



POSTGAME NOTES

GAME 5 ■ #23/19 MISSISSIPPI STATE (3-2, 0-2 SEC) VS. FLORIDA (4-1, 2-1 SEC) ■ SEPT. 29, 2018 ■ DAVIS WADE STADIUM

TEAM NOTABLES

- Senior defensive end Gerri Green and senior quarterback Nick Fitzgerald served as captains. Florida won the toss and elected to defer to the second half.
- Wide receiver Dedrick Thomas and cornerback Maurice Smitherman made their first-career starts in Saturday's contest.
- Tonight's attendance was 61,406, the 10th largest crowd in Davis Wade Stadium history.

OFFENSE

- The Bulldogs have outscored opponents 100-19 in the first half this season.

DEFENSE

- MSU has recorded an interception in seven consecutive games dating back to last season.

PLAYER NOTABLES

QB NICK FITZGERALD

- On the first drive of the game, had 18 passing yards to give him exactly 5,000 for his career. He's the seventh quarterback in MSU history to throw for 5,000 or more yards.
- Ended the game with 98 passing yards to bring his career total to 5,080.

S MARK MCLAURIN

- Recorded a total of seven tackles against Florida and has recorded at least five tackles in MSU's last eight contests.

LB ERROLL THOMPSON

- Set a career high with 14 tackles, becoming the first Bulldog to record 10+ tackles in a game since Mark McLaurin vs. Louisville in the 2017 TaxSlayer Bowl.

S BRIAN COLE

- Recorded a career-high six tackles, including three solo stops.

LB WILLIE GAY JR.

- Tied career high with four tackles and recorded the first pass break-up of his career.

CB CAMERON DANTZLER

- Recorded his first interception of the season with a third-quarter snag, returning it for seven yards.
- Second interception of his career and his first since the 2017 TaxSlayer Bowl.

K JACE CHRISTMANN

- Connected on two field goals - a 34-yarder and 39-yarder - for MSU's lone points of the game.
- Improved to 6-for-6 all-time from the 30-39 yard field goal range.



2018 Florida Football Postgame Notes

Florida 13, No. 23 Mississippi State 6
September 29, 2018

Quick Hits

- ♦ Tonight is just the fourth time since the start of the 2010 season the Gators defeated a top-25 opponent on the road, with the other wins coming Sept. 15, 2012 (at No. 23 Tennessee), Nov. 24, 2012 (at No. 10 Florida State), and Nov. 19, 2016 (at No. 16 LSU).
 - Florida's record in such games during that span improved to 4-13 tonight.
- ♦ Florida's defense allowed just 43 total yards on 27 plays in the second half (1.6 yards per play).
 - The Gators also yielded just 10 rushing yards on 10 carries (1.0 rushing average) in the second half.
- ♦ Florida entered the evening ranked tied for fourth nationally in opponent red zone touchdown percentage (2-6 – 33.3 percent); the Gators held Mississippi State to field goals on both its red zone trips.
 - Mississippi State entered tonight ranked sixth nationally in red zone touchdown percentage, scoring touchdowns on 13 of its 15 red zone trips.
- ♦ The Gators' six sacks are their highest single-game total since notching seven against North Texas on Sept. 17, 2016.
 - Florida had at least six sacks in an SEC game for the first time since Sept. 19, 2015 at Kentucky, where it had six.
- ♦ **Dan Mullen** improves to 66-4 as a head coach when leading after the third quarter.
- ♦ Tonight marked just the seventh game since the start of the 1990 season Florida and its opponent combined for less than 20 points, and Florida improved to 6-1 in those games.
 - 16 – Vanderbilt, Nov. 7, 2015 (W, 9-7)
 - 16 – at Tennessee, Oct. 4, 2014 (W, 10-6)
 - 16 – at LSU, Oct. 10, 2009 (W, 13-3)
 - 16 – at LSU, Oct. 5, 1991 (W, 16-0)
 - 17 – Mississippi State, Oct. 16, 2010 (L, 10-7)
 - 19 – Vanderbilt, Oct. 1, 2016 (W, 13-6)
- ♦ Entering tonight, Florida outscored opponents 101-13 in the first half, and Mississippi State outscored its opponents 94-16 in the first half; the two combined for nine points in tonight's first half.

