



POSTGAME NOTES

GAME 6 ■ MISSISSIPPI STATE (4-2, 1-2 SEC) VS. #8/9 AUBURN (4-2, 1-2 SEC) ■ OCT. 6, 2018 ■ DAVIS WADE STADIUM

TEAM NOTABLES

- Senior defensive end Gerri Green and senior quarterback Nick Fitzgerald served as captains. MSU won the toss and elected to defer to the second half. It is just the second time this season that MSU has won the opening toss.
- Safety Jaquarius Landrews earned the first start of his career in Saturday's contest.
- MSU improved to 27-63-2 against Auburn and 7-16-1 against the Tigers in Starkville. MSU has now won three of the last four matchups against Auburn in Davis Wade Stadium. The victory was MSU's first against the Tigers since a 17-9 win at Auburn in 2015.
- State has won four of its last six games against top-10 opponents at Davis Wade Stadium dating back to the 2014 season. This is MSU's first home victory over a top-10 foe since defeating No. 6 Texas A&M, 35-28, on Nov. 5, 2016.
- Tonight's attendance was 60,635.

OFFENSE

- The Bulldogs have out-scored opponents 117-21 in the first half this season.
- With four seconds remaining in the first half, Nick Fitzgerald rushed for a 1-yard touchdown, the first MSU touchdown since the first quarter against Kentucky (10/22/17).
- The Bulldogs eclipsed the 200-yard rushing mark for the fourth time this season, ending the game with 353 yards on the ground. It's the most rushing yards on the ground for State against an SEC foe since racking up 457 against Ole Miss in the 2016 Egg Bowl. It was the most rushing yards allowed by Auburn since LSU had 411 on Sept. 9, 2015.
- For the third time this season, MSU had two Bulldogs rush for over 100 yards in the same game as quarterback Nick Fitzgerald (195) and Kylin Hill (126) both eclipsed the 100-yard rushing mark. It is the second time in their career that the duo have more rushed over the century mark in the same game.
- MSU had four plays of 20 or more yards against Auburn to bring its season total to 36.

DEFENSE

- MSU did not allow a third-down conversion in Auburn's first seven attempts (nearly three quarters of play).
- State recorded two fumble recoveries against the Tigers, marking the first time since Sept. 30, 2017, at Auburn that the MSU defense recorded at least two fumble recoveries in a game.
- For the fifth time this season, MSU allowed less than 14 points, which is best in the FBS.
- Montez Sweat and Jeffery Simmons has combined for 46 tackles for loss over their 19 career games played together.

PLAYER NOTABLES

QB NICK FITZGERALD

- Accounted for 264 yards of total offense, including 195 yards on the ground and two rushing touchdowns.
- Rushed for a touchdown in three of five games played this season and has rushed for multiple touchdowns in a game 15 times in his career.
- Brought his career rushing yard total to 2,999, surpassing Tim Tebow for the most rushing yards in SEC. Now ranks third in MSU history for career rushing yards among all position players, surpassing Walter Packer (1973-76).
- Eclipsed the 100-yard rushing mark for the third time this season and 17th time in his career, tying Anthony Dixon (2006-09) for the school record.
- Surpassed 8,000 yards of career total offense and ranks second in school history behind only Dak Prescott (11,897).
- His 40 rushing scores are the most among active FBS quarterbacks and rank third in MSU history behind only Anthony Dixon (42) and Dak Prescott (41).

RB KYLIN HILL

- Eclipsed the century mark on the ground for just the second time in his career, recording 126 yards on 23 carries (5.5 avg.)

K JACE CHRISTMANN

- Connected on three field goals (25, 47, 33), which matched his career high of three set on Sept. 16, 2017, against LSU.
- Made a career-long 47-yard field goal with 10:13 remaining in the first half. His previous career long was 45.

LS JOEL BALDWIN

- Recovered a muffed punt return with 4:23 remaining in the first half for MSU's first fumble recovery of the season. It was Baldwin's first fumble recovery of his career.

