

MOBILE, Ala. - The Texas State football team (1-2, 0-1 Sun Belt) opened the 2018 Sun Belt Conference slate with a 41-31 loss at South Alabama (1-2, 1-0 Sun Belt) on Saturday evening at Ladd-Peoples Stadium.

South Alabama won the coin toss and deferred the first half option to the visiting Bobcats. On the first play from scrimmage, sophomore quarterback Willie Jones III scampered 19 yards on a designed quarterback draw. The drive stalled in the next three plays, forcing Texas State to punt. The deep man for the Jaguars mishandled the punt, leading to a fumble recovery by Markeveon Coleman at the South Alabama 23-yard line. Sophomore running back Caleb Twyford tallied 19 yards on three touches on the first three plays following the fumble. After two-consecutive incomplete passes from Jones III, the Bobcats were forced to settle for a short field goal. Reigning Sun Belt Conference Special Teams Player of the Week James Sherman capped off the drive by cashing in a 21-yard attempt.

After yielding a field goal on South Alabama's ensuing possession, Texas State scored its first first-quarter touchdown of the 2018 season. Jah'Marae Sheread accounted for the first 10 scrimmage yards of the drive, a series that was aided by a 15-yard roughing-the-passer penalty, before Jones III ripped off a career-long 50-yard touchdown run. The Cats emptied the backfield, spreading the field with five wide receivers on the play. Jones III recognized the man-to-man coverage by the Jaguar defense, pulled the ball down and darted down the middle of the field and into the endzone to give TXST a 10-3 lead.

Texas State stuffed South Alabama on a 4th-and-1 played at the Jaguar 42-yard line. Bryan London II read the play and made a sound tackle to give the Bobcat offense tremendous starting field position. Two plays later, Jones III found wide receiver Javen Banks in the endzone for a 42-yard quick strike touchdown. Sherman's point after split the uprights to put the visitors ahead, 17-3.

The Jaguars scored its first of two second-quarter touchdowns on the first play of the frame. Tra Minter bullied into the endzone from two yards out to narrow the Bobcats lead, 17-10. Tyler Watts returned the Jaguar kickoff out to the 27-yard line, but an unsportsmanlike penalty on the home team pushed the ball out to the 42-yard line.

Jones III began the drive with a back-shoulder wheel route to Hutch White for 21 yards down the left sideline. Two plays later, a 3rd-and-13, Jones III found Anthony D. Taylor on a well-designed screen pass in the left flat. Taylor scooted out for 16 yards and a first down to keep the drive alive. Once again, Banks closed out the drive with a touchdown, his second of the game. Banks sped around the corner on a one-yard jet sweep to put the Bobcats up by two scores, 24-10.

Two possessions later, South Alabama found the endzone for the second time in the quarter. The drive started with a 63-yard pitch and catch from Evan Orth to Jamarius Way to get the home team inside the Bobcat five-yard line. On the next play, Minter pounded his way in for his second touchdown of the contest. Caeveon Patton blocked the point after attempt to keep the score at 24-16 heading into the halftime break.

South Alabama received the opening kick of the second half. The Jags gained 31 yards on the drive before JaShon Waddy ripped the ball away from Maurice Mayo and the ball was recovered by A.J. Krawczyk for the third Bobcat takeaway of the contest.

The Bobcats cashed in the giveaway 10 plays later. Taylor carried the ball on the first two plays of the drive for 18 total yards. On the ensuing third-down play, Jones III was stopped a couple of yards short of the first down but was hit late out-of-bounds to give the Bobcats a first down. Jones III connected on a third-down pass to redshirt freshman T.J. Bedford for a Bobcat first down. Two plays later, Jones III found White on another wheel route, this one for a 25-yard touchdown. White's first career touchdown put the Bobcats ahead 31-16.

After Texas State forced a three-and-out, South Alabama cranked up the defensive pressure. Jones III was knocked out of the game briefly, giving way to freshman Tyler Vitt. The San Antonio native completed his first third-down pass of the drive but made a crucial error on his second attempt. Jalen Thompson, a junior defensive back, undercut an out route for an interception. Thompson returned the interception back 55 yards for a touchdown, bringing the score to 31-23.

South Alabama connected on a 47-yard field goal with a little more than 10 minutes remaining in the fourth quarter to bring the Jags within a score of 31-26. With less than four minutes on the clock, USA took over on the 20-yard line after a Bobcat punt. Orth led the home team on a 6-play, 80-yard touchdown drive, completing 4-of-5 passes and scrambling for 13 yards. The Tulane transfer accounted for all 80 yards on the drive, including a 23-yard touchdown strike to Jordan McCray. Orth followed the touchdown pass with a two-point conversion to Moore. South Alabama took the lead, its first lead of the game and the season.

