

WEEK TEN
MISSISSIPPI ST at ARKANSAS

Mississippi State snaps slide, rolls past Arkansas 54-24

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. -- Both Arkansas and Mississippi State entered Saturday's game having underplayed to expectations. Both its head coaches have been suggested to have tenuous, at best, job security. It was supposed to gnashing and ugly, but close. Only the ugly part came to fruition. Mississippi State snapped a four-game losing streak, kept alive its chances for a .500 season and looked like a dangerous and elite SEC team. Arkansas looked out of gas, out to sea and out of hope, having been dealt a 54-24 demolition at the hands of its closest competition in the league standings. A month ago, Joe Moorhead, who spent his whole college coaching career in the northeast, had been labeled a potential candidate for the head coaching job at Rutgers, were it to come open, thanks in part to a solid 3-1 start to the Mississippi State season. The Bulldogs then went the entire month of October without a win and Moorhead's proverbial seat began to warm. Arkansas was just the sort of cure-all such a team needed, even if the coach demurred on the significance of the win.

"I guess in a certain respect it is," he said. "This conference, Division I football in general, wins are so hard to come by. I guess in a general sense it is, but also just happy that our kids have been able to maintain a singleness in purpose." The purpose was emphatically displayed Saturday. Mississippi State (4-5, 2-4) ran for more yards on the ground in the first half, 312, than it had in any individual game to that point. Kylin Hill, who finished with a career-high 234 yards rushing, had 198 of those in the first half-hour on just 13 carries, including three for touchdowns. Tommy Stevens, making his first start in three weeks, ran for another 60 and chipped in a 33-yard touchdown pass in the first half. Mississippi State led by four touchdowns, 38-10, at halftime. Moorhead had challenged Hill, the SEC's leading rusher, to do more the last two weeks. Before last week's game against Texas A&M, he had run for just 92 on 43 carries in the previous three games. His 150 yards versus the Aggies was just a warm-up. "He had been pushing me," Hill said. "My last couple performances, that wasn't me. I was doing too much dancing in the backfield. I can do it, but that's not my kind of style. I had to get back to being more aggressive." The boos from the home crowd grew in regularity and force as the second quarter progressed. Arkansas starting quarterback Ben Hicks didn't complete his first pass until the second quarter, drawing a sarcastically loud roar of approval. Ten minutes later, after an interception returned for a touchdown, he was pulled for third-stringer John Stephen Jones. It was the fifth time coach Chad Morris has used multiple quarterbacks for something more than end-of-game play this season.

"The inconsistencies at the quarterback position have not benefited us," Morris said. "We'll get back in here tomorrow and go through that." Rakeem Boyd was the best Arkansas player when the game mattered. He entered as the fourth leading rusher in the SEC and finished with 114 yards on 11 carries. His 52-yard touchdown run in the second quarter pulled Arkansas within 10 points, 17-7, before Mississippi State scored the next four touchdowns. With the outcome decided, Morris made another quarterback change, one that excited the few thousand who stayed. Four-star recruit K.J. Jefferson made his first appearance of the season on the first drive of the fourth quarter. The projected heir apparent at the position ran for 21 yards on his first play from scrimmage, threw a 32-yard strike to Treyton Burks on his next play and capped the four-play drive with a 5-yard rushing touchdown immediately after.

"We kept it as simple as possible with him," Morris said. "I thought he did a really good job. Pretty impressive for your first drive."

Mississippi State needed just three plays, all runs, in response with its own score. Nick Gibson carried all three times and finished with 129 yards on the ground himself. In all, the 460 yards rushing the Bulldogs levied against Arkansas was the most they've ever had in an SEC game. Their 640 yards of total offense was the best ever in an SEC game, as well.

Hill, able to relax with the losing streak snapped and a grand performance behind him, was understated with a laugh afterward.

"I just found out my amount of rushing yards," he said, smiling. "I did pretty good."

THE TAKEAWAY

Mississippi State: Moorhead may have staved off the hot seat for a week, anyway. Mississippi State needs two wins in its final three games, including the Egg Bowl against Ole Miss, to make the Bulldogs .500 and likely bowl bound.

Arkansas: Morris' name only gets bandied about with further speculation. He has yet to win an SEC game in his two seasons and ticket sales are slowing with him at the helm.

INTEREST DWINDLING

The announced attendance at Donald W. Reynolds Razorback Stadium on Saturday was 52,256. It's the lowest attendance at an Arkansas game in Fayetteville since the stadium expanded in 2001. The previous low was 52,683 in October of that season against Weber State, a game that was made-up because of the events of September 11.

SUSPENDED INDEFINITELY

Arkansas' Cheyenne O'Grady did not play Saturday and after the game, Morris said his potential first-team All-SEC tight end was suspended. The team leader in catches (33), receiving yards (372) and touchdowns (3) posted an ominous tweet Friday night suggesting his time with the team was done. After the game, Morris said it was a suspension, but declined giving a reason or how much time O'Grady would miss. Entering Saturday, O'Grady led all SEC tight ends in receptions per game and yards per game.

A LONG TIME COMING

Arkansas' loss Saturday means the Razorbacks will have gone more than three calendar years without an SEC win at home. Morris has never won a conference game and the last home league victory by his predecessor Bret Bielema was against Florida on November 5, 2016. The last time Arkansas won a conference game anywhere was more than two calendar years ago, at Ole Miss on October 28, 2017.

