



# POSTGAME NOTES

LIBERTY BOWL • RICE (10-4) VS. MISSISSIPPI STATE (7-6) • TUESDAY, DEC. 31, 2013 • LIBERTY BOWL MEMORIAL STADIUM

## TEAM NOTABLES

- For the first time in program history, Mississippi State played in a bowl game in four-straight seasons.
- MSU has claimed seven or more victories in four consecutive campaigns for the first time since 1997-2000. It is just the third time in program history with seven or more wins in four-straight years, with the other from 1939-42.
- The Bulldogs have claimed bowl victories in six of their last seven appearances, the best stretch in program history. MSU is now 10-7 in 17 bowl trips.
- Mississippi State is now 3-1 in the Liberty Bowl (W, 16-12 vs. North Carolina State, Dec. 21, 1963; L, 38-15 vs. Air Force, Dec. 29, 1991; W, 10-3 vs. UCF, Dec. 29, 2007; W, 44-7 vs. Rice, Dec. 31, 2013).
- Head coach **Dan Mullen** has won three bowl games, the most by any coach in Mississippi State history, one more than Jackie Sherrill recorded.
- **Mullen's** .750 winning percentage (3-1 record) in bowl games is the best in program history for any head coach who appeared in more than one bowl game.
- **Mullen** earned his 36th victory at the helm, just one behind Emory Bellard (1979-85) for the third most in program history. Sherrill (1991-2003) is the record holder with 75 triumphs while Allyn McKeen (1939-48) is second with 65.
- Mississippi State claimed its third-straight victory, the longest winning streak since taking the first seven games of 2012. It is the first time since 1974 the Bulldogs won their final three games of the season.
- The Bulldogs' 27 points in the first half were the second most in the opening half of a bowl game in program history. MSU tallied 31 first-half points against Michigan on Jan. 1, 2011, in the Gator Bowl.
- The 27 first-half points were the most in the opening half of the AutoZone Liberty Bowl since Houston tallied 28 versus South Carolina in 2006. The 27 points were tied for the fifth most in a half in AutoZone Liberty Bowl history.
- Mississippi State scored 20 points in the second quarter, tied for the sixth most in a quarter in AutoZone Liberty Bowl history.
- MSU's 20-point lead at the half was the largest in the AutoZone Liberty Bowl since Illinois held a 24-0 advantage in 1994 against East Carolina.
- The 37-point margin of victory is the largest during the 2013 bowl season and tied for the largest in AutoZone Liberty Bowl history with the 1997 contest that Southern Miss won against Pittsburgh 41-7.
- MSU's 44 points are the second most scored on a bowl game in program history, trailing only the 52 versus Michigan on the Jan. 1, 2011, Gator Bowl.
- Mississippi State tied the AutoZone Liberty Bowl record with six touchdowns and tied for fourth with three passing scores.
- MSU set the program bowl-game record for most total offensive yards with 533, the fourth most in AutoZone Liberty Bowl history.
- Mississippi State ended the year averaging 434.4 yards a game, breaking the single-season record of 422.0 yards per contest set in 1982.
- The Bulldogs' 5,647 total yards this year set the program's single-season record, surpassing the 2010 squad's 5,217 yards of total offense.
- MSU's 300 total first downs this year are good for the most in school history, surpassing the 2010 team's 268 firsts.
- The Bulldogs threw for 294 yards, finishing the season averaging 244.5 aerial yards a game to break the single-season record of 239.7 passing yards per game set in 1978.
- The 2013 club totaled 3,178 passing yards, the most in a year in program history. The 2012 team owned the previous record with 3,091 yards through the air.
- The 18 completions in the contest gave MSU 253 for the year, the most on the MSU single-season record list. The 2012 squad owned the previous record with 249 completions.
- The 18 completions also give the Bulldogs 15 or more completions in each game this season. Mississippi State had not had an entire season with each contest having 15 or more completions since 2005.
- MSU's 59.0 completion percentage (253-for-429) in 2013 established the single-season Mississippi State record. The previous best was 58.7 percent in 2012.
- With three touchdown passes, the Bulldogs increased their season total to 18, tied for the third most in a year in program history. The 2012 unit owns the record with 28 aerial scores.
- The Bulldogs' three rushing touchdowns lifted their season total to 29, the second most in a year in program history. The 1974 team owns the mark with 31 ground scores.
- MSU tallied one takeaway, giving the team 14 in the last five games after forcing just one total turnover against Bowling Green, Kentucky and South Carolina.
- The Bulldogs did not allow a passing touchdown in the game and did not yield one in the final three games of the campaign. MSU's defense surrendered just one TD since the beginning of the fourth quarter at Arkansas.



