



## POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE

Auburn vs. Texas A&M

September 27, 2025

College Station, Texas

### QUESTIONS FOR COACH MIKE ELKO

**COACH ELKO:** Obviously, great win. Any time you get an SEC win, it's a great win. For us to start 4-0 for the first time since 2016, that was huge. For us to go out and play defense the way we did today and win us a game, multiple times, I thought that was a really, really impressive job by that side of the ball. The staff, the players, and again, when you want to be a complete team, there's times where you're going to have to carry the other time. What I told the guys in the locker room was, when we went up to South Bend and we weren't playing great on defense. Offensively, we made all the plays we needed to make. Today we weren't really in sync on offensive, but on defense, we just kept going out and kept making all the plays we needed to make to go out there and win a football game, and that's the credit of a good football team.

Offensively, we did a good job running the football. It was a really good running team. Our run defense, we ran the ball for over 200 yards. We were efficient in the throwing game. We just created too many penalties. It's got to get fixed. You know, it's way too many penalties that kill drives. It's way too many penalties that set us behind the sticks.

If you put that together with not being able to convert third downs, that's how you have 414 yards and not nearly enough points for what 414 yards should get you.

And then our special teams, we have to get cleaned up immensely. Too many penalties; too many bad kicks.

We're happy. We're 4-0. We did the things we needed to do to win today, and I just think the ceiling for this team is a lot higher if we could figure out how to go put four quarters together.

And so that will be our challenge heading into next week.

From there, questions.

**Q. Mike, when you win an ugly game like that with a lot of penalties and self-inflicted errors, are the emotions more relieved and happy to win a game like that? Or are you more frustrated about some of those errors?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, I mean, we can't have it both ways. We can't be mad when we win high-scoring games and then mad when we win low-scoring games. We can't have it both ways.

And so, we didn't do -- we made a lot of mistakes today. We didn't do things we needed to do on offense to be successful. But defensively, we played lights-out. And defensively, we made an awful lot of stops, and ultimately, that won us a football game.



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**Q. Mike, if I could ask a couple things. First of all, how did y'all shut down Cam Coleman? He only had four catches for 18 years, one of the best receivers in the country, and you're able to really neutralize him.**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah. I mean, obviously, he had a huge night against us last year. That obviously creates a sense of pride to not allow that to happen again. I think we tried to pay a lot of attention to him from a cover standpoint, doubling him, helping in that direction. And we were able to execute that at a really good level today.

I thought the way we executed the plan on defense was really good, and I think if we do that, we have a chance to be really good on defense.

**Q. Do you ever have some feelings of, for lack of a better way to put it, dread or whatever, that the self-inflicted wounds were going to come back and haunt you? Or were you that confident in your defense that you were going to continue to be able to turn them away?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, it's the same thing. When we went to South Bend, I didn't have doubts that we wouldn't be able to score enough to win. And today, I didn't have doubts that we wouldn't be able to stop them enough to win. We led start to finish in an SEC football game against the team that was 0-1 and had their backs against the wall.

And so, yeah, I'm not going to apologize for that.

**Q. Is there any root-based cause when you have a game like this that has so many penalties or any commonalities between so many penalties?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, I don't know what the root-based cause is. If I knew what the root-based cause is, we would fix it.

**Q. And is this a game that you felt like the run game could open up and really have the success they had today?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, I mean, we ran for 200. We threw for 200 in an SEC game against a really, really good SEC defense.

Again, I think that we showed what we're capable of. We have to figure out how to clean up our play.

**Q. Hey, Coach. I was wondering what the play-calling process was on the third-and-one pass that Marcel [Reed] eventually threw the interception on? Did you want to throw it on that one?**

**COACH ELKO:** We were trying to throw it out there, do a quick screen and get the yard and a half. It was closer to two than it was one. It was not a one yard. We felt like it was a



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yard and a half. We felt like they were going to play man coverage out there. We felt like we were going to be able to pop one and block the guy, cover him man-to-man. And the ball was a little off and obviously got tipped and intercepted and didn't go the way we hoped it would.

Does anybody want to ask a question about us being 4-0 for the first time since 2016? Or how did the defense bounce back? Or how about you held them to 176 yards on offense, and you had five sacks, and they were 0 for 12 on third down and 0 for 2 on third down and you got the return game going.

