

WEEK ONE  
EAST CAROLINA at NORTH CAROLINA ST

McKay, stout defense lead NC State past East Carolina 34-6

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Matthew McKay never looked overwhelmed as he made his first start for North Carolina State at quarterback.

The redshirt sophomore ran for two touchdowns and threw for another while N.C. State overcame a shaky start to shut down East Carolina's ground game to beat the Pirates 34-6 in Saturday's season opener for both teams.

McKay completed 25 of 37 passes for 308 yards, becoming only the third quarterback in school history and first in a dozen years to crack the 300-yard mark in his first career start.

"The first play I went out there, I took a deep breath and said, 'OK we're playing football,'" McKay said, "So not nervous or anything, just definitely prepared for my moment."

He looked that way, too.

McKay scored on a 4-yard keeper just before halftime for a 17-3 lead, then got loose around the left side and dove for the pylon for a 21-yard score early in the fourth.

McKay also found a wide-open Tabari Hines on the right side for a 48-yard touchdown in the third as the Wolfpack broke the game open.

"Just very confident, very calm," Wolfpack coach Dave Doeren said. "Put his time in, studied, prepared. Like I tell the players: if you're prepared, you won't be nervous. And he prepared the right way for this football game."

Holton Ahlers threw for 168 yards for the Pirates in their first game under new coach Mike Houston. But a promising game-opening drive ended when Ahlers fumbled inside the Wolfpack 5-yard line, and ECU never got near the end zone again until late with the outcome long decided.

"They don't give any ribbons for coming close," Houston said of the fumble. "That was a big play in the ballgame because that completely changed the outlook in the first half."

THE TAKEAWAY

ECU: East Carolina closed last season with a 58-3 loss on the same field, a disastrous afternoon that had the Pirates kicking a last-second field goal to avoid their first shutout in more than two decades. The second trip went only marginally better. ECU got nothing going on the ground, running 29 times for 41 yards (1.4-yard average) and leaving the mobile Ahlers to carry the offense almost entirely on his own. There was also a penalty that wiped out Tyler Sneed's 93-yard kickoff return immediately following Hines' long TD.

"It gives us the best evaluation we've had so far of where we are," Houston said. "This is not where we want to be, and this is not where we will be."

N.C. State: It was a good start for Doeren's seventh year, which has the Wolfpack entering with more youth than in recent seasons. A balanced ground game produced 191 yards of the Wolfpack's 505 total yards, which included true freshman Zonovan Knight scoring from 9 yards out on his first college carry. And after that opening drive, the Wolfpack's defense settled in and controlled the line of scrimmage with plenty of three-man fronts that closed down every running lane.

THE BIG PLAY

ECU looked sharp on the first drive, with Ahlers completing his first seven passes and the Pirates pushing to the Wolfpack's 9-yard line. But as the 235-pound Ahlers headed for the goal line on a first-down run, sophomore Tanner Ingle knocked the ball loose with a hard hit and fellow safety Jarius Morehead recovered it in the end zone.

"That was a very long drive so I was very thankful we got off the field and they didn't score," Wolfpack defensive lineman James Smith-Williams said. "So I definitely thanked (Morehead)."

MORE ON MCKAY

Before Saturday, the only Wolfpack players to throw for 300 yards in their first career start were Harrison Beck (321 yards) in 2007 and longtime NFL quarterback Philip Rivers (397) in 2000.

"As practice went on throughout the week, you could see him (becoming) more and more confident," Doeren said. "Thursday he had his best practice that I've seen him have since he's been here."

"I said to the guys: 'Man, if he throws it like that, we're good Saturday because he's throwing dimes.'"

