



# POSTGAME NOTES

**GAME 9 ■ #18 MISSISSIPPI STATE (6-3, 2-3 SEC) VS. LOUISIANA TECH (6-3, 4-1 C-USA) ■ NOV. 3, 2018 ■ DAVIS WADE STADIUM**

## TEAM NOTABLES

- Senior defensive end Gerri Green and senior quarterback Nick Fitzgerald served as captains. Louisiana Tech won the toss and elected to defer to the second half.
- With tonight's victory, Mississippi State is bowl eligible for a school-record ninth consecutive season.
- Mississippi State improved to 11-3 all-time versus Louisiana Tech. MSU has now won 39 of its last 44 non-conference games, including 11 straight versus non-conference opponents. MSU has out-scored opponents 474-164 during that streak.
- State now owns a 56-21-3 all-time record in Homecoming games, including nine-straight victories.
- Barrett Shock of Chattanooga, Tennessee, was named the 2018 Homecoming King. Emily Turner of Madison, Mississippi, was named the 2018 Homecoming Queen.
- Tonight's attendance was 58,709.

## OFFENSE

- Nick Fitzgerald threw a touchdown pass to Stephen Guidry on MSU's first offensive drive for the second-straight week. Last week against No. 16 Texas A&M was a 25-yard TD pass, while tonight's was from 11 yards out. MSU scored on its first three offensive drives versus Louisiana Tech.
- MSU has out-scored opponents 148-44 in the first half this season.
- State converted 15 first downs in the first half, the most in the opening half this season.
- The Bulldogs logged 400+ yards of total offense in a game for the fifth time this year.
- The Dawgs rushed for 289 yards, marking the sixth time this year MSU has eclipsed the 200-yard rushing mark. State has rushed for 200 or more yards as a team 23 times since the start of the 2016 season and has eclipsed 250 rushing yards in 16 out of its last 29 games.
- State had nine plays of 20 or more yards against Louisiana Tech to bring its season total to 52. The Bulldogs had a total of 52 plays of 20+ yards over the entire 2017 season.

## DEFENSE

- MSU held its opponent without a touchdown in the first quarter for the eighth time this season. The Bulldogs are out-scoring opponents in the first quarter 75-19 and have allowed only 160 yards combined over the last four games.
- State's defense has allowed just two touchdowns in its opponents' last 51 offensive possessions this season.
- With Stephen Adegoke's fourth-quarter interception, MSU has recorded at least one turnover in 12-straight games.

## PLAYER NOTABLES

### QB NICK FITZGERALD

- Accounted for 350 total yards of offense, including 243 yards through the air with four passing touchdowns.
- Responsible for eight touchdowns (six passing, two rushing) over the last two games.
- With touchdown passes on each of MSU's first three offensive possessions, Fitzgerald has thrown multiple touchdown passes in back-to-back games and 18 times in his career.
- Rushed 18 times for a total of 107 yards for his fifth 100-yard rushing game of the season and the 19th of his career. He has rushed for over 100 yards in 10 of his last 14 appearances. It marks his third season with at least five 100-yard rushing games (each in the Top 11 in single-season history).
- Had a 33-yard run in the second quarter and now has a run of at least 30 yards in six games this season.
- Recorded a season-high four touchdown passes during the first half, marking the first time he has had at least four passing touchdowns in a game since throwing a career-high five against Samford on Oct. 29, 2016.
- This is the second time in Nick Fitzgerald's career that he has thrown at least four touchdowns in a single game. It is the first time in his career that he has thrown four touchdown passes in the first half and the first time that he has thrown three-plus touchdown passes in the first quarter.

### TE JUSTIN JOHNSON

- Took a reception 37 yards on the first offensive play of the game for his 10th catch of the season and fourth for 25+ yards.
- His 37 receiving yards were a career high.

### WR STEPHEN GUIDRY

- Reeled in an 11-yard touchdown with 12:38 remaining in the first quarter. Guidry has now scored a touchdown on the opening drive in back-to-back contests after also scoring a 25-yard touchdown on MSU's opening drive versus No. 16 Texas A&M.
- Last four catches have been 11 yards (TD), 84 yards (1st down), 21 yards (1st down), 25 yards (TD).
- Scored a touchdown in each of the last two games.

### WR DEDDRICK THOMAS

- With 7:02 remaining in the first quarter, caught a 36-yard touchdown pass to put Mississippi State up 14-0. The score was his first of the season and his first since Nov. 23, 2017, versus Ole Miss.
- Closed the game with three receptions for a career-high 70 yards.
- He also returned one kick for 20 yards and racked up 41 yards on two punt returns to average 21.0 yards per punt.