Thompson sealed the victory for the home team, intercepting his second pass of the game. The cornerback read the eyes of Jones III and stepped in front of an out route for the second time in the second half. After three-consecutive running plays, South Alabama ran the clock down to less than one minute before scoring the game-sealing touchdown. Orth, once again, found Way on a fade route for an 18-yard touchdown.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
TXST	17	7	7	0	31
USA	3	13	7	18	41

Scoring Summary -----

	TXST	USA
FIRST QUARTER		
TXST FG 11:54 James Sherman 21 Yd Field Goal		
6 plays, 19 yards, 1:12	3	0
USA FG 7:56 Gavin Patterson 28 Yd Field Goal		
4 plays, 7 yards, 1:04	3	3
TXST TD 6:41 Willie Jones III 50 Yd Run (James Sherman Kick)		
4 plays, 75 yards, 1:15	10	3
TXST TD 4:37 Javen Banks 42 Yd pass from Willie Jones III (James Sherman Kick)		
2 plays, 42 yards, 0:15	17	3
SECOND QUARTER		
USA TD 14:52 Tra Minter 2 Yd Run (Gavin Patterson Kick)		
4 plays, 62 yards, 1:16	17	10
TXST TD 9:02 Javen Banks 1 Yd Run (James Sherman Kick)		
12 plays, 58 yards, 5:50	24	10
USA TD 5:43 Tra Minter 3 Yd Run (Gavin Patterson PAT blocked)		
2 plays, 66 yards, 0:22	4	16
THIRD QUARTER		
TXST TD 9:38 Hutch White 25 Yd pass from Willie Jones III (James Sherman Kick)		
9 plays, 62 yards, 3:25	31	16
USA TD 6:10 Jalen Thompson 55 Yd Interception Return (Gavin Patterson Kick)		
6 plays, 21 yards, 2:32	31	23
FOURTH QUARTER		
USA FG 10:21 Gavin Patterson 47 Yd Field Goal		
8 plays, 58 yards, 4:06	31	26
USA TD 2:02 Jordan McCray 23 Yd pass from Evan Orth (Evan Orth Pass to Deonta Moore for Two-Point Conversion)		
6 plays, 80 yards, 1:49	31	34
USA TD 0:33 Jamarius Way 18 Yd pass from Evan Orth (Gavin Patterson Kick)		
4 plays, 4 yards, 1:11	31	41

Team Stats	TXST	USA
First Downs	16	9
Total Yards	370	382
Total Plays	82	60
Avg Gain Per Play	4.5	6.4
Net Yards Rushing	156	116
Rushes	51	27
Yards Per Rush	3.1	4.3
Net Yards Passing	214	266
Comp-Att	17-31	24-33
Yards Per Pass	6.9	8.1
Times Sacked	0	3
Yds Lost To Sacks	0	-22
Interceptions	2	0
Punts	5	5
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	6	15
Penalty Yards	48	143
Fumbles	2	4
Fumbles Lost	1	3
Possession	36:08	23:52

Individual Stats

RUSHING						
TXST	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
8 Willie Jones III	17	58	3.4	50	1	
25 Anthony D. Taylor	14	44	3.1	15	0	
11 Tyler Vitt	5	21	4.2	10	0	
20 Robert Brown, Jr.	9	20	2.2	13	0	
4 Caleb Twyford	4	11	2.8	7	0	
2 Jah'Marae Sheread	1	5	5.0	5	0	
12 Javen Banks	1	1	1.0	1	1	
USA	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
5 Tra Minter	9	61	6.8	23	2	
14 Evan Orth	3	21	7.0	13	0	
27 Maurice Mayo	3	14	4.7	5	0	
15 Kawaan Baker	3	10	3.3	5	0	
24 Deonta Moore	9	10	1.1	8	0	

PASSING

TXST	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
8 Willie Jones III	16	30	205	6.8	2	1	126.1
11 Tyler Vitt	1	2	9	4.5	0	1	-12.2
USA	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
14 Evan Orth	24	33	266	8.1	2	0	160.4

RECEIVING

TXST	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
12 Javen Banks	2	82	41.0	42	1
80 Hutch White	2	46	23.0	25	1
17 T.J. Bedford	2	22	11.0	13	0
25 Anthony D. Taylor	2	18	9.0	16	0
1 Tyler Vitt	2	13	6.5	9	0
6 Keenen Brown	2	12	6.0	8	0
4 Caleb Twyford	2	11	5.5	9	0
2 Jah'Marae Sheread	2	5	2.5	5	0
20 Robert Brown, Jr.	1	5	5.0	5	0
3 Jeremiah Haydel	0	0	-	-	0
USA	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
3 Jamarius Way	11	173	15.7	63	1
12 Jordan McCray	4	31	7.8	23	1
84 Khameron Taylor	1	26	26.0	26	0
4 Sam Harris	1	25	25.0	25	0
15 Kawaan Baker	2	7	3.5	4	0
24 Deonta Moore	3	7	2.3	8	0
5 Tra Minter	2	-3	-1.5	2	0