Florida Offense

- ♦ With his 20-yard touchdown pass to **Moral Stephens**, **Kadarius Toney** became the first Gators running back or receiver to throw a touchdown pass since Antonio Callaway threw a two-yard touchdown pass in the 2016 Buffalo Wild Wings Citrus Bowl against Michigan.
- ♦ Toney totaled 50 all-purpose yards (which does not include the passing touchdown) on four touches (12.5 average).
- ♦ **Feleipe Franks** was 14-of-20 for 126 yards passing in the second half.
- ♦ Franks' six-game streak of multiple passing touchdowns came to an end tonight.
- ♦ **Freddie Swain** matched his total amount of receiving yards from his first two seasons (214) with his 12-yard reception on the opening play of the second quarter.
- ♦ **Kyle Pitts**' first career reception came late in the third quarter, going for nine yards and converting a third down.
- ♦ **Moral Stephens**' 20-yard touchdown reception off Toney's pass was the second of his career; both have come this season, and two of Stephens' four catches this year have been touchdowns.
- ♦ Four Gators tight ends—Lucas Krull, C'yontai Lewis, Pitts, and Stephens—had a reception tonight.

Florida Defense

- ♦ The Gators recorded at least five sacks for the second time in their last three games; they had one such game in 2017.
- ♦ **Jachai Polite**, who entered the season with two career sacks, recorded the first multi-sack game of his career and boasts a team-high four sacks this year.
- ♦ **Vosean Joseph**'s first sack of the season came immediately following Tommy Townsend pinned Mississippi State at its own 6-yard line with 11:54 remaining in the fourth quarter.
- ♦ **CJ Henderson** notched the second sack of his career, and both have come this season.

Florida Special Teams

- ♦ **Evan McPherson** has made 8 of his first 9 collegiate field goal attempts, adding a 39-yarder and 21-yarder tonight.
- ♦ **Tommy Townsend** downed all four of his punts inside the 20-yard line, including one downed at Mississippi State's 6-yard line with 11:54 left in the fourth quarter.
 - Townsend's previous career high for punts downed inside the 20-yard line was two against Charleston Southern in the season opener and last Saturday at Tennessee.



Big Plays

- ♦ **Kadarius Toney:** 16-yard rush, 2nd quarter
- ♦ **Lamical Perine,** 22-yard rush, 3rd quarter
- ♦ **Moral Stephens (from Kadarius Toney):** 20-yard touchdown reception, 3rd quarter
- ♦ **Josh Hammond:** 20-yard reception, 4th quarter

Other

- ♦ *Florida Game Captains:* R.J. Raymond, David Reese II
- ♦ Florida won the opening coin toss and deferred to the second half; Florida defended the north end zone.
- ♦ *Attendance:* 61,406



MISSISSIPPI STATE FOOTBALL

POSTGAME QUOTES

Mississippi State Football
vs. Florida | Sept. 29, 2018
Mississippi State Postgame Quotes

Joe Moorhead | Mississippi State Head Coach

Opening Statement

JM: I appreciate the fans coming out. It was a great atmosphere. They provided a great home-field advantage for us, but I am definitely disappointed in the loss. I thought for the second week in a row, we were unable to get anything going offensively in the second half. The defense played very, very well. They kept us in it and gave us an opportunity. If the defense is playing that way, I have to put a plan together offensively that puts us in the position to be successful. I have to call good plays, and when we call the good plays we have to execute them. Credit to Coach Mullen, his staff and Florida. We just have to find a way to start scoring some points on offense.

Q: When the defense plays well, how frustrating is it for the offense not to be able to score points?

JM: It is incredibly frustrating. I thought in the first half, we had three drives outside of two minutes. We scored field goals on two of them that we needed to convert to touchdowns. Series after series outside of the one, the defense was getting stops and forcing them to punt. We didn't really have great field position, but for the defense to play the way they did, we have to capitalize on some of those possessions and turn them into points. It's very frustrating.

Q: What are you seeing offensively on the sidelines with only one touchdown in two SEC games?

JM: We're getting behind the sticks a little bit. We have to get the run game going with some consistency to stay in second and manageable and third and manageable down and distances. We have to do a good job of pass protecting. When we get a good route called and get someone open, we have to connect on it.