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## PLAYER NOTABLES

- Junior wide receiver **Jameon Lewis**, who was voted the Mississippi State Outstanding Offensive Player, finished with a Bulldog single-game record 220 yards receiving. He became just the fifth player in program history to reach the 200-yard receiving plateau, joining David Smith (215 vs. Texas Tech/Nov. 17, 1970), Sammy Milner (208 vs. Texas Tech/Nov. 19, 1968), Danny Knight (208 vs. Florida/Sept. 25, 1982) and Jamayel Smith (208 vs. Arkansas/Nov. 17, 2007).
- **Lewis** set the AutoZone Liberty Bowl record for receiving yards with the 220, surpassing Houston's Vincent Marshall, who hauled in 201 yards versus South Carolina in the 2006 contest.
- **Lewis** caught nine passes, tied for the third most in AutoZone Liberty Bowl history, to finish with 64 this season, tied for the second most on the program's single-season list. David Smith owns the MSU record with 74 receptions in 1970.
- **Lewis'** 220 receiving yards gave him 923 for the campaign, the fourth most in a year in program history. Smith owns the record with 987 yards in 1970.
- **Lewis** finished with 267 all-purpose yards, the third most in AutoZone Liberty Bowl history, increasing his season total to 1,537 yards, good for the third most in a year in program history. Nick Turner (2003) set the record with 1,664 all-purpose yards.
- **Lewis'** 267 all-purpose yards were the fourth most in a game in Mississippi State history. Nick Turner set the record with 344 yards versus Tennessee on Nov. 15, 2003.
- In **Lewis'** last two games at Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium (2011 season opener versus Memphis), he tallied 13 receptions for 333 yards and 419 all-purpose yards.
- Sophomore quarterback **Dak Prescott** and **Lewis** connected for a 65-yard pass, tied for the ninth-longest completion in AutoZone Liberty Bowl history.
- **Prescott**, the AutoZone Liberty Bowl Most Valuable Player, established a career high with three touchdown passes. His trio of TD passes were tied for the fourth most in AutoZone Liberty Bowl history.
- **Prescott** threw for 283 yards, the ninth most in AutoZone Liberty Bowl history, to give him the fifth game of his career surpassing 200 or more aerial yards. He is the 11th player in program history with five career games of 200 or more passing yards.
- **Prescott's** five 200-plus yard passing games this season are tied for the fifth most in a year in program history. Senior quarterback **Tyler Russell** holds the mark with eight such games in 2012.
- **Prescott** accounted for 361 yards of total offense in the game, the fifth most in AutoZone Liberty Bowl history.
- **Prescott** finished the year accounting for 2,769 yards of total offense, good for third place on the MSU single-season record list. **Tyler Russell** set the mark in 2012 with 2,892 yards of total offense.
- **Prescott** rushed for 78 yards, giving him 829 ground yards this season, the most by an MSU quarterback in single-season history, surpassing Smith's 740 rushing yards in 1986.
- **Prescott** rushed for two touchdowns, giving him 13 ground scores this season, tied for fifth on the MSU single-season top-10 chart. Vick Ballard (2010/19) holds the program single-season record.
- **Prescott's** five total touchdowns gave him 23 TDs accounted for this season, the third most on the Bulldog single-season record list. **Russell** set the MSU mark with 26 TDs responsible for in 2012.
- **Prescott** ended the year with a 58.4 completion percentage (156-for-267), good for the sixth-best mark on the MSU single-season top-10 ledger. Chris Relf (2011) owns the record, converting on 60.0 percent of his attempts.
- **Prescott's** 156 completions also checked in seventh on the school's single-season chart. **Russell's** 231 completions in 2012 are the most in a year in program history.
- Senior running back **LaDarius Perkins'** touchdown reception in the opening quarter was his third of the season, tied for the most in a year in his career.
- Freshman running back **Ashton Shumpert** scored the game-winning touchdown with a one-yard plunge in the second quarter. The ground TD was Shumpert's third of the campaign and first since the Alcorn State contest on Sept. 7.
- Sophomore linebacker **Benardrick McKinney** sacked Taylor McHargue for a four-yard loss in the first quarter. The hit gave McKinney 3.5 sacks in the last six games.
- MSU Outstanding Defensive Player **Preston Smith** led the Bulldogs with six tackles during the contest.
- Conerly Trophy and Kent Hull Award winning All-American left guard **Gabe Jackson** started his 52nd-straight game, the most among active FBS players.
- **Jackson** also became the first Bulldog in program history to start four bowl games.
- **Jackson, Perkins** and senior linebacker **Deontae Skinner** became the first MSU players in program history to appear in four bowl games.
- Sophomore cornerback **Will Redmond** earned his first career start and junior **Justin Cox** made his first career start at safety.