### RB AERIS WILLIAMS

- Rushed twice for 42 yards, including a 29-yard rushing touchdown with 4:12 left in the third quarter.
- Career rushing yards stand at 2,339, which surpasses Dennis Johnson (1974-77) for 10th all-time in MSU history.

### RB NICK GIBSON

- Rushed twice for a career-high 64 yards, including a career-long rush of 62 yards in the fourth quarter.

### WR JESSE JACKSON

- Reeled in a 10-yard touchdown reception with 30 seconds remaining in the second quarter to record the first touchdown of his career.

### K JACE CHRISTMANN

- Connected on a 47-yard field goal with 5:23 remaining in the second quarter to tie his career long, which he set on Oct. 6, 2018, versus No. 8 Auburn.
- Improved to 72-of-72 in career PATs made, which surpasses Evan Sobiesk (2013-14) for seventh in MSU career history.

### S STEPHEN ADEGOKE

- Recorded the first interception of his career during Louisiana Tech's final drive of the game, returning it for 29 yards.

### DE MONTEZ SWEAT

- Recorded three tackles, including a sack on a 3rd-and-8 play during the third quarter. He now has recorded 9.5 sacks this season, which ranks 10th all-time in MSU single-season history.
- Has recorded 20.0 career sacks, which surpasses Greg Favors (1994-97) for sixth all-time in MSU career history.

### LB ERROLL THOMPSON

- Led the defense with nine tackles. Has recorded at least seven tackles in six of MSU's nine games this season.



# MISSISSIPPI STATE FOOTBALL

## POSTGAME QUOTES

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Mississippi State Football  
vs. Louisiana Tech | Nov. 3, 2018  
*Mississippi State Postgame Quotes*

**Joe Moorhead | Head Coach**

### ***Opening Statement***

JM: First and foremost, I want to give credit to coach [Skip] Holtz, his staff and his team. That's a very good football team. [They] came into the game 6-2, bowl eligible and first place in their conference. Talking to the kids at the beginning of the week, it was 24-21 against LSU with a little over eight minutes left in the fourth quarter, so for us to be able to come out and have a great week of practice, be firing on all cylinders, in all three phases of the game, and become bowl-eligible [ourselves], which is one of our barometers for success, I'm very proud of our staff, proud of our team and proud of our program. I thought it was another good home win and (I'm) excited we got such great fan support, as well.

***Q: Tonight you had a lot of different guys involved in the receiving game. What does that add to the passing game when you have different guys like that step up?***

JM: What allows us to be effective and explosive is the versatility of it. We went into the week saying we wanted to get the slots and the tight ends a little bit more involved and we were able to do that. When a defense has to defend the length and the width of the field and you're able to spread it out amongst all the ball carriers and get the ball dispersed, it makes it harder to shut down one person. It was good to get the slots and the tight ends involved and I think that makes us all the more difficult to defend.

***Q: Was there a reason you didn't play Aeris Williams in the first half?***

JM: There was an accountability issue during the week, so that's part of the development of a championship culture and he understood, he knew the reasons why, and he sat out for a half and then we got him rolling in the third quarter.

***Q: Has getting your receivers into open space a priority, and why was that possible tonight?***

JM: One of the base tenants of our offense is attempting to get our speed in space, for lack of a better term, whether it's running backs, like we do with Kylin [Hill], in the pass game or any of the receivers, or Nick [Fitzgerald] in the run game. You don't want to be a phone booth game you want to be an open field game. Open-field tackling is a hard thing to do, so the more we spread out and get people in space with the athletes we have it makes us difficult to defend.

***Q: How instrumental were effort plays in jumping out to the big lead you had?***

JM: That was one of the things that we talked about last night and today right before the game, is that we needed to start fast and knock the belief out of [Louisiana Tech]. Having been at a group of five school with Akron and when you're at an FCS school and when you get a chance to play up, these guys come in with a chip on their shoulder and want to be able to prove that they belong here and they can play against SEC talent. The longer you let them [stay] in the game the harder it's going to be to win. We saw that [in] the Louisiana Tech [at LSU] game. Our kids have prepared well all year. I think our practices have been excellent. Our effort has been a constant as well, but I think what we're seeing as the season's progressed, particularly on the offensive side of the ball, is improved execution has been steady. On defense, I think every game we get a little bit better.

***Q: Why has wide receiver Jesse Jackson seen more snaps?***

JM: We look at those guys as co-starters. Osirus [Mitchell], Stephen [Guidry] and Jesse are all guys that rotate through the outside receiver position. I think they were going one [snap] for one [snap] today. Jesse just happened to be the guy that started. All three of those guys are on a series-by-series rotation. Jesse did have his best game of the year, tonight, I think.

