

CD: "It started with the loss we had last week. We got past that, and we just had to win this week. Sunday, we made the corrections, and we just went hard from Sunday to gameday. We just did the little things right, and it showed today."

### **LB Erroll Thompson**

#### ***Q: How do you feel like you guys adjusted today to Kentucky's offense?***

ET: "I feel like they kind of gave us some fix in certain things throughout the whole thing, but I feel like the main thing was that they had one or two missed field goals inside the red zone so that was big. We got them down there, and it was tough for them to score on us. That was improvement from the past couple of weeks. We had been given up touchdowns, so there are still some things we have to clean up and keep working on."

***Q: What are you guys trying to do differently to add to that success of the defense this year?***

ET: "Really just everyone has to key in on their assignments. [Montez] Sweat and Jeffery Simmons, those are guys that can play any kind of defense and be dominant. We got a different type of players in there now. It's just being savvy, staying in your gap and in your integrity and keeping your eyes in the right place as well."

***Q: How do you guys keep that energy when players like Willie Gay Jr. aren't out on the field?***

ET: "It's everyone. It's a collective thing, and I try to do the same thing with getting the guys going and being that electric guy. All the leaders on the team, Leo Lewis, Cameron Dantlzer, Chauncey Rivers, guys like that they get it going also."

***Q: How big was this win today in the SEC opener?***

ET: "It's really big. Kentucky is a great program. Last week, they had Florida down to a nail biter. Florida's top 10 in the country right now, so they're a great program. So, it's big in this first SEC win at home."



**Mississippi State vs. Kentucky**  
**Kentucky Postgame Quotes**  
**September 21, 2019 | Davis Wade Stadium**

**Head coach Mark Stoops**

***Opening Statement***

MS: "I thought the story of the game was the way we started. I am very disappointed with the way we started the game. Very disappointed, really, with the entire first half; it did not feel like we played very good football in any phase. I did not see any signs of that during the week, but obviously I did not have them ready to play and come into an environment like this, against a tough, physical football team. [Mississippi State] beat us. They beat us in all phases, in particular the start. I challenged the guys at halftime and I am happy that we had enough pride in ourselves to regroup and come out and play with the type of attitude and fight [in the second half]. We really played the game the way you were supposed to, but we are not perfect and we still made a lot of mistakes. We have to get back and regroup. I have to do a better job at coaching them and we have to play better. We are going on the road again next week so we have to make it happen quickly."

***Q: People will see that start and just assume that it is hangover from last week, is it that simple or is there other stuff going on?***

MS: "I do not think it is that simple, I really do not. I really do feel like we have had that before and that it can happen again later in the year. These guys are young men with a lot in their tank and we need to regroup. I think it was a situation where I have to do a better job at getting them ready to play. Coaches have to get them ready and I think, you know, you take an inexperienced team in certain positions on the road in a hostile environment and we were not up for the challenge. That is on all of us, but I do not think it is just as simple as a hangover. I really do not. I think it is a mentality that you have to have and you have to be a good football team to go on the road in a playing environment like this and win. We did not have that today."

***Q: What was going on with Sawyer Smith's shoulder?***

MS: "Sawyer got hurt at the end of the second quarter. He got dinged up with his shoulder. He went in, got it X-rayed, and to start the second half he gave some throws and was hurting and had a pain. They X-rayed it, and then he came back. I thought he was done, but he came back and gutted it out and gave us everything he had in the second half, but he was dinged up with his shoulder. I would think he would be available next week, but I would not know, you never know how he is going to wake up and feel tomorrow."

***Q: You knew going in that Kylin Hill would hurt you in the back, and that Garrett Shrader would have some scrambles, is there anything you can say about the film?***

MS: "I thought that both of them made some really tough, good plays, just like we thought. I think with Hill, you could see a great player there with a great desire to make some tough runs. That is a very good football player. Coming out of the game you just have more respect for them because you could see that he was very tough, very physical. He ran through some tackles and he was a grown man out there, and he really did a nice job. Shrader did good as well. He made some tough throws, and made live, physical runs. It is vintage Mississippi State. We have to do a better job and be a little stronger if we want to attack in certain spots. The third down ordeal hurt us again. It is a tough call. You know again, we got aggressive and it really backfired on us to be honest with you. In that third-and-four [yards] range, there are a lot of things that keep you off balance. We chose to be aggressive and that defensive is aggressive and the reads that they ran will put you in a tough spot. They ripped off the long run there. It is two weeks in a row in those situations and they have hurt us."

#### **QB Sawyer Smith**

***Q: They were able to get to you for some sacks. Was that more of a protection problem or you holding on to the ball too long?***

SS: "No, they were bringing some good blitzes today. They just got to me a few times. We made some plays, but that's nothing on the offensive line. It's more just me holding on to it too long."

***Q: Was this one of the more difficult environments you've ever played in?***

A: "No, I've played at Clemson, Death Valley, my freshman year. They had a good environment here, but Clemson was louder."

#### **DB Quandre Mosely**

***Q: How do you feel you played today compared to the last three games when you weren't out there as much?***

A: "I played a little bit better. I mean I could have stepped it up a lot more. I played a lot better than I have been in practice, so it gave me a little more trust in myself today. I feel like I did pretty good."

***Q: Can you put your finger on what was the reason for the slow start on defense?***

A: "No sir, not right now. I mean we were still communicating and were seeing what was going on. It was the first away game, so we were just trying to get used to the crowd and all. That's probably what it was."