I don't mean to sound like someone else, but my gosh, will you guys stop being so dreadful and gloomy?

Next one.

**Q. I was actually going to -- not just because you said it. To be 4-0 for the first time in a long time.**

**COACH ELKO:** A long time.

**Q. What does that say about your program and where you guys are headed?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, we won two games without playing our best football, right? And that's a testament to character, culture and just grinding out wins. Again, that won't last forever. That's not lost on me.

But I do think when you go find different ways to win -- you know, one game you throw the ball, one game you run the ball, one game you win on offense, one game you win on defense, it gives you an opportunity to go out and win and sustain success over long periods of time.

And again, our defensive kids stood up today and made an awful lot of stops and helped us go out there and win a football game.

**Q. What has having [Le'Veon] Moss back done for your team this year, and just the way he's able to grind it out for you guys when maybe the passing game isn't going as well as you'd like?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, he's an elite player. He's an elite running back. He was last year, he is this year. It kind of went under the carpet a little bit that he was leading the SEC in rushing at the point he got injured. That's not easy to do. It's a testimony to him. I think he's a really, really good player. Obviously, when you're in the SEC, it takes a little something extra to be able to run the ball efficiently against these defensive lines that we play against.

For him to average over six yards a carry, which is a positive, that's a really good thing for everybody out there. That's good.



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**Q. Coach, two-parter. One, can you talk a little bit about the offensive line and their performance, especially in the running game against a line that was only giving up like 54 yards a game before this one.**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, 54 a game and we went for over 200. Good question, Mark. Thank you.

Yeah. I just -- we're just making lazy mistakes, and that's I think what's killing us. I think when they get their pads down and they get underneath people, they're capable of moving people. And maybe to some degree, the veteran group has relaxed a little bit, and we've got to turn the heat back up. But when they want to go out there and move people, they can do it, and they did it for the most part today.

**Q. And can you recall a game where your defense went out and basically held -- threw a shutout on third and fourth downs?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, I think we -- I think -- Obi (Julien Obioha) would know this one. I think if you go back to Ole Miss 2018, I think we pitched a shutout that day if I'm not mistaken. There might be one more. Maybe LSU 2020. It's rare. It was a good day. Obi's going to look it up for us. '18? Yeah.

What was their third down he asked? They had one. Okay. Yeah.

**Q. Hey, Mike. What did you add to Marcel's [Reed] plate in the offseason? And what do you think about his performance after the heroics at Notre Dame?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah. I think he had a good day. He was 15-22. He was much more accurate today than he was against Notre Dame. Obviously, had another deep ball that we'd like to have back. They did some different things pressure-wise that I don't think we handled really well. Kind of put that on the staff and on myself for that. Caused him some problems with pressures in his face. That was some of the third down issues that we ran into.

But again, I think he was 15 of 22 today. We didn't put a lot on him because of the amount of blitzes we were getting. We felt like they were a little bit more susceptible to the run, and we wanted to do that. So we tried to grind it out a little bit more through the run game.

**Q. What did you see from Taurean [York] stepping up and the three other guys that were in that other spot?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, hard to see individual performance. Obviously, Taurean flashed a bunch, and so obviously, he made the big sack on the second-to-last drive that kind of put them behind the chains and really put them into a tough position to be able to get that drive going. Thought he made a huge play on a screen early in the game that could have been a big one that



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I thought he diagnosed really well. Thought he commanded the game really, really well. One sack, two TFLs, had a really, really strong game, and he flashed.

In terms of the other guys, if they don't make real big flash plays, it's kind of hard to judge that on the field.

**Q. And you mentioned the ceiling of this team. If you guys can clean up some of the things that have troubled y'all in different ways the last couple games, what do you think the ceiling of this team is?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, it's high. It's really high. I think if we can figure out how to put together a full four quarters and play at the level that we're capable of, I think we have a high ceiling. I think we have the opportunity to put something together this year.

It's got to be one game at a time. We've got to have a growth mindset all the way through it. We have a big challenge next week, a night game, blackout, Mississippi State coming in here.

We've got to go back to work and keep working to become what we're capable of becoming.

