

## **Illinois Head Coach Postgame Quotes**

**Illinois 31, Michigan State 27**

**Memorial Stadium // Nov. 5, 2016 // Attendance: 47,144**

**Lovie Smith**

### ***Opening Statement:***

"It's a special day for our football team, our football players. There's something special, of course, about a son and his dad and someone in that role today. That was pretty neat for them. The dads got a chance to go through our pregame walk with our football team. There's a little pressure when the last person you see (before the game) is your father wanting to see a good game. We're getting better; we've been getting better on the football field and in practice. You win games on the practice field but today we put it all together. You talk a lot about starting fast and finishing strong and that's what it was today. It was a brutal, typical Big Ten football game; it's going to go right down to the end. Offensively, Jeff George has gotten better and better each week, but we needed our quarterback to step up and answer some drives that they had, and he did. In order to do that the offensive line has to give you protection. Kendrick Foster, I think, that he had over 50, 150-60, whatever it was, a lot of yards. Again, you attribute a lot of that to the offensive line: Sam Mays, Zach Grant, we had a lot of guys that stepped up defensively, different guys. They grew plus one in the turnover ratio; that was big. Tré Watson, Hardy Nickerson, they had a lot of sacks. The front played well, again, it was a great team effort, one that we needed as much as anything."

### ***On Moving Forward After the Win Against Michigan State...***

"They had to take me through the routine of singing our alma mater. Of course, in the locker room, there is no excitement like a winning locker room. Just genuine emotion, that's what the locker room was like. You want the guys to feel that more often. Going into this week, we can't do a whole lot about what's happened in the past. There were some disappointments that have happened in the past. We talk about a four-game season and in order to really do justice to the four-game season you need to win the first game. Now we're going to talk about the next one, but we got off to a good start."

### ***On QB Jeff George's Improvements...***

"I'm just going to take the easy way out and say his entire quarterback play. I mean, there are checks at the line, he hasn't made calls, and, of course, handing the ball off, but eventually quarterbacks are judged on how they throw the ball and step up to make big throws. The more you do something, the

more confident you get with it, and that's what we saw from him. We had a confident quarterback at the end of the game."

***On Working Through Offensive Limitations...***

"Garrick [McGee] and our offensive staff, all our coaching staff, they've been coaching their butt off all year. It's tough for the OC to go down to its third quarterback, have linemen out and lose your one receiver, but they want the next guy to step up and you find a way to get some production. That's what they were able to do."

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### **Junior DB Jaylen Dunlap**

#### *On his energy...*

"First off on the field I'm just a big competitor, so when I win there is a lot of energy. Sometimes I have to bring it back down and calm down so I don't cause my team a penalty, but it's just the passion. It's nothing really that I rehearse it's just the passion for the game."

#### *On winning on defense...*

"Being a football player, you always want the ball in your hands to make the big play. You want to stand up you know. The defense bolted up and we just pinned our ears back and were blessed that they were stopped."

### **Junior RB Kendrick Foster**

#### *On today's win...*

"It feels good to put everything together finally. And like I said before, to put our talent on display feels good as well. As Coach Smith preaches all the time, we have to finish. And we did that today. And we're good, we're young, but we're still fighting. We got some fight, and we showed some pride today on Dad's Weekend."

#### *On His Touchdown...*

"I wanted to finish off strong and finish getting that momentum into the half. As soon as they caught that play I was licking my chops because I knew that it was going to be a big play. It was a big play in practice, and we did the same thing in the game."

### **Sophomore WR Sam Mays**

#### *On His Touchdown...*

"I was expecting an extra safety to come over and I knew with my timing that I had to pace myself a little bit, and when I saw that Zach (Grant) and Justin (Hardee) took both the guys, I was like, "oh man, we need to make this play." And we made the play. I was happy to do that for the team."

#### *On Jeff George's Growth...*

"I feel like it's more of getting comfortable with the offense, and being able to be you in the offense. Learning, reading the defense, the blitzes and stuff like that. And I feel like he did that really well today."

## **Michigan State Head Coach Quotes**

**Illinois 31, Michigan State 27**

**Memorial Stadium // Nov. 5, 2016 // Attendance: 47,114**

### **Mark Dantonio**

#### *Opening Statement*

Obviously, we are very disappointed. We had too many missed opportunities in the red zone. First half, we did very well defensively until the last series, that two-minute drive, obviously we gave that one up. We had some situations in the second half where we started to lead a little bit more and we congratulate them, they played hard and made plays. I thought we came back, worked extremely hard to get back in front and that last series by the defense: blown coverage, two pass interferences, instructionally on the covers that we made, and headed back down the field again. We are very disappointed, lot of disappointed people but it's like I told the football team, when we are on that long road, everybody's walking down that long road. We might not all be on the road at the same time, but it appears there's a long line of us on that road. We have to keep pushing and we have to come out the other end, that's the only way I know how to do it. If you take the foot off the accelerator, stop grinding, bad things happen. Thus far, we have not done that. We have to reanalyze, reevaluate and I'm obviously very disappointed for the fans as well.

#### *On how he keeps his team motivated:*

There's always a future for everybody, everybody has a future. Whether you are a freshman, coach, player who is a senior, you have a future. So you better play well in the future. You have opportunities to show in the future and you need to continue to press forward. I think that's what you do when you're a competitor.

#### *On his team's mentality*

I can't fault the players. The effort was there. We were engaged. We were engaged in practice. We were engaged coming over here. We were engaged in the pregame making sure we had positive energy going and I thought we did.

## Michigan State Player Postgame Quotes

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### Michigan State LB Riley Bullough

#### *On the defensive effort today*

"I thought, in the first half, we played really good defense overall, other than that last drive. We were doing things right, we were playing confident and that was a big thing. Our biggest thing, I feel like, is that after a team gets a big play, we have to keep playing after that. We can't just quit playing, or quit doing our assignments, because we're down. You have to play through the entire drive, and I think that's something we need to get better at."

#### *On giving up the go-ahead touchdown in the final drive*

"They made plays on that drive. In the Big Ten, if the game is close going into the fourth quarter, the other team is going to make plays and I think that's what we saw today. It feels like it just slipped away from us. The first half, I thought we played great, but things just slipped away from us a little bit."

### Michigan State WR R.J. Shelton

#### *On minimizing the mistakes*

"At the end of the day, we have to get back and do the little things. The details are so critical. On the offensive side, the things we can control we need to control – the penalties, the offsides, hand placement, running routes for wide receives, quarterback check-downs or running back picking up blocks. It's not anyone individually; it's a team, especially on [the offensive] side. We need to come together against Rutgers next weekend."

#### *On what the team is missing compared to last season*

"You have to come out and play this game with heart. It doesn't matter if it's me, if it's any of the seniors or if it's anyone on the team. You have to play with your heart when it comes to crunch time situations. Guys have that in them, but they don't portray that out on the field, and we need to. No matter who it is and what is called, we have to go out and make the plays we're capable of making. And, that's what's missing right now."

### Michigan State TE Josiah Price

#### *On the emotions surrounding the end of the game*

"In the past we've won these games in the fourth quarter, and I think that's what's frustrating about being so close. If I catch that touchdown at the start of the second half in the end zone, it's a four-point swing and we get seven points instead of three. It's just very frustrating."

#### *On the struggles of the offensive line*

"It's frustrating. I think our offensive line has made some really good strides the last two weeks against Maryland and Michigan. And then, this week I think there were some times where we struggled a little bit. But, credit Illinois. They have two really fast defensive ends that can cause a lot of problems, and, if you put on the film, they've been causing a lot of problems all year. So, I think it's a little bit of both, but it's very frustrating."