Q: In the first quarter, it looked like you did have the run game going. Was there a point in the game where that changed and the game slowed down?

JM: In the second half, we got off schedule a little bit. Once again, some of those were run calls. With it being a run-pass option, they turned into throws instead of handoffs. I think field position played a little into it in the second half. We have to find a way to stay ahead of the sticks and generate more yardage and points certainly.

Q: Did you consider calling more designed handoffs to get Hill and Williams more touches?

JM: Yes, we did. When they're bringing some pressure the way that they did, it's hard to just hand the ball off to guys when they have guys unblocked at the point of attack. That's something you certainly take into account.

Q: How big was the play where MSU got the interception?

JM: We certainly have to capitalize on that thing. If you catch it and run it into the end zone, I think that would have been a shift on the scoreboard and a shift in momentum there. That didn't make or break the game, but it certainly could have helped us.

Q: The teams you have played recently and Florida in particular have tried to get their offenses on the perimeter. How much have you talked about keying in and making sure offense don't do it moving forward?

JM: We are seeing a lot of formation to the sideline and a lot of unbalanced. I know the defense worked on that all week, putting some new stuff in and some checks. With throwing quick screens in boundary. I think we did a good job minimizing them, rallying the ball and tackling them. Certainly, that will be something we continue to see moving forward.

Q: Is it to the point there will be some personnel changes? Would those likely be on the offensive line?

JM: We will look at the film tomorrow and make determinations from there. At this point, offensively we just have to make sure we are leaving no stone unturned and making sure we're getting the best level on the field.

Q: Through the first half, it was a slower pace wise than the previous games. Was that by design?

JM: Yes, I think we were making a concerted effort to run the ball and come out to establish the run. I think in the first half, we had a bunch of carries. We threw nine passes, and we were moving the ball with some success on the ground. That's what we wanted to do coming out early. We didn't run the ball much last week, so we were going to run it some this week.

Q: Do you think the pace of the play calling mechanic and the check with me's, is that what you want it to be right now?

JM: We want to be in the best play possible, whether that is running it fast or checking over to the sideline to get us in the right play.

Q: Were you expecting the dip and dunk screen passes Florida threw as much?

JM: I guess to a certain extent. We saw a lot of that with Louisiana and Kentucky did a little bit of it, but they stretched the field horizontally and found the soft spots in the zone and worked those bubble screens.

Q: What is your message to the fans with a lot of heads down?

JM: Myself included and the team included, I wouldn't say heads down but certainly not where we want to be at this point in the season. We're 3-2 after five games. We have a big game here at home against Auburn before the bye week. We have to figure a way to get the thing right, rally together and get this thing headed in the right direction.

Q: How would you characterize today?

JM: I have to really look at the film and get a view of that.

Q: What about the defense made it so successful tonight?

JM: I thought we did a pretty good job stopping the run. I think the big thing was getting off the field on third downs. We bent a little bit, but we didn't necessarily break. We had one trick play get us in the end zone, but for the most part we found a way to get off the field on third downs and force field goals in the red zone.

Q: Two of twelve on third downs, is that a case of being behind the sticks? What is going on with the third downs?

JM: We had been right at 50 percent or a little bit over. We got into some longer down and distances. I thought we did a good job of picking up some of the pressures but had a little bit of leakage there in some of the protections though. We have to get open on some routes. When the guys are open, we have to put the ball on them.

Nick Fitzgerald | QB | SR

Q: How did Florida arrange its run defense tonight?

NF: If an end knew he was getting read he would shuffle down the line. That would give them a real confident pool reach. They would try to take the quarterback out of the situation. They are not normally real fast, downhill guys, but tonight they were filling gaps pretty well.

Q: What have you been seeing out of the offense?

NF: We haven't been playing well. As the quarterback, I will take all [the blame] and shoulder that. Absolutely. I am not playing up to par. We will deal with this, look at the film, get better from it and keep working.

Q: What did you see on the pass to Osirus [Mitchell]?

NF: The safety came up on the first post and another deep post behind him. Osirus had leverage to run a deep post over the middle. I stepped up, let it go and it is unfortunate. It happens.