**Q. Mike, you want the gloomy one or the good one first?**

**COACH ELKO:** Whatever you got, Sam.

**Q. On the deep balls with Marcel [Reed], is that just a rep thing? Is that a timing thing? What do you pinpoint to get that?**

**COACH ELKO:** I think honestly what happens, I think he sees it and he speeds up. He just won't slow down. Like, if he slowed down, put a little bit more air on it, that's what we're trying to get him to do. I think what happens is he comes out and he sees it and he gets excited, and then everything speeds up, and that's what kind of causes the overthrows.

And so he's working on it. We're working on it. He'll get better. He'll make the throws he needs to make.

**Q. And after the turnover, it would be very easy everybody to go haywire, to panic --**

**COACH ELKO:** Like you guys did.

**Q. What does it say about the poise of your team? How many guys on that team showed the poise in that moment to not let that snowball into something else?**

**COACH ELKO:** I think that should be the story of the game. I think the story of the game at Notre Dame was, offensively, we never blinked. And as everything got thrown at



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us, we found a way to keep going out there and making plays. And the touchdown gets called back, and we still go out and put a drive together to win the football game.

Today, we didn't do anything on offense to help us in the second half, and that will happen at times in this league. You're going to play at times where you play teams that are really good on defense. And yet, defensively, we didn't flinch at all.

And so, okay, short field, touchdown, one-score game, whatever. Give them the ball. Go right back out, three and out. Give them the ball, right back out, four and out. That's the culture that you want to see from your players. You want to see them go out there and try to play winning football and win football games, and they did that today.

**Q. Coach, so much was said about the team's ability to defend the run, and then you go out there and face the SEC's second leading rusher (Jeremiah Cobb). What does it mean to hold him to only 28 yards on the day?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, I think when we play together as 11, we can be good. I think there have been times where we have been significantly better on defense this year. We've had breakdowns that have caused issues. Today, we didn't. We didn't give up the explosive plays. We leveraged the football well. We kept the ball inside of us today. And because we did that, the only explosive they had was the one catch [Eric] Singleton made, which was a phenomenal catch. And if you force people to earn it, we've got a shot to do some things.

**Q. I wanted to ask you a question about Taurean York and his leadership and what he meant to that defensive push that you guys had today.**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah. I mean, his leadership is elite. He's an elite player. He's a special one. We're really glad we have him. But what he does to command that defense all week in meetings, on the practice field, in walkthroughs, during the game, he is a special kid. And I've said it multiple times, we're going to look back on him and really wished we cherished him, because they don't come along like that very often.

He is, he's a unique player, and we're really glad we got him in the middle of our defense.

**Q. Coach, can you just talk a little bit about starting 1-0 in this conference, this very competitive conference, and what it means to help push your team forward?**

**COACH ELKO:** Yeah, I think any time you're 1-0, it's definitely better than being 0-1. I don't know how else to answer that.

Yeah, it means a lot. We've got to hold serve at home. We've got to find ways to win games at home. This was a big one. I think we all knew how talented Auburn was. Auburn was a team that had a chance to crack this thing this year. Certainly felt like they made the plays





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they needed to make last week to give Oklahoma all that they could. And you knew they were going to come in here hungry, with their backs against the wall, to go out and get a win.

And for us to bow up and play the way we did and get the win that we got, I thought that was really good.

**Q. You mentioned only one explosive play, 0 for 13 on third down. Is this what this defense should look like when it's playing at its best? Or is there even another level that they can reach?**

**COACH ELKO:** No, that's pretty high, Carter. I'm not sure if we can let 176 yards be the standard that we're shooting for in the modern era, but we played well.

This is what I think, and this is what we talk a lot about behind the building, is we have to force teams to make plays. Teams in this league are going to make plays to some degree, right? [Eric] Singleton is going to go up and make a great catch, right? And things like that will happen. That's the level of football we're playing.

We have to force that to be how people have success. It can't be that we bust a wheel route. It can't be that they hit us on a flea-flicker. That can't be how people get plays on us. They have to get them because they make plays. And if we can play defense that way, we have enough talent that we'll make our fair share of plays, they'll certainly make some. And at the end of that, we should win that ledger. It's when you start throwing in all of the add-ons and the extras, that's been the first three games, that that's where we're not going to be what we want to be or what we're capable of being.

**Q. So, comparing the Aggie defense that came out for the UTSA game to now the one that came out today on Kyle Field, what do you think that those biggest improvements have been?**

**And then, looking forward, do you foresee anything that you're going to have to work on with them as the season goes on?**

**COACH ELKO:** Oh, yeah, there's about eight million things that we've got to work on. That will always be the answer to that question.