DE MONTEZ SWEAT

- Set career high with 3.0 sacks against Auburn. Sweat has now recorded 18.0 sacks in just 19 career games played, which ranks seventh in MSU career history.
- It was the most sacks by a Bulldog since Willie Evans had three versus Tulan on Sept. 17, 2005.

S MARK MCLAURIN

- Led the Bulldogs with a season-high 10 total tackles, including eight solo stops and a tackle for loss.
- Forced just the second fumble of his career during the third quarter, punching out the ball at the goal line to prevent an Auburn touchdown.

DE KOBE JONES

- Grabbed a tackle and recorded the first fumble recovery of his career during the third quarter, recovering a loose ball in the end zone for a touchback.

Auburn at Mississippi State game notes

- >> Captains: Deshaun Davis, Ryan Davis, Jarrett Stidham
- >> Coin Toss: Mississippi State wins the toss and defers. Auburn will receive
- >> Attendance: 60,635

TEAM NOTES

- >> First-time starters for Auburn: Calvin Ashley
- >> Auburn scored first for the 21st time in its last 24 games and the fifth time this season

INDIVIDUAL NOTES/OFFENSE

- >> Tucker Brown recorded his first career reception
- >> John Samuel Shenker's 26-yard reception was a career long
- >> JaTarvious Whitlow is now 15th all-time among Auburn freshman rushers with 414 yards this season; tonight he has passed Kiehl Frazier (327 in 2011), Ronnie Brown (330 in 2001), Brad Lester (339 in 2005), Markeith Cooper (351 in 1996), Darrell Williams (371 in 1989) and Ben Tate (392 in 2006)
- >> Ryan Davis is now fourth among Auburn career receiving leaders with 137 career receptions, passing Tyrone Goodson (136 from 1993-97). Davis ranks 19th in Auburn career receiving yardage (1,261), passing Greg Taylor (1,217 from 1987-90) and Thomas Bailey (1,243 from 1991-94)
- >> Ryan Davis' 42-yard reception in the third quarter was his longest catch of the season
- >> Jarrett Stidham to Ryan Davis is the second most productive pass tandem in Auburn history, with 113 completions; the Auburn record is 140 completions by Pat Sullivan to Terry Beasley (1969-71)
- >> Stidham recorded his third 200-yard passing game of the season and the 13th of his Auburn career

INDIVIDUAL NOTES/DEFENSE

- >> Jeremiah Dinson records his second interception of the season and career. It's the first Auburn player with interceptions in back-to-back games since Joshua Holsey in 2016 vs. Ole Miss and Vanderbilt
- >> Deshaun Davis now has 203 career tackles, making him the 15th Auburn player since 2000 to reach 200 career tackles; he recorded his seventh career game with double-figure tackles
- >> Marlon Davidson recorded a career high with 10 tackles
- >> Jeremiah Dinson recorded a career high with 15 tackles, the most by an Auburn player since Daren Bates (16) vs. Ole Miss in 2012
- >> Darrell Williams recorded his second career game with double-figure tackles

INDIVIDUAL NOTES/SPECIAL TEAMS

- >> Marlon Davidson records his first blocked field goal, the first for Auburn since Derrick Brown blocked a UCF field goal attempt in last year's Peach Bowl
- >> Anders Carlson's 47-yard field goal was his second longest of the season (longest: 53 vs. Washington). This was his second game with three made field goals (also Washington)

Mississippi State Football
vs. Auburn | Oct. 6, 2018
Mississippi State Postgame Quotes

Joe Moorhead | Mississippi State Head Coach

Opening Statement

JM: First of all, I'd like to thank the fans for coming out, making another electric atmosphere and really supporting the team. It helped the team do a great job, gave us a home field advantage. I'm incredibly proud of our team – awesome job getting a win over a top 10 opponent. A great squad like Auburn, Gus Malzahn, very well coached. Great job, very happy for the team, very happy for the kids.

