

WEEK SEVEN
TEXAS A&M AT SOUTH CAROLINA

Mond, Small lead No. 22 Texas A&M to 26-23 win vs. Gamecocks COLUMBIA, S.C. -- Tight end Jace Sternberger knew plenty of people were waiting for No. 22 Texas A&M to fall apart after its surprisingly strong start. The Aggies showed Saturday they're not going away any time soon.

Sternberger had seven catches for 145 yards, Kellen Mond threw for 353 yards and Seth Small had four field goals as Texas A&M held off South Carolina 26-23. Sternberger had heard too many comparisons with past Aggies teams who opened strong, then faded as the Southeastern Conference season wore on. "We put a lot of pressure on ourselves this week," he said. "We knew everybody was waiting to see how we were going to respond."

The Aggies answered with a winning final quarter after squandering a 16-0 second-half lead. "We were going to get over that hump and we were able to show that today," he said. There are several more tests ahead for Texas A&M (5-2, 3-1), including road games with Mississippi State and Auburn and closing the regular season against LSU. For now, though, the Aggies displayed the grit and resolve essential to succeed in the SEC. "We've got some guys with heart and toughness, I can you that," first year Texas A&M coach Jimbo Fisher said.

The Aggies won their third straight this season and moved to 5-0 against the Gamecocks (3-3, 2-3) since joining the league in 2012.

Mond also had a 4-yard touchdown pass to Sternberger in the second quarter and, when Small hit a 32-yard field goal on the Aggies' first drive of the second half to go up 16-0, it looked like more than enough to put away the Gamecocks, who managed just 102 yards of offense the first 30 minutes. That's when Jake Bentley, returning after missing last week's win over Missouri with a knee injury, led a pair of third-quarter TD drives -- and the two-point conversions both times.

Bentley had a 22-yard scoring pass to Shi Smith to start the comeback, then hit Chavis Dawkins for a 33-yard touchdown throw off a flea flicker. Bryan Edwards caught both two-point tries, stretching second across the line before falling out of bounds to tie the game.

Texas A&M responded with the winning drive next time out, moving 45 yards to set Small up for a 39-yard field goal with 9:16 left.

The Aggies sealed things with Trayveon William's 3-yard scoring run with 1:36 left.

South Carolina got a final TD pass from Bentley to Samuel with 48 seconds to go, but could not execute an onside kick attempt. Texas A&M ran out the clock.

Mond got the Aggies going when he found his big tight end Sternberger. The 6-foot-4, 250-pound junior had a 53-yard reception where he dragged safety Steven Montac (some 65 pounds lighter) about 25 yards inside the South Carolina 10. Asked if he'd ever carried a player that far, Sternberger joked, "Just my little brother." Small opened Texas A&M's scoring with a 52-yard field goal, the freshman tying his career long kick.

South Carolina struggled with Bentley back behind center in the opening half. The junior, talked about at times this season as an NFL prospect, was 6 of 17 passing the first 30 minutes for 46 yards. He had an awful interception in the end zone to kill off the Gamecocks best scoring chance of the half. "We didn't take advantage of opportunities," South Carolina coach Will Muschamp said.

Mond was 25 of 37 passing. His 353 yards was the second most of his career after throwing for 430 yards in a 28-26 loss to No. 4 Clemson last month.

THE TAKEAWAY

TEXAS A&M: The Aggies have found ways to hang in games and overcome opponents at the end. It happened a week ago in a 20-14 overtime victory against previously undefeated Kentucky. And they did it against the Gamecocks when momentum had switched in South Carolina's favor.

SOUTH CAROLINA: The Gamecocks played another in a series of terrible first halves. Bentley had only nine yards passing two weeks ago at Kentucky the first two quarters and South Carolina trailed 23-14 at the break against Missouri before rallying. The Gamecocks must figure out a way to start faster or risk more such defeats this season.

TOUGH PUNTER

Texas A&M punter Braden Mann, who led the Football Bowl Subdivision with a gross average of 54.9 yards coming in, had a long of 67 yards against the Gamecocks. He also caused a fumble with a hit on South Carolina returner Bryan Edwards. "He can sell popcorn, too," Aggies coach Jimbo Fisher said.