But I think they bought in today to being on the same page consistently throughout the game, to staying focused, to staying locked in, to committing to every single play, being dialed in to doing their job. It sounds like coach speak, but it's really what it comes down to. If they can do that, they can be good.

If we can do that consistently, we have a shot to be a good defense.

**Q. Coach, what does it say about your team after the big win on the road against Notre Dame? Everybody was singing the team's praises, but they seemed like they**



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came out today pretty level-headed.

**COACH ELKO:** I think that we understand what we're chasing. We understand what we're after. We understand how far away we are. And I worded it to them this way yesterday, we talked a lot about four quarters, obviously, with the game that we play. And so, the season breaks down into four quarters. And so we went 3-0 in the first quarter. And you can't ever win a football game in the first quarter. You can certainly go out and lose one, but you can't ever go out and win one. So all we did was go out and win the first quarter.

And now, you head into this middle part of the season, and this is where seasons get defined. This is where consistency is going to be critical. This is where our ability to go to work every single week and bring the right mindset and bring the right mentality to the game every single week is going to matter. Those are the things that are going to be important.

And then figuring out a way to make sure the scoreboard stays in our favor. We did that today, and we're a 4-0 team and we're 1-0 in the SEC. And those are things we're going to relish. We'll always relish those things.

We act sometimes around here like those things happen all the time, and they just don't. So we're going to cherish the upward trajectory of the program while we're trying to clean up everything that we need to clean up.

**Q. Coach, obviously the most complete defensive effort of the year. Two weeks to prepare for this game. Was there anything tangible or anything that stood out in this preparation that kind of clicked with the unit to kind of get that performance we saw today?**

**COACH ELKO:** Honestly, no, we didn't really take two weeks. We probably did as coaches, but we really, really spent the bye week focusing on ourselves, because we felt like there were so many things we needed to just clean up within our own game and just with what we were doing.

And so we really didn't go out there and put in two weeks of Auburn practice. We didn't play one rep of Auburn offense last week. We just felt like we had to focus on playing our game, playing our defense, playing it the way we know how. And so maybe from a coaching perspective.

But I just think -- I said this in the beginning of the week, that I felt like their offensive line would have a chip on our shoulder. What I failed to mention to you was our defense was going to have a chip on their shoulder, too, and I think that's probably a little bit more what caused that than the two weeks to prepare.

Thank you, guys.





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### QUESTIONS FOR LE'VEON MOSS, TAUREAN YORK AND MARCEL REED

**Q. Hey, Le'Veon, were you battling something there in that first quarter? Looked like you were a little limited there in the first few drives.**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** I was, but I was just throwing up, that's about it. A stomach bug. I've been sick all week.

**Q. What allowed you to maybe persevere through that and kind of --**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** Being there for my brothers, that's it.

**Q. Le'Veon, did it seem like this was some of the biggest running lanes that you had so far this season? And what do you think made the offensive line so successful in some of the running games?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** Just doing their job, executing the play. That's it.

**Q. Did you come into this game feeling like this was a matchup that the running game really could shine?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** I heard people saying that we really couldn't run the ball. It was just a statement game for us. The O-line and the running backs really.

**Q. And then how much -- you have a focus moving forward is going to be mitigating the penalties.**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** We've just got to cut the penalties out. I mean, we played great ball. It's just the penalties just be killing us.

**Q. Le'Veon, obviously the first three weeks, offense was the story. This week was defensive. What did you see from those guys that kind of stepped up today?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** Defense did amazing. We couldn't get the ball in the box as much as we needed to, but they made great stops all game.

**Q. What is the conversation when you guys come to the sideline. Do they say they're going to pick you up?**



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**LE'VEON MOSS:** Every time, every time. If it's a four and out, they come like, we're going to get the ball back for y'all. Just go down and score next time.

**Q. What does it mean to you to help the team to a 4-0 start for the first time since 2016?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** It means a lot. I'm just here to do my job, honestly. I'm just playing ball.

**Q. You kind of brushed by it, but how difficult is it to play football when you're throwing up?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** It's kind of difficult with your stomach hurting and throwing every up time you get out the game. It's kind of weird.

**Q. Was it just happening in the first quarter? Did you get better?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** I got better as the game went going on. I took a little medicine, it was fine.