Q: Obviously, you used a lot of motion in the run game today. What was your reasoning behind that, what were you trying to accomplish with that?

JM: You look at Auburn's defensive front led by number five [Derrick Brown] and all the other guys. The front four, number fifty-seven [Deshaun Davis]. They're one of the most-stout, incredibly talented teams that I've seen on film. A lot of those guys just get their hands in the dirt, tee off and have the linebackers play downhill. We thought we needed to do something to neutralize the physicality and athleticism, and did that with some motions. We tried to keep running east-west, keep off-balance. We talked about the run game being numbers and angles. I think the motions and formations helped us gain a numbers advantage at the point of attack.

Q: Before the season, you talked about making Nick [Fitzgerald] into more of a passer. Did you just decide, "He runs well, run the ball?" What did you think of this performance running tonight and passing [Tim] Tebow for the career SEC rushing record for a quarterback?

JM: I took my coaching pills this week, and I forgot them last week. Nick's a – ... in a storm, I guess. Obviously, coming off of two substandard performances offensively that are below our standard, really sit down on Sunday and identify the things that we needed to do to be successful relative to our personnel. Having our scheme match our personnel, not our personnel match our scheme. Nick's going to continue to develop as a passer. We feel good about our o-line. Darryl Williams being out, being a good next-man-in mentality there. We put the ball in the hands of our playmakers, made some timely plays in the pass game, but ultimately it's about production of points, and we were able to do that.

Q: Coach, how big was recovering that fumble on the punt before the half, and then going down and scoring a touchdown there after that?

JM: It was great for momentum. We talk about all three phases needing to contribute in a positive manner. Playing one play at a time at a championship standard. To recover that thing and punch it in, [and] not only punch it in but on a fourth down play ... The hustle there by our defense to punch that thing out to eliminate it. I thought that it was a momentum-changing play in the second half. Those two swung the game back in our favor.

Q: Joe, all the eye candy and the motions that you ran, was that something that you installed this week?

JM: It's been in our playbook. We've worked on it a little bit. When we were talking as a staff, the guys who have been with me at Penn State, we kind of compared them to a Michigan style of defense. Donny Brown, [Michigan's defensive coordinator], is a good friend of mine, and we played in the White Out game last year. We thought that their front seven was like these guys, talented and physical. We needed to do something to neutralize that. So, it's been in the playbook, but it hasn't been emphasized.

Q: Coach, what did you see that made you think you could run on them with the success that you had tonight? Was it something in the film study or something that happened early in the ball game?

JM: It kind of happened organically, a little bit. We go into a game with a similar amount of runs and a similar amount of passes. I think it was probably a little bit more streamlined this week to account for some of the formations and motions and things we were doing along those lines. I think once we got going a little bit, the kids got confidence. We saw we were moving on the ground. We kind of stuck with what worked.

Q: Going off of that, how big was this performance on the ground for your confidence going forward? I mean, a lot of the talk has been, "where's the running game?" and then you guys come out and run for over 300 yards on what's arguably the best rushing defense in the conference?

JM: I think it was a great confidence booster for our offense. To be able to move the ball on these guys, more importantly, across the board a great confidence booster for our team. You guys have heard me talk about the ability to handle prosperity and adversity. Obviously, there were some prosperous times in our first three games, and we were hit with a little bit of adversity in our last two. To me, sometimes those tests of character, they reveal it. I think our character as a team was revealed today. The message is to remain consistent. So, we didn't go in last Sunday and fly off the rails and try to reinvent the wheel, because we lost a close football game to a very good Florida team. We're going to stick with our process. We're going to do what we do, but we're going to do it better. The message is not a – we're not looking for short-term success in the season, but to build a program over a course of time that can have sustained success. You have consistent habits, you have consistent production. You have inconsistent habits, you have inconsistent production. But I think the

kids will buy into the fact that this is a process. You stick to it and do the things that are necessary, this can be a result. Six games in, we are headed in the right direction.