Final	1	2	3	4	T		
MSST	14	24	7	9	54		
ARK	0	10	7	7	24		
Scoring Summary -----							
FIRST QUARTER				MSST	ARK		
MSST TD 12:11 Kylin Hill 4 Yd Run (Jace Christmann Kick)					0		
6 plays, 82 yards, 2:49				7			
MSST TD 5:31 Osirus Mitchell 33 Yd pass from Tommy Stevens (Jace Christmann Kick)					7		
11 plays, 80 yards, 5:21				14	0		
SECOND QUARTER				MSST	ARK		
MSST FG 14:04 Jace Christmann 26 Yd Field Goal					0		
11 plays, 68 yards, 4:55				17			
ARK TD 10:24 Rakeem Boyd 52 Yd Run (Connor Limpert Kick)					7		
2 plays, 61 yards, 0:57				17			
MSST TD 7:55 Kylin Hill 2 Yd Run (Jace Christmann Kick)					7		
6 plays, 75 yards, 2:29				24			
ARK FG 5:00 Connor Limpert 40 Yd Field Goal					10		
4 plays, 1 yard, 0:56				24			
MSST TD 2:42 Kylin Hill 1 Yd Run (Jace Christmann Kick)					10		
5 plays, 84 yards, 2:18				31			
MSST TD 1:59 Marcus Murphy 32 Yd Interception Return (Jace Christmann Kick)					10		
3 plays, 4 yards, 0:43				38			
THIRD QUARTER				MSST	ARK		
MSST TD 10:33 Farrod Green 3 Yd pass from Tommy Stevens (Jace Christmann Kick)					10		
6 plays, 66 yards, 3:09				45			
ARK TD 4:03 Mike Woods 11 Yd pass from John Stephen Jones (Connor Limpert Kick)					17		
12 plays, 59 yards, 6:30				45			
FOURTH QUARTER				MSST	ARK		
MSST FG 11:40 Jace Christmann 46 Yd Field Goal					17		
13 plays, 47 yards, 7:23				48			
ARK TD 9:47 K.J. Jefferson 5 Yd Run (Connor Limpert Kick)					24		
4 plays, 75 yards, 1:53				48			
MSST TD 8:22 Nick Gibson 47 Yd Run (Two-Point Run Conversion Failed)					24		
3 plays, 75 yards, 1:25				54			
Team Stats				MSST	ARK		
First Downs	27			10			
Passes for First	7			3			
Rushes for First	19			6			
Penalties for First	1			1			
Third Down Efficiency	8-13			2-12			
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-1			1-1			
Total Yards	640			285			
Total Plays	76			49			
Avg Gain Per Play	8.4			5.8			
Net Yards Rushing	460			184			
Rushes	57			25			
Yards Per Rush	8.1			7.4			
Net Yards Passing	180			101			
Comp-Att	13-19			9-24			
Yards Per Pass	9.5			4.2			
Times Sacked	0			0			
Yds Lost To Sacks	0			0			
Interceptions	0			1			
Punts	2			6			
Punt Average	0.0			0.0			
Penalties	3			2			
Penalty Yards	23			10			
Fumbles	1			3			
Fumbles Lost	1			1			
Time of Poss	40:09			19:51			
Individual Stats							
RUSHING							
MISSISSIPPI ST	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Kylin Hill	21	234	11.1	3	62		
Nick Gibson	12	129	10.8	1	47		
Tommy Stevens	15	74	4.9	0	15		
Lee Witherspoon	5	24	4.8	0	9		
Malik Dear	2	4	2.0	0	2		
Isaiah Zuber	1	-2	-2.0	0	0		
Team	1	-3	-3.0	0	0		
ARKANSAS	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Rakeem Boyd	11	114	10.4	1	52		
K.J. Jefferson	2	26	13.0	1	21		
Treyton Burks	4	15	3.8	0	7		
A'Montae Spivey	3	14	4.7	0	11		
Devwah Whaley	2	12	6.0	0	8		
John Stephen Jones	2	3	1.5	0	3		
Greg Brooks Jr.	1	0	0.0	0	0		
PASSING							
MISSISSIPPI ST	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Tommy Stevens	12/18	172	9.6	2	0	64.5	
Logan Burnett	1/1	8	8.0	0	0	99.9	
ARKANSAS	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Ben Hicks	4/13	44	3.4	0	1	2.8	
K.J. Jefferson	1/2	32	16.0	0	0	99.0	
John Stephen Jones	4/9	25	2.8	1	0	46.8	
RECEIVING							
MISSISSIPPI ST	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Dedrick Thomas	2	59	29.5	0	42		
Osirus Mitchell	1	33	33.0	1	33		
Isaiah Zuber	1	27	27.0	0	27		
Austin Williams	2	18	9.0	0	11		
Brad Cumbest	2	16	8.0	0	8		
Malik Dear	1	8	8.0	0	8		
Stephen Guidry	1	8	8.0	0	8		
Geor'quarius Spivey	1	7	7.0	0	7		
Farrod Green	1	3	3.0	1	3		
Kylin Hill	1	1	1.0	0	1		
ARKANSAS	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Treyton Burks	1	32	32.0	0	32		
Grayson Gunter	1	23	23.0	0	23		
Tyson Morris	2	18	9.0	0	10		
Mike Woods	2	15	7.5	1	11		
Trey Knox	1	9	9.0	0	9		
Chase Harrell	1	6	6.0	0	6		
Hudson Henry	1	-2	-2.0	0	0		