**Q. Le'Veon, you guys, after y'all had to punt that last time, it's 16-10. A touchdown is going to beat y'all. You guys are on the -- the offensive guys are on the sideline.**

**How nervous, concerned, worried were you at that point that Auburn could go down there and pull it out? What was going through your mind?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** I wasn't really nervous. I got faith in my defense. When they step on the field, I believe they're going to make stops.

**Q. Obviously last year, you missed the game against Auburn with your injury. I just want to know, was there kind of more of a want in this game to kind of make up for what you didn't get to do last year?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** Most definitely, I would say so.

**Q. What's the spirit like in the running back room between you and Amari [Daniels] and Rueben [Owens]?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** We're family. You don't love family in slices.

**Q. What's it like whenever you guys are switching out and you're just excited to see the other go out there and make plays?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** Congratulating each other when we break runs. It's just a big old family in the running back room.



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**Q. How does it feel that you made the first touchdown for your team within the first three minutes of the game? And how did you use that to go back and to motivate your team so that way y'all could come out with a strong win like you did today?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** It felt good to come right out and score, but just doing our jobs, honestly. I don't know what to say. We're just doing our jobs, executing plays how we need to execute them.

**Q. What can be done to cut down the number of penalties? Is it just like a punishment thing? What is it?**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** Focusing more. We just need to focus.

**Q. I know that field goals helped you win today, but you're going to have to score touchdowns instead of field goals going on down the road. How do you guys get past that? I know points is what matters, but you want to maximize your opportunities.**

**LE'VEON MOSS:** We've just got to execute our plays and do them the right way, how they're supposed to be ran. Every man for a man.

**Q. Hey, Taurean. Everybody knows Jackson Arnold, the quarterback, is well-known for his running ability and scrambling and quarterback draws and things like that. Y'all kept him under wraps, and he didn't have any long runs. How did y'all do that?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** I mean, we just played our game. We executed the right way. We all came in with the right mindset. We knew that he was a threat. Baylor probably would have beat them if they were more aware of Jackson Arnold's ability. Obviously he played Texas high school football I think at Denton Guyer. If you watch his high school tape, he's been doing that for as many years. So we knew we had to cage him. I think we did a good job at that tonight.

**Q. Taurean, seems like your breakout game two years ago was against Auburn, and now doing it again at Kyle Field. First, what is it about playing Auburn that gets you hyped up to go play them?**

**And just the defensive stops, too. Getting that stop late in the game, what did that do for this team and the defense moving forward?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** As far as Auburn goes, I feel they do some things schematically that fits my play style. I don't want to speak too much on that. But Auburn is Auburn. Hugh Freeze has been running the offense for a long time.

But as far as the last stop, it's just good, I thought. It's really good to see our



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training came through when we needed it the most. Worked a plethora of times, all offseason. Just to see our training pay off in the right way, it's always a good feeling, man.

**Q. Taurean, obviously your second year as captain, but watching you on the field, you seem to be able to keep the entire defense on the same page, especially when it gets really loud here at Kyle Field. When did that start to come to you as a player, and how have you kind of continued to grow that aspect of your game?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** I'd probably say, I think I felt like I had good grasp of the defense, probably since the camp practice my freshman year whenever [DJ] Durkin told me I was going to be the starter. I mean, this is nothing new to me. I feel like I'm a natural born leader. My dad and my mom raised me to be that way. I did the same thing in high school. I came to high school from the eighth grade and went from playing Tuesday nights to Friday nights. My first game was against Deuce Vaughn. He just got cut by the Cowboys. That's an NFL-caliber talent right there. So I felt like as soon as they gave me the keys to be the starter, I became a leader. You can't be a Mike linebacker and not be a leader.

**Q. Taurean, what was your mindset going into this game today, and did you have a feeling it would be a big one for you?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** Two things. We were at Bible study last night. And Darius Dunaway, our chaplain, he said you fight harder when it's personal. I feel like that stuck with me a lot. And then my dad made his Facebook post before the game today and he said he had a gut feeling that I was going to have a big game tonight. So I told my dad I trust his gut feeling. I went out there and trusted my instincts and my training from my coaches, and we got the job done.