Q: Coach, you ran the ball 75 percent of the time tonight. Did you adjust your coaching style? Is that something that you made a concerted effort to do? Is that something that you may do more of going forward?

JM: I think, looking at the self-scout numbers last week, we were on first and second down, close to 65 percent run and 35 percent passing. But that's run calls. The ball may get thrown because it's an RPO [run-pass option], but there were times at Penn State – I was back at the Maryland game in '16, where we ran close to 50, 60 times. Really, it's a matter to me of dispersal of the ball to your playmakers, rather than the run-pass percentage. I think you're more difficult to defend when you're closer to the 50-50 [percentage of passes and runs], because it makes the defense defend the whole field and both facets of the game. Certainly, if we're able to, I think I said at the beginning here, if we're able to run the ball successfully like we did tonight, then we're geared more toward that part of the game.

Q: Everyone in the stadium knows Nick Fitzgerald is going to run the ball. How does he continue to do it time and time again? What do you think about his performance?

JM: He's a tough son of a gun. You come in, and you see him on a Sunday after a game. You can tell he's been through the battles. It's a testament to his leadership, and it's a testament to his willingness to do what it takes for the offense of the team to be successful. Most 6'4, 235-pound guys who can throw the ball over a mountain, they want to throw all the time. Right now, it's not a part of our game. That is going to help us win as much as the running is. That's why he's the captain. He cares more about the team than he does about his individual success. It speaks volumes to his willingness to do what it takes for us to be successful.

Q: Assess the play of the offensive line.

JM: They are a very prideful group. Coming off a couple weeks where we haven't been able to run it very well and had issues protecting. It hurts me, and it hurts them. Coach [Marcus] Johnson has done a great job developing his players, and I don't think the body of his work over the last two games represented our ability. For Michael Story to go in, [Dareuan] Parker was in there for a little bit, and Tyre [Phillips], all came in at some point. Darryl [Williams] didn't really practice that much at all this week. All those guys contributed. It's a line of scrimmage football league, and I think we did a good job at the line of scrimmage today on both sides of the ball.

Q: Do you feel like you got a better effort from your defense tonight?

JM: The defense has been playing very, very well. I think we saw some good things today; creating turnovers, creating more three-and-outs, shortening the field up for the offense and giving us an opportunity where we didn't have to drive 80, 90 yards every time. To me, that's great complimentary football, where all three parts

of the game feed off of each other. I've been really pleased with Coach [Bob] Shoop and the defensive staff. They've played really well this year.

Q: I know you'd like to run for 350+ yards every game. However, is there anything in the passing game that caught your eye or could be improved upon?

JM: We went for a conservative effort; ran more quick gains, more quick screens, to get the ball out of our hands. Those are some things we wanted to do. I could fill a blackboard with pass plays that are going to get open down the field and to attack the coverages that the defense is playing. That's only part of it. You have to protect, you have to get open, and complete the throw. Against this defense who is just as good against the pass as they are the run; we saw our game plan as the best path to success.

Q: What does getting your first SEC win do for your confidence?

JM: My confidence never wavered. I lack a lot of things; confidence is not one of them. I think that is what's great about our team, we didn't flinch. We didn't cower in the face of adversity. We didn't pout. We went out on Sunday this week, watched the film from the week before, and moved forward. Obviously, the momentum of beating a top ten team at home; to carry that into a bye week, feeling good at 4-2. We know we have a huge test on the road in two weeks.

Q: Do you feel like Jamal [Peters] is close to getting back, and is Darryl [Williams] progressing? Also, what is the situation with Brian Cole?

JM: Jamal has progressed. He was out indefinitely and is now day-to-day going into the bye week. We'll go into this week and see how he does. I'll update you on the Monday of the next game week. We didn't find out the severity of the Brian Cole injury until later in the week; he is kind of day-to-day as well.

Deion Calhoun | OL | Sr.

Q: How proud of the way the offense line stepped up tonight?

