

WEEK ONE
TULSA at MICHIGAN ST

No. 18 Michigan State shuts down Tulsa in 28-7 win

EAST LANSING, Mich. -- Raequan Williams knocked the ball out, and Kenny Willekes recovered it in the end zone.

When Michigan State's defensive linemen are playing like this, the Spartans' offense has plenty of margin for error.

Willekes recovered two fumbles, including one for a touchdown, and No. 18 Michigan State manhandled Tulsa 28-7 on Friday night. Willekes, back on the field after breaking his leg in last season's Redbox Bowl, was part of a swarming Michigan State defense that held the Golden Hurricane to minus-73 yards rushing.

The touchdown by Willekes came after he and Williams sacked Zach Smith near the goal line. The ball came free, and Willekes came up with it to put Michigan State up 22-0.

"Thank you Raequan for my first touchdown," Willekes said. "It speaks to how, I think, the chemistry on our defense, how much work we put in this offseason -- you see how dominant we are when we play together, we all do our job."

The Spartans (1-0) still had their problems offensively, but that made little difference on this night.

Tulsa (0-1) botched two shotgun snaps in the second quarter -- part of the reason its rushing total ended up so far below zero. One of those loose balls went out of the end zone for a safety.

"This may be the best defensive line we faced as a whole since I've been here," said Philip Montgomery, now in his fifth season as Tulsa's coach. "We've played some very good teams obviously. This group that we faced tonight, there's guys that everybody across the board is a big deal player."

The big question coming into this game was how Michigan State's offense would look after the Spartans scored only 32 points over the final four games of 2018. Coach Mark Dantonio shuffled roles around among his offensive assistants, making Brad Salem the offensive coordinator.

"Obviously, our defense played outstanding," Dantonio said. "I thought our offense went down the field the first series, and then stalled out after that. Too many missed opportunities."

Michigan State got the ball first and capped a penalty-aided drive with a 15-yard touchdown pass from Brian Lewerke to Connor Heyward. Then the defense -- which was No. 1 in the nation against the run last season -- took over.

Tulsa went with Smith, a Baylor transfer, at quarterback over returning sophomore Seth Boomer. It would have probably been a long night no matter who was in. Michigan State was up 25-0 before the Golden Hurricane scored. Smith threw a 28-yard touchdown pass to Sam Crawford late in the second quarter.

The Spartans have won 21 straight home openers.

RECORDS

Tulsa's rushing total set a school record for each team. It was the lowest rushing total for the Golden Hurricane, breaking the mark of minus-56 from the Humanitarian Bowl against Georgia Tech in 2004.

It was the lowest total allowed by the Spartans, who held Pittsburgh to minus-63 in a 1950 game.

"Our defensive line is dominant," Dantonio said. "I mean, they're good. I think they handled the line of scrimmage, and we tackled well."

FLAGS

On Michigan State's second play from scrimmage, Tulsa was called for holding and a personal foul on the same play. That set the tone for the evening. The Golden Hurricane finished with eight penalties for 80 yards, and Michigan State had 14 for 122.

THE TAKEAWAY

Tulsa: The Golden Hurricane had trouble running and passing, and they didn't help themselves with three first-half turnovers. The final score could have been a lot worse.

"They're a really good defense. We knew that coming in, and we knew we couldn't shoot ourselves in the foot," Smith said. "That's exactly what we did. We shot ourselves in the foot too many times."

Michigan State: The Spartans were never in much danger of losing this one, but in the end, they scored only one offensive touchdown. The offense failed to take full advantage of great field position in that second quarter, and there was some grumbling from fans at Spartan Stadium at various points in the night.

"The crowd reacts how they want, and you can't really control that," Lewerke said. "It's probably right for them to do so, in a sense. The offense was lacking. We've just got to be better."

POLL IMPLICATIONS

Michigan State was in the Top 25 despite all the concerns about the offense, and this comfortable win isn't likely to threaten that ranking.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
TLSA	0	7	0	0	7
MSU	7	18	3	0	28

Scoring Summary -----

	TLSA	MSU
FIRST QUARTER		
MSU TD 11:41 Connor Heyward 15 Yd pass from Brian Lewerke (Matt Coghlin Kick)		7
9 plays, 73 yards, 3:19	0	7
SECOND QUARTER		
MSU FG 14:03 Matt Coghlin 38 Yd Field Goal	0	10
4 plays, 4 yards, 0:48	0	10
MSU FG 9:59 Matt Coghlin 47 Yd Field Goal		13
7 plays, -8 yards, 2:07	0	13
MSU SF 9:09 Team Safety		15
2 plays, -19 yards, 0:50	0	15
MSU TD 4:49 Kenny Willekes 0 Yd Fumble Return (Matt Coghlin Kick)		22
2 plays, -8 yards, 0:30	0	22
MSU FG 2:32 Matt Coghlin 44 Yd Field Goal		25
4 plays, 4 yards, 1:30	0	25
TLSA TD 0:36 Sam Crawford Jr. 28 Yd pass from Zach Smith (Jacob Rainey Kick)		25
7 plays, 85 yards, 1:56	7	25
THIRD QUARTER		
MSU FG 2:20 Matt Coghlin 40 Yd Field Goal		28
17 plays, 73 yards, 7:23	7	28

	TLSA	MSU
Team Stats		
First Downs	8	18
Passes for First	7	7
Rushes for First	0	8
Penalties for First	1	3
Third Down Efficiency	2-11	6-19
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	1-4
Total Yards	80	303
Total Plays	52	78
Avg Gain Per Play	1.5	3.9
Net Yards Rushing	-73	108
Rushes	25	40
Yards Per Rush	-2.9	2.7
Net Yards Passing	153	195
Comp-Att	16-27	22-38
Yards Per Pass	5.7	5.1
Times Sacked	6	1
Yds Lost To Sacks	-39	-7
Interceptions	1	0
Punts	9	5
Punt Average	41.0	47.4
Penalties	8	14
Penalty Yards	80	122
Fumbles	5	0
Fumbles Lost	2	0
Time of Poss	23:54	36:06

Individual Stats

RUSHING

	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
TLSA					
Shamari Brooks	6	0	0.0	0	5
Corey Taylor II	7	-1	-0.1	0	2
Zach Smith	10	-32	-3.2	0	8
MICHIGAN ST					
Connor Heyward	15	43	2.9	0	7
Brian Lewerke	7	34	4.9	0	16
Elijah Collins	8	17	2.1	0	9
La'Darius Jefferson	7	8	1.1	0	5
Cody White	1	4	4.0	0	4
Rocky Lombardi	2	2	1.0	0	2

PASSING

	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
TLSA							
Zach Smith	16	27	153	5.7	1	1	20.8
MICHIGAN ST							
Brian Lewerke	21	37	192	5.2	1	0	46.6
Rocky Lombardi	1	1	3	3.0	0	0	17.9

RECEIVING

	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
TLSA					
Keylon Stokes	6	54	9.0	0	12
Sam Crawford Jr.	5	49	9.8	1	28
Keenen Johnson	1	37	37.0	0	37
Josh Johnson	3	19	6.3	0	13
Shamari Brooks	1	-6	-6.0	0	0
MICHIGAN ST					
Darrell Stewart Jr.	6	56	9.3	0	30
La'Darius Jefferson	2	29	14.5	0	18
Connor Heyward	3	28	9.3	1	15
Laress Nelson	1	25	25.0	0	25
Matt Dotson	3	22	7.3	0	10
Cody White	2	18	9.0	0	9
Matt Seybert	2	12	6.0	0	7
Jalen Nailor	3	5	1.7	0	3