**Q. Scooby [Williams] out. What did you see from [Daymion] Sanford and a couple of the others that got in there as well?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** We're all ready, man. I feel so confident about our linebacker group. No matter who it is, no matter how old they are. These guys, we love football, man. We really don't care who gets the credit, and that's a universal thing with our team. It doesn't matter if the offense put up 40 points, or they put up 13 or 16 points today. We won the game. We get to celebrate with 131 people in there, scout team included -- trainers, nutritionists, operations, recruiting, personnel guys. It takes everybody to win a football game. Feels good, man.

**Q. I understand most of the penalties were on the offensive side. But as a team captain, what do you say to your guys throughout the week to start cutting those down?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** I talked to Chase [Bisontis] when he came out the game with his second penalty like in three plays or something. I was like, don't worry about it. We know you can play. We know who you are. Don't worry about it. They probably sat you down for a little bit, just calm down, breathe a little bit. You're going to be all right. Don't worry about it. You get in there and go run through somebody's face.



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**Q. So obviously, the story for the first three games are the offense. How personal was it for you guys on the defensive side of the ball to come out there and have a performance like that today and prove that you guys got that in you?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** We knew we had it in us. We had some execution issues in the first three games, but we never really panicked or anything like that. We know we have good players. We know we tighten up the scheme, we're all 11 on the same page. We're going to play lights out. Today, it's great, man. We had a great third down, and they converted zero third downs. If you do that, you better win the game.

**Q. What's that feeling like on that sack late in the fourth quarter?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** Man, that was God. That was God's work, man. I felt like I overran [Jackson] Arnold a little bit. I got a strong arm though, so shout out to Coach [Tommy] Moffitt. He got me in the weight room doing those curls on Thursday.

I'm just happy I could put my team in the position to go hunt on second down. I think the sack happened on first down. We hunted on second down and got off the field. It was a crazy game, to be honest with you. I'm just so happy we won the game.

And it was extremely personal, for so many reasons, so I'm glad we won.

**Q. Coach Elko talked about [Jackson] Arnold's dual threat ability. What was the message for the defense and sort of keeping track on him and putting a spy on him?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** Just watch his game against Baylor. He killed them with their feet all night long. I talked to a couple guys from Baylor from my time when I was committed there. I knew they were going to give me good insight on how they felt. They said they weren't prepared for his running ability. In my head, he's been doing that. He's been doing that.

But it's always good to have some insight from other teams who have already played them already. Just get a feel for them. Obviously, you trust your eyes and what you see on film, but if you can talk to a guy that you deeply trust about him who's already played him, I like our chances a lot. DK Kalu.

**Q. Y'all's whole thing this offseason was finish. It's been two different ways of finishing these last two games. What are you learning about this team and the ability to overcome some of that?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** This team really loves each other, man. We've been through so much, and we've only been together for about 21 months. Especially with our new guys that just came in this year, I mean, we love them like they've been here since the start of the [Mike] Elko



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era.

It's just so good to see us taking tremendous strides. They caught us in year one. A lot of teams caught us in year one. And that's kind of how it's supposed to go in year one, honestly. Nobody really expected much from us. And we're out there, we exceed expectations. We had a downhill landslide at the back-end of the season. But we came back this year, and we knew it was going to be personal. So to get two games back to back, it's a great feeling. I'm already thinking about Mississippi State, to be honest with you.

**Q. When y'all came out for the last series, Auburn had a chance to go down and score and maybe pull out a win at the end. What was the conversation like, maybe on the sideline or coming out on the field when y'all are coming out for that last series that could have won or lost it?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** Yeah, you're right, won or loss. We won by six. They go down there and score a touchdown, we lose the game, and everybody's not happy. I said, this isn't last year. Trust your training. We've been doing these situations so many times. We do it every Wednesday against the offense. So it's good on good, two-minute drill. That sets us up for success.

Like I said, it's just so good to see our training pay off in crucial moments like that.

**Q. Obviously, understanding the mantra is "a game at a time, " but you've talked about personal and the emotion and gut feelings. So when you look at this team, does it feel different? Does this year feel different for you?**

**TAUREAN YORK:** It just feels like we're going to find a way, man. We're not a rah-rah team. We don't have a lot of outspoken guys on this team. We just have a lot of people who do their jobs. I feel like when you do your job, you get put in position to make plays. Obviously, you've seen a plethora of guys make plays throughout the first four games of this season.