DC: Coach [Moorhead] always says it's the next man up, so that's what our mentality was starting Sunday. It was next man up. I'm proud for Michael [Story] and DP [Dareuan Parker], they stepped up and got the job done. They prepared well all week.

Q: Was there a point in the game that you thought you had the advantage in the trenches?

DC: As the game kept going, we kept moving the ball and kept getting on the plus side [of the downs]. We just kept moving [the ball]. We'd come to the sideline and Coach [Johnson] said just keep pounding it and keep working.

Q: What did Coach Johnson say to you all after the last two weeks performances?

I believe he kind of knew that some of the guys were frustrated with the last game against Florida and he just kept telling us to trust the process and keep working. The only way we're going to get better is to keep working.

Jace Christmann | K | So.

Q: How well do you feel like you guys performed tonight?

JC: I think this is the best specialist performance we've had since I've been here. Tucker [Day] punted well, Joel [Baldwin] had the recover on the [fumble] and i feel like I hit the ball pretty well tonight. In general, the whole special team unit, we just feel like we attacked every play and did our job.

Q: How do you keep the mindset of not thinking about the [kicks] you miss, but focus on the [kicks] you make?

JC: You just got to walk in everyday and just trust [the process]. You're here for a reason, its okay if you miss one, you just have to tell yourself that you got the next one.

Q: Was it fun to see Joel Baldwin recover that fumble?

JC: Its always fun for a guy like that to get out and there make a play. Guys like [Joel], they don't get to make a whole of bunch of plays like that. The whole sideline was ecstatic. It was awesome.

Nick Fitzgerald | QB | Sr.

Q: How fun was it doing everything again like that?

NF: I'm not a laughing hysterical on the sidelines type of guy. I like to be serious, but there are times when you can crack smile and those kind of things. To me, what is fun is going out there and honestly dominating someone. I don't want to say that we just dominated them [Auburn], but offensive line and defensive line, i feel like they just had they're way with them tonight. I know it was amazing to watch. It was awesome to be apart of. So, huge props to those guys, huge props to my five guys up front, the "funky bunch" as I call them.

they played really well and gave us an opportunity to [win]. I told those guys if you guys [the offensive line] win, [our team] is going to win, and that's exactly what they did.

Q: Could you sense any confusion in the Auburn defense with all the motion in the backfield?

NF: They're a team that likes to show a lot of different looks and roll late into different things. We knew that if we spread them out, got into a no back in the backfield and did our motions that we would have to make them think, which means they couldn't be static, then try to show us different looks and then we roll late. We made them play their base stuff or show us exactly what they were about to do before we really get going. So, that was a huge thing we wanted to do and it worked out well for us.

Q: What did you see on the fourth and goal? what went through your thought process?

NF: It was actually called to go to the right. Fifty seven [Deshaun Davis], he is a heck of a player. He timed it up just right, came right through the hole and I had to cut it backside. It was me and two guys and I wiggled my way in there, I guess. We barely got in there

Q: What does it mean to take an SEC record?

NF: It's huge. Honestly, it kind of goes back to a seven-year-old boy from Richmond Hill, Georgia who was just starting out playing football. Who would of known that little boy would turn into this and have all of this all of this great opportunity for him and all the success. It's a blessing. It feels amazing to know that all the hard work your putting in, your going to be remembered. Other than that, I wouldn't have got here without my teammates, so it's an achievement for me, but a huge compliment to them. It's a huge compliment to how hard they play for me and how well they do, specifically the five guys up front blocking and opening up holes for me.

Kylin Hill | RB | So.

Q: How much did the motion help with the running game tonight?

KH: It helped a lot. [Coach Moorhead] told me I had to be the guy that was versatile. He told me just to do what God has blessed me with the talent to do. It was great play calling and we just kept it working all night.

Q: The team's confidence didn't waver during these last two losses, why not?

KH: We know we can win with the talent we have. It was all about executing and do what we [the players] can do. It's not a coaching thing, as you saw tonight when everybody does their job and executes, we can get the job done.

Q: Was there a point early in the game where you knew you were going to get the running game going?