***Q: How important is it for your guys to be playing the way they are right now heading into the Alabama game next weekend?***

JM: Very important. Obviously, we'll discuss them a little bit more on Monday, but that's what's ahead of us. We're going to enjoy this win for tonight, then watch the film. We'll make the corrections at practice and get a jump start on Alabama tomorrow. But certainly, when you're heading on the road to play the number one team in the country you definitely want to have momentum going in your favor.

***Q: How important were the big plays on special teams?***

JM: That was actually coach [Joey] Jones' number one point of emphasis. He thought with how they punt the ball, with the trajectory and the distance, we were [going to be] able to get some returns set up this week. Dedrick [Thomas] did a good job, Malik Dear got a nice kickoff return. I think we did a real nice job on returns. We have to work a little bit more on coverages, but I thought the punting improved, as well. So, I'll be surprised if we didn't win the drive start battle this game. That would be a good change for us.

***Q: What have you seen from Nick Fitzgerald in the last two weeks that has led to what he's doing on the field?***

JM: I think he's playing with a lot more confidence. Obviously, as coaches we kind of took a look at what we were doing and the things we were asking him to do, kind of streamlining it and, I don't want to say simplifying it, but making sure that he was playing fast and utilizing his skill set to the best of his abilities. I think it's been a combination. He's been playing with more confidence and I think the confidence comes from performing well and I think the things that we're asking him to do allows him to put his best foot forward. I'm excited to see him come out and build on last week's performance.

***Q: How was it seeing the freshmen get quality playing time?***

JM: It was great. You look out there on the last drive, and it was just about all of our freshmen on defense. Got [Kwatrivous] Johnson in there on the offensive line. I think we got just about every freshman in there, [with] maybe one or two that we missed. [Aaron] Brule was a guy that we held out because we want him to be able to play in the bowl game, so this would have been four for him. We go through that every Monday, the list of the freshmen and how many games they've played. Certainly, to get those guys some more experience was very beneficial. Now, with the bowl game and all the extra practices, that's huge for their development, as well.

***Q: Do you feel like it could have gone any better in the first quarter?***

JM: We started fast, building that confidence. I think it was three drives and three touchdowns, which was great. They were extended drives. You talk about situational football, we had some third-down conversions and, i think there was a fourth-down conversion. [We] were running and throwing it with equal effectiveness. Certainly, our defense has really come out on a weekly basis and you're almost surprised when they give up a first down or some yardage. Forty possession [entering tonight] without a touchdown given up, then add whatever there was tonight. It's been 51. That's remarkable. Fifty-one possessions since the last touchdown. Definitely, starting fast helped us.

***Q: How important was it that a lot of guys got involved in the passing game?***

JM: Like I said, we want to get the slots and the tight ends more involved in the pass game. Out of everybody, I would guess there were probably [nine] guys who caught a pass or carried the ball. That's good. We want to spread the ball around. Getting those guys involved, like I said, makes us more difficult to defend. Certainly, with [Justin] Johnson and [Farrod] Green, kind of as co-starters, it was really nice to get them some touches tonight. They bust their tails in the run game. They do a great job blocking and, obviously you want to be rewarded with the ball as well.

**Nick Fitzgerald | QB | Senior**

***Q: Do you feel like you are finding a rhythm?***

NF: Yeah, you can definitely say that. I think it is very apparent that I am a lot more comfortable in the pocket and a lot more comfortable in the pass game. I've really liked our last two games and the plan that we had to go attack them. I felt comfortable doing it and commanding it out there. It was definitely another solid week.

***Q: Has stopping over-thinking lead to your last two games?***

NF: Yes. It has really just been trusting in what I have been taught throughout the week, and what I have practiced over and over again. I'm not seeing something little and thinking it is something big and completely going off-course from what we have done all week. I'm really just settling down and playing my game.

***Q: Was the throw to Kylin [Hill] a throw you are more comfortable with these days?***

NF: Honestly, I threw the same thing to him on Friday during our walkthrough and he dropped it, so he owed me that one. But, the wheel route is something we throw a lot so I am comfortable with it.

***Q: How eager are you to get back to Tuscaloosa and see how measure up to how you did two years ago [against Alabama]?***

NF: Two years ago, I think I won their respect by just being able to get hit a lot of times and get back up. I just have to go over there and do the same things I have been doing the past two weeks. For the rest of the season, I need to be a leader and keep everybody calm, cool and collected. Don't let it get into people's heads that we are playing Alabama. We try to play to our standard every week and that is what we are going to do next week, as well.