# MISSISSIPPI STATE POSTGAME QUOTES

*Mississippi State vs. Rice – 55<sup>th</sup> Annual AutoZone Liberty Bowl – December 31, 2013 – Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium – Memphis, Tenn.*

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## **MISSISSIPPI STATE HEAD COACH DAN MULLEN**

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### ***Opening Statement***

*“I’m really proud of our guys and how they played today. Coming into a bowl game after a long layoff, we talked about having to come out on fire and play at a very high level. We have to play with a lot of emotion and be ready to play a very physical game. I think we certainly did that.*”

*“Rice is a team that obviously won a conference championship and had a special year. We knew they were a very talented group coming in. They were going to be a very physical team up front, and they were; making it hard for us to run the ball. We had to create some mismatches down the field.*”

*“It was a really dominating defensive effort. They (Rice) are a team that was one of the top rushing teams in the country, averaging over 200 yards rushing a game. We held them to 61 yards rushing and 145 total offense yards. It was just a very smothering effort by our defense. We gave up an early drive off a turnover and after that, that was about it.*”

*“I’m so proud of this team. Coming into this year a lot of people didn’t pick us to go to a bowl game. I don’t read a lot of publications, but people were telling me that. ‘They’re not going to have a winning record. They’re not going to go to a bowl game. They’re not going to do this.’ With a very young and impressionable group they didn’t listen to any of that. They battled and they fought. They battled through unbelievable injuries and adversity throughout the year. I think we played the third hardest schedule in all of college football, and to do that and finish with our fourth-straight winning season and our fourth straight bowl game and winning three of those bowl games is very special.”*

### ***Rice came in with a pretty strong secondary. How were you able to exploit it the way you did today?***

*“We just tried to put these guys in position to make plays. Their top corner, we knew where he was at all times on the field. Their other corner is a very good player. We tried to make mismatches in the middle field within situations and these guys did it all.”*

### ***How does this raise expectations for 2014?***

*“My expectations are always really high. We’re going to enjoy this win tonight, enjoy it tomorrow and then start looking to 2014 as a staff. These guys are off until January 10. Tonight we played the rest of the 2013 team and each team has a one year shelf life. The 2014 team is born on January 10 when we report for our first team meeting. We have one year to show what we can do. Our expectations are always that we want to win the SEC West and represent Mississippi State and the whole state of Mississippi. That’s the one thing we can control. Beyond that you don’t have much control over stuff. That’s always going to be our goal. I think we embrace those expectations. I know our program does and our players do. We’re going to make sure they work to meet those expectations during the offseason.”*

### ***How strong of a year did Jameon Lewis have for you?***

*“We always knew that Jameon was a great play maker. I know everybody is excited about him since he’s been here. When he has the ball in his hands, he’s special. I think he really embraced that he was going to be the go to guy after Chad [Bumphis] left. But embraced on how to become a great football player and you saw that tonight with his route running and getting open and making catches.”*

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## **Sophomore Quarterback Dak Prescott**

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### ***On making adjustments after a slow start offensively:***

*I guess it was just about fighting through adversity. I really did not pay too much attention to it. My teammates rallied behind me. I did not pay attention to starting three-of-seven, I guess that had a lot to do with it. And we just rallied as a team and pulled the game out.*

### ***On attacking the Rice defense:***

*The coaches set a good game plan up for us to execute and it worked just like they planned. They [Rice] has two very good cornerbacks, so we just tried to attack the middle of their secondary. Jameon [Lewis] was able to get the ball and make some good moves on their safeties, and our guys were getting open.*

### ***On facing adversity this season:***

*It has been about Mississippi State University and this football team being there for me. I can't be more thankful to coach Mullen, my teammates, the university, President Keenum [Dr. Mark Keenum] and everybody else for just sticking with me.*

### ***On his five-touchdown performance tonight:***

*It was all about the game plan and my teammates. I guess I scored the touchdowns, but the rushing touchdowns, I basically walked into the end zone. The offensive line did a great job blocking for me. And then on the three passing touchdowns, Jameon helped and did a great job getting the ball there, and then I just had to make one more throw. It was not about me and the touchdowns I scored, this was more of a team record.*

## **Junior Wide Receiver Jameon Lewis**

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### ***On his performance tonight:***

*It was the game plan, the game plan worked. I was just happy that Dak [Prescott] kept finding me. I am thankful to the coaches for putting me in the right situation to make plays for this team.*

## **Junior Defensive Lineman Preston Smith**

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### ***On playing against the Rice offense:***

*We focused on not letting them get anything easy. Everybody just focused on staying in their gap, playing technique and not doing too much. We wanted play as a team and play for the team.*

*This day means a lot to me. I was named defensive MVP in the game, and my first-born child was born earlier this morning. So, this day will always mean a lot to me. This team has been able to get to four bowl games, and this is the second ring [bowl victory] for me. So words can't even describe this day for me.*