Q: How do you keep the offense locked in?

NF: This sucks, obviously, two weeks in a row. Last year, we went to Georgia and went to Auburn, and we had our tails handed to us two weeks in a row. We came back and fought back the rest of the season. Obviously, we have the means to do it. We can't get down on ourselves or count ourselves out by any means. We'll look at this film and get better. It is just little execution things. [If we fix] some things here and there, we will be fine.

Q: What did you see on third down?

NF: [We saw] a lot of pressure. They did a really good job mixing up pressures and mixing up looks for us. We just didn't make the plays we needed too.

Gerri Green | DE | Sr.

Q: How would you say the defense played?

GG: I think we played well. We left some plays out there and there's always room for improvement. [We just try] to help the offense. We just have to keep moving forward and we have to get [some things] cleaned up in this upcoming practice.

Q: How do you keep everybody positive?

GG: Our goals [are] still out there. Those two teams were from the SEC East, so we haven't started [playing our] west division [opponents] yet, so we just have to stay positive. We love this game and the road [ahead of us], and no one said it was going to be easy. We just have to keep moving forward.

Q: Is it frustrating when the defense makes plenty of stops and the offense doesn't go out there and score points?

GG: No, that's not the frustrating part. Any loss is frustrating because you always [think about] what you could have done better. You always point fingers at yourself first. You just want to be out there and be the best for your team. That's the frustrating part.

Jeffery Simmons | DT | Jr.

Q: What are you guys feeling right now?

JS: This game meant a lot to a lot of people... to the seniors and to the people in the community. As bad as we wanted to win this game... it happened. We just have to move forward when adversity strikes. With back-to-back losses, that is a lot of adversity hitting us right now, but with the team I know we have, the guys I know that are on this team, we are going to bounce back from the adversity and respond.

Q: What would be your message to the fans?

JS: I know they wanted [to win] this game, but I can control, and the team can control, what we can control. As bad as it hurts to the fans and to this program, with losing this game against Coach Mullen, we just have to control what we can control and move on from it.

Q: What was the defense doing on third down to get a good job and get [Florida] off the field often?

JS: We practice a lot with the blitzes. We knew they couldn't pick up all our blitzes. As Coach Shoop said we have some of the best blitzes in college football right now with getting to the quarterback and causing disruption up front.

Dedrick Thomas | WR | SR.

Q: What is slowing the offense down?

DT: It is just execution. Not anything too much. It is just us. [It was] great play calling, just execution.

Q: What is the locker room like after a game like this?

DT: All you can do is pick everyone up. You come in tomorrow and work harder.

Q: Is picking up your teammates easier said than done?

DT: No. We are all a family. We came as a team. We win as a team. We lose as a team. It is your brother [next to you]. When your brother falls down you pick him up, no matter where it is or how it happened.

Q: How do you keep a positive mindset?

DT: There are a lot of games left to be played. It is a long season. All you can do is just come in tomorrow, look at film, and go out and execute next time it is presented to you.

Q: What does the offense need to do when you get out of sync?

DT: I can't tell you. I don't know. We are all preparing well. There is a great plan to the game. It is a plan to win. We just have to go out and execute.

Q: Are you glad this game is behind you?

DT: Every game is important. It is one hurdle at a time. It was just another game. Me and my brothers just take it one game at a time. The media may emphasize [certain games], but we just take it one game at a time and try to emphasize all of them.

Mississippi State Football
vs. Florida | Sept. 29, 2018
Florida Postgame Quotes

Dan Mullen | Head Coach

Q: Opening Statement

DM: What an exciting game. That was a heck of a game. I was really proud of our guys and how they came in. This is one of the toughest environments in college football to come in to. [It was] a very emotional night against one of the most talented teams out there. I know everybody knows the talent that's on that team. I think all week I've been harping on our guys to stick with it and continue to improve from one week to the next in practice, and it'll show on Saturday in our preparation. I think our guys are really starting to buy into that we need to prepare the right way. If we do that, then your performance is going to start to improve. All week we talked about think about each rep in practice, think about what you're doing and that's going to be how you perform. Is that to the standard you want to perform come Saturday? We came in here, and we found a way to win a different style game. In our program, in this league, you're going to win all different styles of games. Last week, we won by the big play. This week, we won by grinding it out. That's pretty cool. It was a great win for us. As I've always said, in this league, you win two really tough road games, and one against a rival. Then, you play a top 15 team the next week, and then you head home and play a top five team the next week. That's kind of what the league does to you. Let's enjoy this win tonight and get to work on LSU tomorrow.