***Q: How did it feel to score that touchdown just before halftime?***

JJ: I want to thank God for the opportunity. I have dreamed of that moment for about five years, to finally cross that milestone. Every little detail counts when it comes to scoring.

***Q: Coach [Joe Moorhead] thought it was your best game of the year. How would you characterize your performance?***

JJ: I think so as well. As far as detail and staying focused, it was definitely a big game for me.

***Q: What was it like for a lot of different guys to get involved tonight?***

JJ: I think everybody plays a role. One game is not defined by our team. Everybody plays a role. Some people will be hot sometimes and some not. I think it was our time to step up and take the reins.

Dedrick Thomas | WR | Junior

***Q: What do you say about this offense where different guys can step up a different week and just expand the weapons in the offense?***

DT: It's just the next man up. It builds trust and faith and confidence in everybody. If somebody goes down, then you know you're not going to miss a beat. It's going to be constant.

***Q: Have you noticed anything different about [Nick] Fitzgerald the last couple of games? He seems really comfortable throwing the ball right now. Is there anything at practice that changed? What have you seen?***

DT: I don't really think he's playing much differently. I feel like he still can throw the way he's been throwing. He's having great success right now, that's all I can say.

***Q: A month ago you were in this room, and it was a difficult night after losing to Florida. What has changed for this team since that time?***

DT: The preparation has been better. We're taking it slower. Any little thing now, at practice, if somebody messes up, it's "copy, copy, copy" just to get that look back. I think, as a team, we've matured more as the season has moved on.

Erroll Thompson | LB | Sophomore

***Q: You guys have a big challenge next week. How quickly do you erase this game and start looking at that Alabama game and just your thoughts on playing Tua [Tagovailoa] and this Alabama offense?***

ET: Hopefully right after everybody walks out of this locker room, they're going to look at some film from the LSU game. Hopefully the defense has the same mindset as me, because I'm going to go home and try to watch a little bit and see what they did. Hopefully [we'll be] right on it.

***Q: Coach Moorhead mentioned that you guys went 51 possessions without giving up a touchdown. You guys have given up 3 in the last 5 games. Is it a point of pride at this point that you guys just aren't giving up touchdowns?***

KT: Yeah, I believe it's a point of pride. Right now, I feel like everybody wants to keep everybody out of the end zone. We've got 51 right now and the goal is to try and make it 61 or 71 for the rest of the year.

***Q: With the game coming up next week, momentum couldn't be higher for you guys defensively, and going up against an offense like [Alabama]. How much does positive momentum impact the game next week?***

ET: It affects it greatly. We know those guys are going to put in the air. They're going to be explosive, they've been explosive in every game this year. So, it's a great challenge for us.

**Mississippi State Football**  
**vs. Louisiana Tech | Nov. 3, 2018**  
**Louisiana Tech Postgame Quotes**

**Skip Holtz | Head Coach**

***Q: Is the Mississippi State Defense as good as advertised?***

SH: They are, they played a great game. We talked all week about them being top five in the country in total defense and in scoring defense. They are strong. We knew in order for us to have a chance in this game we were going to have to stop them running the ball. We were not able to do that. That was one of the things we were trying to do coming into it. They put the ball in a very talented quarterback's hands. I thought that what he [Nick Fitzgerald] did running the ball and what he did throwing the ball was really impressive.

***Q: The MSU receivers made some great catches tonight, didn't they?***

SH: They really did. He [Nick Fitzgerald] was 17-of-28 throwing the ball for 250 yards. He was very productive, and you put that on top of rushing for 100 yards in the first half. We didn't make them punt in the first half. I was excited we didn't turn the ball over until there at the end of the game. We never gave them a short field. I knew their defense was good coming in. I did not expect them to do to our defense what they did. That is a real testament to them, and the way they came out and played. I know they have received a lot of criticism for their offense. They have worked hard to get it better. It was impressive with the show they put on tonight.

***Q: Do you like playing out of conference this late in the season?***

SH: I don't like it, but it is what it is. They don't ask me. They just put the schedule together, and I go out and play it. Would I do this by choice, no. This is really hard. You are late in the season. You are beat up with a lot of injuries. Then you go on the road to a SEC venue. It is a tough challenge for a football team. We had a couple guys get knocked out tonight. We will see what our injuries are and put it together and go play. This is what it is. We just have to take it, learn from it and grow from it as a football team. We have to get ready to play next week. It never gets any easier. We still have three conference games to go. We need to get that seventh [win] and guarantee ourselves a bowl game. Hopefully, there is still four games to play. We have to do it one game at a time just like you take the game one play at a time.