



ARKANSAS STATE POSTGAME NOTES

Arkansas State vs Southern Miss | September 23, 2023 | Centennial Bank Stadium

TEAM

- Senior LB **Melique Straker**, junior OL **Jacob Bayer**, junior S **Justin Parks**, sophomore OL **Makilan Thomas** were A-State team captains and represented the Red Wolves at midfield for the coin toss.
- Freshman QB **Jaylen Raynor** and RS freshman DL **Ashtin Rustemeyer** made their first career start at A-State. The Red Wolves have now used 33 different starters (17 offense/16 defense), including 18 who are in their first or second year in the A-State program.
- Arkansas State won its first Sun Belt Conference opener since 2019 (Sept. 28 at Troy – 50-43).

OFFENSE:

- **Jaylen Raynor** became the first true freshman QB to start a game at A-State since Elliot Jacobs on Oct. 27, 2001 against Idaho ... He is the sixth true-freshman to start at quarterback in the FBS era (1992), and this is first time A-State has won the first career start for a true-freshman QB. He completed a season-high three TD passes, giving him four over the last two games ... Playing in just his second collegiate game, he also posted career-high numbers for completions (11), pass attempts (21), passing yards (233) and rushing attempts (17) ... His 97 rushing yards were the most by an A-State signal caller since Justice Hansen rushed for 121 yards against Louisiana on October 19, 2017.
- Junior WR **Courtney Jackson** finished with three receptions for a career-high 94 yards and two touchdowns. One of his catches covered a career-long 60 yards.
- Senior WR **Jeff Foreman** recorded his first TD catch of the year, giving him 10 for his career.
- Arkansas State's 44 points scored were its second most against a Sun Belt opponent over the last three seasons (2021-23) behind only its 45 posted against ULM on Oct. 1 of last season. Additionally, the Red Wolves' 44 points were its most ever scored in its 13 all-time games against the Golden Eagles.

DEFENSE:

- A-State forced its first two turnovers of the season – both interceptions.
- LB **Melique Straker** recorded his first career interception ... Straker also finished with a team-high nine tackles, marking the fourth time in as many games he has led the team in tackles.
- Junior safety **Trevian Thomas** posted his first interception of the season and second of his career ... Thomas was also responsible for five tackles.

SPECIAL TEAMS:

- Sophomore K **Dominic Zvada** connected all three of his field goal attempts, making him 4-of-6 on the season ... His 53-yard make in the second quarter ties for the sixth-longest in program history ... He is now among four players in program history with multiple 50-yard field goals made after his 56-yarder last year at Texas State.

- Freshman WR **Reed Linder** blocked a Southern Miss punt in the first quarter, the first blocked punt by an A-State player since KaRon Coleman vs ULM on December 5, 2020.
- Redshirt-sophomore RB **Ja'Quez Cross** had 10 rushes for 58 yards and a career-high five kickoff returns for 125 yards ... It is Cross' third consecutive game with over 100 all-purpose yards.