Q: They had some success early with the run, what was the adjustment there?

DM: It really wasn't that, but we had to be more physical. That was the biggest aspect of us. It wasn't that there were gaping holes everywhere or explosive play after explosive play. It was that they were knocking us back a little bit and getting the ball control to move the sticks. I don't know if that was their plan coming in. We had three possessions in the first half. I felt like they were really trying to run the clock, really shorten the game and slow the game down a whole bunch. If you look at it, we ran 66 plays, finally. They ran 58. That's not a lot of plays to run in the game, so it was short in that way. We talked to our guys [and said] don't freak out. We played Kentucky doing that, and they had a similar plan. We had guys jump out of gaps trying to make a play. Like they had to get off the field and make a play on their own instead of just doing your job, fitting your gap and being a little more physical and be more stout. All of a sudden, that first-and-ten, second-and-four and third-and-one, then goes from first-and-ten, to second-and-nine and third-and-seven. That's a different deal, and that was a big adjustment, to be honest with you.

Q: How did you manage Jeffrey Simmons and Montez Sweat so well?

DM: If you see what we did, we tried to get as many doubles on them as we could on them all night. We did a lot more checking protections or staying in and max-protecting. [Also,] we were getting the ball out really quick. You're talking about two of the best D-Linemen in the SEC. There were times I saw Simmons out and I thought we could run. He's only out for one play, so by the time I saw he was out and I call the next play, he's back in. I think the big key was just our consistency through the night, our ability to stay on the field and make some third-down conversions. We hit a couple of shots, here and there, down the field. We stayed fairly balanced, I guess not, we only had 118 rushing but 239 passing. We out-rushed them, and they are one of the best rushing teams in the country. I think that's a pretty big positive.

Q: Does a fourth-down call for a safety blitz make you cringe?

DM: No, go get it and attack. [Defensive Coordinator] Todd [Grantham] and I have been through it before. I've done it. We've played coverage and made plays. We've blitzed and not made plays. He's got to get the feel of 'let's go after them.' I've learned one thing through the years—to shut my mouth in that situation. I'm just going to shut my mouth. Todd, I'm here if you need me. He's the one that watched all the film and put the game plan together and blitz package together. I just need to sit there quietly and let him go.

Q: What was the thought process behind the double pass in the third quarter?

DM: They're a really aggressive defense with driving the ball. We got the ball in the red zone, which would happen when we'd been running some quick screens. All of a sudden, they jump up on the quick screens and the double pass is open.

Q: Would you credit being able to stop Nick Fitzgerald to your familiarity of him?

DM: I don't know that that's really the case. One of the big things we wanted to do with him was try to pressure him but try to keep him in the pocket. His designed called runs he had success with, which we know. You're not going to just dial that up and stop that. You need to contain it. We need to fit, just tackle and get him on the ground. We need to be a little bit stouter and force them into some third-down situations. We have some guys that can get some pressure off the edge. Don't give him those scramble lanes that he can scramble to throw or scramble to run where he makes a lot of his big plays. We've done a better job than weeks past of really opening our rush lanes and keeping him in the pocket.

Q: What kind of reception did you get out there tonight?

DM: It was great. It was kind of like bizarro world. Like the Seinfeld episode with 'bizarro'. I was in the same locker I was in for nine years. They flipped the locker rooms, and I was warming up on the same side of the field. All I had to do was make sure I took a right instead of a left when I ran out of the tunnel. It was pretty special for me to come in here. This is probably the last time I'm ever in this stadium, with how the SEC works. For my last time ever being at Davis Wade Stadium and to finish with a win. Not to freak everybody out, but it'll be 14 years. That's a long time from now.

Q: Was the touchdown something you put in this week?