KH: Not really. There was just a vibe on the sideline. Everybody had great energy and I knew the way we were feeling that we could get the job done.

Mark McLaurin | S | Sr.

Q: What was the moment shift like on the sideline with the huge hustle play [on the fumble] in the end zone?

ML: I was giving everything I had. I just wanted to make a play for the team. Everybody on the sideline was pumped. We just had to keep it going from there.

Q: How do you feel about the performance of the defense?

ML: It was a great performance on every phase of the ball: offense, defense and special teams. It was a tremendous team effort.

Q: You guys made several stops inside the red zone. How big is that?

ML: It's really big. We always pride ourselves on no touchdowns [for the opposing team]. It's either zero or three. That's what we pride ourselves on.

Q: How big was the crowd tonight for you guys?

ML: It was tremendous. The crowd was great. We really thank everybody for coming out. It was a huge support.

Maurice Smitherman | CB | Jr.

Q: What did this defense prove about itself tonight?

MS: Coach [Shoo] preached all week that it's going to come down to the defense. We have our offense's back. We just tried to run to the ball and just do our job.

Q: Can you explain the emotions on the field tonight?

MS: [Coach] Moorhead said, before we got over to the stadium...we had a chip on our shoulder. We were reading all of the negativity that everybody was saying. We just wanted to prove that our team still had life in and we could still be a great team. We did that tonight.

Q: Can you explain how important it is that Coach Moorhead is really adamant about the consistency that you have and that he expects from the team?

MS: He has had really high expectations for us since the beginning. The first time we met him in the meeting room, he asked us, "What's your ring size?" We just have that high standard. We just tried to play with that chip on our shoulder [tonight]. We still believe we're the best team in the SEC. We beat number eight team in the country.

Q: How important is that mentality to maintain?

MS: It's really good going into the bye week. To give us the confidence we need. We can get a little rest before we head into Death Valley the next week.

Erroll Thompson | LB | So.

Q: What did the defense think about Auburn blocking the field goal and then losing the ball?

ET: We just had to go back out and play. No matter what, we pride ourselves on the adversity of the game and sudden change. No matter what [happened], we knew we had to step up.

Q: Did you feel like [Jarrett Stidham] was uncomfortable the whole night?

ET: I wouldn't say he was too rattled. I feel like we put great pressure on him the whole night and got him out of his comfort zone. We knew he was a great guy, a great player, who could make those throws. We wanted to rattle his cage a little bit.

Q: How important was it to know that the defense didn't have to be perfect with the offense scoring [a touchdown] right before the end of the first half?

ET: It was perfect. It was a great momentum shift. It was really a sigh of relief with those guys scoring [a touchdown]. I think it was eight quarters of not scoring a touchdown, so it was a great momentum boost [for our team].

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Auburn Postgame Quotes

Gus Malzahn | Head Coach

Q: Opening Statement

GM: Obviously, an extremely tough loss. Any time you go on the road in this league and play a good opponent, you can't do the things we did. Really, you can go to the very end of the game, and I'm real proud of our team from the standpoint that our defense blocked a field goal and gave us a chance to go down and score. I think we got in the 30-yard-line and couldn't do it. So, we had an opportunity. We didn't seize the moment but just a lot of mistakes as far as fumbled punts. We fumbled the ball out of the end zone when you think you got a touchdown. Defensively, obviously, they kept us on the field a lot. We've got to give their quarterback (Nick Fitzgerald) credit. He ran the ball extremely well with the scheme that they had. Offensively, third downs, we were 3-of-14 on the road, you're not going to win very many games like that. Obviously, disappointing loss. Give Mississippi State credit, they had a good plan and their kids executed.

Q: What did you do at halftime when you weren't able to run the ball successfully?

GM: We were having trouble with our zone scheme, getting a little bit of movement and started trying to get outside on the perimeter a little bit more, a really late second quarter. In the second half, we started throwing it a little bit more and had a little success right there. We just had a couple opportunities. In a game like this where you have opportunities, you've got to seize the moment. We had our hands on the ball or two in the end zone, and we were close on a deep shot and close doesn't get it. We've got to make the plays.