TARGETING

Two members of Texas A&M's secondary were ejected for targeting. Cornerback DeBione Renfro was ejected in the first quarter while safety Donovan Wilson was thrown out in the final period. Fisher said he'll continue strongly reminding his players the right way to tackle.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
TA&M	3	10	3	10	26
SC	0	0	16	7	23

Scoring Summary -----

	TA&M	SC
FIRST QUARTER		
TA&M FG 0:31 Seth Small 52 Yd Field Goal		
10 plays, 45 yards, 4:38	3	0
second Quarter		
TA&M TD 4:19 Jace Sternberger 4 Yd pass from Kellen Mond (Seth Small Kick) 5 plays, 94 yards, 3:12	10	0
TA&M FG 0:00 Seth Small 20 Yd Field Goal		
9 plays, 73 yards, 3:21	13	0
third Quarter		
TA&M FG 8:36 Seth Small 32 Yd Field Goal		
11 plays, 60 yards, 6:24	16	0
SC TD 4:54 Shi Smith 22 Yd pass from Jake Bentley (Jake Bentley Pass to Bryan Edwards for Two-Point Conversion)		8
10 plays, 82 yards, 3:35	16	8
SC TD 0:24 Chavis Dawkins 33 Yd pass from Jake Bentley (Jake Bentley Pass to Bryan Edwards for Two-Point Conversion)		16
7 plays, 88 yards, 2:43	16	16
fourth Quarter		
TA&M FG 9:16 Seth Small 39 Yd Field Goal		
11 plays, 55 yards, 6:02	19	16
TA&M TD 1:36 Trayveon Williams 3 Yd Run (Seth Small Kick)		16
11 plays, 78 yards, 5:45	26	16
SC TD 0:48 Deebo Samuel 6 Yd pass from Jake Bentley (Parker White Kick) 5 plays, 75 yards, 0:48	26	23

	TA&M	SC
Team Stats		
First Downs	25	19
Total Yards	458	299
Total Plays	77	53
Avg Gain Per Play	5.9	5.6
Net Yards Rushing	105	76
Rushes	40	18
Yards Per Rush	2.6	4.2
Net Yards Passing	353	223
Comp-Att	25-37	17-35
Yards Per Pass	9.5	6.4
Times Sacked	2	1
Yds Lost To Sacks	-15	-10
Interceptions	0	1
Punts	4	6
Punt Average	52.3	50.7
Penalties	12	4
Penalty Yards	117	39
Fumbles	0	1
Fumbles Lost	0	1
Possession	41:29	18:31

Individual Stats

RUSHING						
TA&M	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
5 Trayveon Williams	19	78	4.1	16	1	
11 Kellen Mond	13	25	1.9	15	0	
7 Jashaun Corbin	5	21	4.2	9	0	
SC	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
27 Ty'Son Williams	7	48	6.9	27	0	
5 Rico Dowdle	7	19	2.7	5	0	
19 Jake Bentley	4	9	2.3	9	0	

PASSING

TA&M	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
11 Kellen Mond	25	37	353	9.5	1	0	156.6
SC	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
19 Jake Bentley	17	35	223	6.4	3	1	124.7

RECEIVING

TA&M	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
81 Jace Sternberger	7	145	20.7	53	1
1 Quartney Davis	9	127	14.1	30	0
14 Camron Buckley	3	44	14.7	22	0
9 Hezekiah Jones	3	24	8.0	11	0
7 Jashaun Corbin	2	9	4.5	6	0
5 Trayveon Williams	1	4	4.0	4	0
SC	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
1 Deebo Samuel	7	88	12.6	32	1
13 Shi Smith	3	51	17.0	22	1
89 Bryan Edwards	4	42	10.5	26	0
83 Chavis Dawkins	1	33	33.0	33	1
40 Jacob August	1	6	6.0	6	0
87 Kiel Pollard	1	3	3.0	3	0