DM: That's something we've had for a couple of weeks. That's something we put in, actually, back in training camp. I've always said that, about deceptive and trick plays like that, it's not really the play design, but more when you call it and how you execute it. It's a play that we've had in the game plan every week this season. We just never got around to calling it, so we finally made the call.

Q: How far has this team physically come in two or three weeks?

DM: I don't think we did play very physical that night, but I think we're learning. If you look back to that game, they hit a couple of explosive plays. It was a grind it out game, similar to this. Except, when it was time to make the plays, we made them tonight. A couple of weeks ago we didn't. You're as good as your next play. I'm just worried about that. This win doesn't mean we're a great team or a bad team. We came out, we played hard tonight and we were better this week than we were last week. If we continue to do that, we'll have the opportunity to win another game next week. If we're not more physical, if we don't play with more effort, if we don't play with more discipline and execution, if we don't work harder at practice this week, then I can already tell you what the outcome of the game will be. That's the mindset these guys have to have. It's looked like it the last couple of weeks, and they've really started to buy into that.

Q: How steady was Feleipe Franks?

DM: I thought he made some really good decisions, good checks and good throws down the field. He had a pick on a tipped ball, which was kind of too bad. He didn't throw a touchdown pass—that's too bad. [He was] 22-31 and 219. That's a pretty solid day. [He came] in against that defense, and this is one of the best and deepest defenses in the country. To come in here and execute the plan the way he was able to, I thought he did a very good job.

Q: What were your thoughts on Dameon Pierce's performance?

DM: He did. I said you keep looking. He came in, and I wanted to try and give him the ball. He hit a big run, and we kind of left him in. He had a couple other tough runs. I'd love to say if you look at us this year, you say I'd love to have 1,000-yard rusher. I don't know that it will be the case for us this year, but we might have three that have put up really, really good numbers running the football at the running back position. That might not seem much in an individual game, but as the year goes on you know that as that year goes on, and they're fresh and they can kind of pound away. We have three guys that can, that are physical and can make you miss and have speed. The fact they keep coming at you and keep coming at you can be tough handle.

Q: Were there some emotional moments with some of your former players?

DM: After the game it is. It's hard to explain coach-player relationship. It is such an unbelievably tight relationship. I mean I recruited most of those guys, a lot of them, coached them and helped develop them. I mean those are guys that believe in what I was trying to build here. There are guys on that team that had every scholarship in America, and there were some guys who didn't. We took chances on them. You love those guys, you really do. You love all those guys. I feel for them because there's nothing like the competing. It was kind of fun for me. You're going to compete against not a team that's a rival, but a team of guys that you love and so you still like. I told our guys coming in that it wasn't about me. It was about winning because I want to win. We need to make sure we keep our composure and that's what it's all about – just play our game, and our guys were able to do that. I tried to make sure that it was just that. After the game to just get to see those guys and give them hugs. The toughest thing I ever had to do was have a team meeting on Sunday – I should rephrase that because there are a lot of tough moments in life when you lose players and other things, but when in a coaches' moment and meeting one of the hardest things I've ever had to do is you walk in. I know there have been different stories out there. I met with that team to tell them I was leaving before I told my Mom, my Dad or any other person in my family. The first people that found out were the players in that locker room that I was going to move on. After that meeting a bunch of them came up and gave me hugs. This is the next time I've seen any of them. When you're that close to people, I know how hard those guys work and what they want. I know they're going to have a great rest of the season because they're a talented group and a tough group of young men. That's why I was probably emotional after the game.

Q: Were you sentimental at any point during the game especially at the end of the third quarter with “Don’t Stop Believing?”

DM: I tried to block some of it out, I did. Coming out before the game and seeing it and one of the things that we helped create here. We came out I don’t know an hour before kickoff, and the student section is full and going crazy not a seat in the house. The different traditions. I remember coming here a couple years ago saying ‘Hey, we need to play don’t stop believing at the start of the fourth quarter. I tried not to look around and take it all in. I’ve seen it many, many times, and I wanted to keep my focus on the game. But it was a little surreal.

Q: Did you have concerns with your players coming in?