Q: What did you think of JaTarvious Whitlow's performance coming off the shoulder injury?

GM: He practiced, but he didn't practice. He practiced on wearing his jersey and trainers said that he was good to play. So, we tried him out pregame. He fought hard and competed. He's still a young guy, he's still learning and he's got a chance to be a good running back in this league.

Q: What was Jarrett Stidham's issue with overthrows tonight?

GM: We've got to get into a rhythm. We've got to do all of the above. It's not just one thing, but when you have our opportunities, we've just got to seize it.

Q: What was the injury to Deshaun Davis?

GM: He had a leg injury, and it was pretty scary. He's a tough guy, and he came back in. We'll see the extent of it. I know he was getting checked out as I came up here.

Q: What do you have to say about the two plays that were reviewed by the officials?

GM: The one at the [end of the] first half, that was a huge play in the game. That was a huge play, huge call and of all that. It doesn't matter if I agree or disagree. It's something you deal with. That's part of the game, and we've got to overcome it. The one down [at the end zone] when the ball came out, I know it was close. It was a touchback, that's what they said. So, it's what you deal [with]. Even those two things, still, we have opportunities, and we didn't seize the moment.

Q: What were you trying to communicate to the referees after that Ryan Davis incident?

GM: The whistle blew. There was an inadvertent whistle that blew and so. They explained that if it happens simultaneously or something like that. That's what I was saying because they blew the whistle.

Q: Were you pleased with the prep during the week leading?

GM: You know, I was pleased with the prep. Our focus, the first road game, I know they were excited to play on the road. But like I said, when you make the mistakes we made on the road, you're not going to win very many games. I'll say this, our kids played hard. They fought their butt off. I'm proud of them, but obviously the mistakes. We've got to coach them better. We've got to do a better job and that starts with me.

Q: Do you take some time to reassess what is going on with the offense?

GM: I think each game you gather information. You put together a plan with the guys, and you try to continue to improve. We will continue to do that. The reality is that after six games, the young guys are experienced. We're not inexperienced anymore. We've got to start showing improvement, and I expect that we will.

Q: It looked like third downs and time of possession were your two problems

GM: Yeah, I mean our defense was on the field for most of the game. There's no doubt that anytime you go three of fourteen on third downs offensively, that makes it tough. We have to do a better job on third down. They have a dynamic pass rush, there is no doubt about that. We had two third-and-shorts that we did not convert and that can't happen.

Q: What was Nick Fitzgerald able to do that made him more so much more effective tonight that he had been in the past?

GM: They ran their speed sweep read. He's got long arms and they did a good job with their scheme, and they had a couple of wrinkles. He's pretty good when he gets going downhill. He got going downhill a few times.

Q: What did you say to the guys post game?

GM: I was honest with them. We made too many mistakes to win a game like that. We have to man up. Our backs are up against the wall like it was last year at this time. We have to do the same thing that we did last year. We need to play better. We need to coach them better. I was just honest with them. We will get back [home] and tomorrow we will turn the page, and we have to solve some of our issues.

Q: You talked about being aggressive and that is one of the things, you get that turnover early, the fourth-and-one and field goal units on there before they even measure. What was the thought process on that?

GM: The thought process was I expect [tonight] to be a fairly low scoring game. I did not want to give them any momentum. I wanted to put three [points] on the board. We get back down there and in the second quarter we went ahead and went for it. We got the first down, and I think we had two plays. Then we had a bad snap on the third down, which was really tough on us and I think we missed a field goal after that. That was the thinking on that.

Q: After the way the second half went, and you go back and think maybe we need to pass the ball a little more this year to be successful more offensively

GM: I think each game we are learning more about our team, and you got to do whatever gives your team the best chance of being successful. Each week we will be evaluating that.