DOMINANT

Going back to the December meeting, N.C. State outscored ECU by 83 points (92-9), outgained the Pirates by 787 yards (1,160-373) and posted 11 touchdowns to ECU's zero over the two games.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
ECU	3	0	0	3	6
NCST	7	10	7	10	34

Scoring Summary -----

FIRST QUARTER	ECU	NCST
NCST TD 8:34 Zonovan Knight 9 Yd Run (Christopher Dunn Kick)		
6 plays, 80 yards, 1:50	0	7
ECU FG 6:04 Jake Verity 47 Yd Field Goal		
8 plays, 34 yards, 2:21	3	7
SECOND QUARTER	ECU	NCST
NCST FG 10:01 Christopher Dunn 27 Yd Field Goal		
7 plays, 56 yards, 2:31	3	10
NCST TD 0:51 Matthew McKay 4 Yd Run (Christopher Dunn Kick)		
3 plays, 55 yards, 1:23	3	17
THIRD QUARTER	ECU	NCST
NCST TD 9:48 Tabari Hines 48 Yd pass from Matthew McKay (Christopher Dunn Kick)		
4 plays, 70 yards, 1:40	3	24
FOURTH QUARTER	ECU	NCST
NCST TD 12:21 Matthew McKay 21 Yd Run (Christopher Dunn Kick)		
9 plays, 86 yards, 3:06	3	31
NCST FG 4:14 Christopher Dunn 34 Yd Field Goal		
12 plays, 59 yards, 6:35	3	34
ECU FG 1:18 Jake Verity 31 Yd Field Goal		
9 plays, 61 yards, 2:56	6	34

Team Stats	ECU	NCST
First Downs	18	23
Passes for First	12	12
Rushes for First	3	9
Penalties for First	3	2
Third Down Efficiency	5-15	4-12
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	0-1
Total Yards	269	505
Total Plays	74	70
Avg Gain Per Play	3.6	7.2
Net Yards Rushing	41	191
Rushes	29	31
Yards Per Rush	1.4	6.2
Net Yards Passing	228	314
Comp-Att	26-45	26-39
Yards Per Pass	5.1	8.1
Times Sacked	0	3
Yds Lost To Sacks	0	-24
Interceptions	1	0
Punts	7	5
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	5	6
Penalty Yards	53	55
Fumbles	2	2
Fumbles Lost	1	0
Time of Poss	29:22	30:38

Individual Stats

RUSHING							
EAST CAROLINA	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Darius Pinnix Jr.	11	23	2.1	0	9		
Holton Ahlers	10	11	1.1	0	12		
Hussein Howe	5	8	1.6	0	8		
Reid Herring	1	2	2.0	0	2		
Demetrius Mauney	2	-3	-1.5	0	0		
NC STATE	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Zonovan Knight	9	42	4.7	1	13		
Matthew McKay	6	35	5.8	2	21		
Jordan Houston	6	35	5.8	0	22		
Tabari Hines	1	34	34.0	0	34		
Keyon Lesane	1	24	24.0	0	24		
Ricky Person Jr.	5	20	4.0	0	15		
Trent Pennix	1	3	3.0	0	3		
PASSING							
EAST CAROLINA	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Holton Ahlers	22	39	168	4.3	0	1	23.2
Reid Herring	4	6	60	10.0	0	0	85.4
NC STATE	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Matthew McKay	25	37	308	8.3	1	0	37.9
Bailey Hockman	1	2	6	3.0	0	0	4.1
RECEIVING							
EAST CAROLINA	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Blake Proehl	5	45	9.0	0	12		
Audie Omotosho	1	37	37.0	0	37		
Jsi Hatfield	5	26	5.2	0	9		
Deondre Farrier	2	22	11.0	0	18		
Leroy Henley	3	21	7.0	0	11		
Zech Byrd	1	20	20.0	0	20		
Mydreon Vines	3	20	6.7	0	9		
Hussein Howe	1	16	16.0	0	16		
Tyler Sneed	2	13	6.5	0	11		
C.J. Johnson	2	11	5.5	0	7		
Darius Pinnix Jr.	1	-3	-3.0	0	0		
NC STATE	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Thayer Thomas	6	83	13.8	0	19		
Tabari Hines	4	74	18.5	1	48		
Emeka Emezie	7	70	10.0	0	16		
Ricky Person Jr.	1	45	45.0	0	45		
Devin Carter	1	12	12.0	0	12		
Jordan Houston	3	10	3.3	0	6		
Cary Angeline	1	7	7.0	0	7		
Keyon Lesane	1	6	6.0	0	6		
Max Fisher	1	5	5.0	0	5		
Zonovan Knight	1	2	2.0	0	2		