DM: Pregame meal. One of the things a couple them were like let’s lock arms when we come out with you and do that and I said we don’t do that every game. I said it’s not about me tonight. It really isn’t. It’s about the Florida Gators coming out there and improving as a football team coming on the road against a great opponent a team that’s ranked in the top 25 and top 20 and go get a win. It has nothing to do with my emotions or any of that. That’s on me but I told our guys I want to win. I didn’t want to win this game more than I wanted to win last week’s game and I didn’t want win this game more than next week’s game. I love winning, I love competing so I love it. It’s not more or less because of the atmosphere of the situation. It’s great to get this win and there’s maybe the sentimental aspect of some things.

Q: Who wanted to lock arms?

DM: I think Freddie and a couple of them were like we need to do this, and we got your back. What I didn’t want is I didn’t want anything about me with our team because I didn’t want us to lose our focus from what we needed to do to be successful. We came out and played better than we did last week. That had to be the focus. I didn’t bring it up all week. I didn’t talk about this game and what it meant for me. They heard it and how they treat our players and treated me after the game. I appreciate them for that, but I wanted to make sure that never became a distraction.

Q: Did you expect an ice bath?

DM: No, I really wasn’t, but I do appreciate our players. It shows that the guys are starting to believe and buy in to what we’re trying to build here because when you do that – I’ll be honest were tough on them, and it shows that there’s a love and respect for each other in that locker room. I’m not going to get any softer on them. I’m just going to get tougher but I think it shows how the team has come together.

Q: I know you said it’s not about you, but the fans were chanting your name after the game. How did that make you feel?

DM: It was a sentimental moment for everybody. It was great. I didn’t want to think one time from the second we landed to after the game seeing all the state troopers and police that escorted me bus drivers and everybody. I certainly hope all the fans, the team, the guys in program. I don’t really worry about because I know what they think for the most part I do and the former players I certainly hope fans and the people of Starkville I would hope the administration has respect for what we were able to accomplish and like all the Bulldog Club and all those people that are here. [I hope they] appreciate what I tried to accomplish while I was here and how much I put into it and I think the fans, for sure, I know former players and my wife was back in town to see some friends and family. I know they want to beat me but I think there was a lot of appreciation for what we were able to accomplish.

Vosean Joseph | LB | Jr.

Q: Being able to take [Nick] Fitzgerald out of the running game after the first half, how much did that mean for you guys?

VJ: That meant a lot. He’s a dual-threat quarterback. He can do it all. Respect to him. We really just had to focus on the calls that our coaches gave us. This whole week we focused on how he can run, but then we have to focus on everyone else on the team. So, what we try to do is adjust to each player and play within the defense. We were just trying to make plays and stop the run. That’s what we were trying to do.

Q: Obviously, your coaching staff had a lot of knowledge of [Mississippi State], how much confidence did they give you?

VJ: It gave us a lot of confidence, but then again you can’t look at any team and be like ‘okay, we’re just going to beat them.’ You always have to go out there and prepare and do your best, practice, and try to come out with a [win]. That’s what we did this week, so I feel good about that.

Q: How do you feel the defense responded after losing Trey [Dean III] early?

VJ: That kind of hit us hard, but it’s always next man up. The next guy just had to step up and that’s what they did. CJ [Henderson], Brian [Edwards], it doesn’t matter who it is they are all going to step up and do their best.

Q: I saw you grab the flag after the game and run up and down the field. How much did this win mean and how much of it was for [Dan]Mullen?

FF: It was a big team win. Like Coach Mullen says, it only gets harder in the SEC. The next week is going to be harder [than this week]. I think we're going to enjoy our win next day, but get our bodies back [to feeling right]tomorrow and be ready to work again on Monday.

Q: What was the challenge of the atmosphere and with the offensive line struggling earlier on and you guys struggled down, what was that challenge?

FF: I think it's always fun when you go and play on the road. You've got the cowbells going and I've never played at Mississippi State, so I thought it was fun. I think it's fun in road environments. It was a great road environment this week. It was a great road environment last week at Tennessee. We finally get to go back home and play in front of our fans and that's going to be special for us and everyone's up for the challenge.

Q: What can you say about this team being able to win back to back road games which is something UF hasn't done since 2012?

FF: I think it's big time. It just showing the way that we're preparing and, like I said before, it's only going to get harder. We have to prepare and work twice as hard as we did last week for next week. We just have to be ready to go on Monday and start that all over.