Q: Considering what has happened this season so far, you've had three-straight game where you have failed to crack one-hundred yards rushing. Can you get the power run game back this season, or at this point is it is what it is?

GM: We've had trouble the last three weeks, I mean that is the facts of it. We have to solve it. We have to run that football better. We have to give them credit, but at the end of the day, that is what we have to.

Q: At this point with it being a midpoint of the season do you look inward as a staff and do anything change wise? Whether its people in the press-box, people down on the field?

GM: I just think as a head coach, we have to do whatever helps our team be better and improve, and get better.

Marlon Davidson | DL | Jr.

Q: What did you do with the field goal?

MD: I was just trying to make a play for my team. I was just trying to get my offense a chance to make plays and get the ball back to them. Sometimes, you need those type of plays to try to build momentum and try to get the ball in a different position for the offense to try to help them out.

Q: What were they doing effectively, running the ball?

MD: At the end, it was all on us. I take the blame. We could have done better things on the defensive side of the ball and played better. We didn't play to the Auburn standard.

Q: Were guys getting tired after the defense being on the field for 41 minutes?

MD: Yeah, but we still have to fight. That's all that matters, and that's all that defense is built on, fight. No matter what, we're going to throw the last punch. That's what we did, we kept fighting and kept fighting. The outcome didn't come our way. We had bad plays with a fumble for a touchback [and] a long dropped punt. We beat ourselves. It is nothing they did, it's what we did.

Deshaun Davis | LB | Sr.

Q: How were you able to come back on the field?

DD: It was a 16-9 game, and I'm a senior linebacker. I had to come back. They tried to sit me down because I was in pain. In a game like that, you're not supposed to sit out unless you can't walk. I could walk fine.

Q: What was the mood on the sideline after blocking the field goal?

DD: I mean, it was electrifying. We felt like we were in striking distance, then we got an extra 15 yards with a personal foul on their guy. We kind of felt like that leaf was turning for us. We didn't go put it in the end zone. I'll say, we had our chances on offense and defense. We just didn't execute and didn't get the job done.

Q: How tough was it for the defense to be on the field as much as it was?

DD: It's just something that we have to do. The good thing about it is, it's something that we can control. Sadly, tonight, we didn't control it. They made more plays. They schemed us up really well. We didn't make good adjustments on the field [or] off the field, just as a whole. We're kind of bummed out as a defense because that's not our standard. No one is about to rush for that many yards on us. We just have to go back to the drawing board, see the things that we did wrong and try to correct them. Obviously, it's going to be something that we see going down further in the year.

Ryan Davis | RB | Sr.

Q: How well did your defense play tonight?

RD: Our defense is big every night. We know that they're going to do what they're supposed to do every night. We know that they have our [the offenses] back. We have to have their backs. I have to step up and play for them.

Q: What happened on the muffed punt in the second quarter?

RD: I was trying to get on the punt before it rolled. I didn't want to lose yards. So I tried to hurry and get up on it. It was a different bounce. I should have called 'Peter' and got away from it.

Q: Do you think the offense got into more of a rhythm in the second half?

RD: I felt like we finally got a rhythm when we finally started making positive plays. We were moving up and down the field. We just have to find a way to get in the end zone somehow.

Jarrett Stidham | QB | Jr.

Q: What are your thoughts on tonight's game?

JS: It was a tough game. We just can't play like that.

Q: What was your reaction on overthrowing a receiver in the end zone during the third quarter?

JS: I have made that throw over and over and over. For whatever reason, I just [missed it]. So, I was not happy with myself.

Q: What do you tell your teammates after a tough loss like tonight?

JS: I think the thing for us is, obviously, this is not the position that we want to be in. I think people's character comes out whenever you are under adversity. All the way around, top to bottom, a lot of character is going to show right now. We have lost two game in conference play in the west [division] and it would be really easy for

guys to get down on themselves. I think a lot of character is going to show here and that is where I need to step up as the leader and not let this loss effect us. We have to get back tomorrow and get to work.