**Q. Hey, Marcel. As leader of the offense, when the penalties kind of start coming, what's the conversation with the guys then, and what's the conversation moving forward?**

**MARCEL REED:** Yeah, I mean, we kind of have to stop killing ourselves a little bit, but just taking it one play at a time, executing the call. Whatever play is called, executing it to the best of our ability.

We're not really trying to focus on, I guess, getting all those yards back in one play. Just trying to cut them in half and give ourselves a chance to call another one where we can get the first down. But we kind of just have to eliminate those penalties.

**Q. And how good was it to see Le'Veon and the running backs get that premier game?**





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**MARCEL REED:** It was really good to see. We really haven't had that from them yet, just because we've been doing so well in the passing attack.

But this is a game where we kind of had to use our legs a little bit more, because they decided they wanted to bracket our receivers, double a little bit, and that was just kind of hard to get it to them. But worked out in our favor just a little bit.

Obviously, the penalties set us back a little bit, but 140 yards, that's pretty good for Le'V (Le'Veon Moss).

**Q. What does it mean to you to have helped the team to its first 4-0 start since 12016?**

**MARCEL REED:** It means a lot. I really didn't know the history of that. We're just doing what we can to get wins every day. We're trying to execute our championship execution and play our best ball. It wasn't that today, obviously, but we got the job done and we're on to next week.

**Q. Hey, Marcel. How much has the game slowed down for you from last season to this season, and how much did Coach Elko and Coach [Collin] Klein put on your plate?**

**MARCEL REED:** Yeah, it slowed down a lot, just because I feel like we're getting open faster, and just things are working out a little bit better than they were last year because of the preparation that we've had this offseason together.

Last year was just a little bit different coming in. Halfway through the season, I didn't have the connection with the receivers I have this year. Just having a full set of O-linemen that have been together, a running back room that has been together, bringing in tight ends who can make plays, blocking in, catching the ball has made things a lot easier.

As just kind of putting stuff on my plate, I feel like being in the room with [Collin] Klein this offseason has helped a lot, and it definitely added a few more things that are in my control while I'm on the field, and just having the confidence day in and day out to go do that has been really good for me and the offense.

**Q. Marcel, how impressed were you with your offensive line and the way that they controlled the line of scrimmage in the run game?**

**MARCEL REED:** Really impressed. I mean, that's what we talked about. We had to do that because Coach Elko mentioned that they were coming off the game they last week, the line of scrimmage was going to be where we have to win offensively and defensively. They had ten sacks for Jackson Arnold last week.

So, you know, we expected their O-line to be at their best, and we also expected their D-line to be at their best. It just kind of a trench war this weekend. We knew that coming in,



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and they executed.

**Q. You only ran the ball once on a design play. Was it just the plan to get the ball to the running backs and let them do their thing, or is it just how that kind of worked out?**

**MARCEL REED:** Just kind of how that worked out. I guess we had things in the game plan where I had chances to run the ball, but I feel like a couple times I missed my opportunity to run in open space. I stayed in the pocket a little bit too long trying to get the ball downfield. Didn't use my legs enough.

But there weren't too many design runs for me this week. I don't think we're purposely trying to get the ball in our running backs' hands. I think that's just how the game played and what we had to do against this defense, and we had to adjust after the first quarter a little bit and there were some things we had to adjust.

But yeah, wasn't in it for me today. Had a little breakout in the two-minute. I was happy to get that one, because I used my legs a little bit, too.

**Q. Marcel, when the defense comes out for that last series and Auburn, if they can get a touchdown, even though y'all led the whole game, can take the lead. What's going through your mind? What's the conversation like among the offense on the sideline? Where was everybody at that point?**

**MARCEL REED:** Yeah. I think everybody else was kind of confused, aside from me. I kind of knew what the coaches were trying to do. I guess the receivers really didn't know, running backs didn't really know.

But I understood that we were trying to kind of just pound that clock down a little bit, make them use their time-outs, so when the defense goes out, they only have one to try to drive the field. Auburn's offense, I mean.

They did a really good job making that stop. If they didn't make that stop, we've been great in two-minute operation, and I think that we would have been just fine trying to go drive the ball down the field, put a field goal up.

**Q. How confident were you that they were going to be able to make that stop?**

**MARCEL REED:** I was confident.

**Q. Why?**

**MARCEL REED:** They've been doing it the whole game. You see Taurean York making plays, getting back to Jackson Arnold, making them try to get the ball, or taking



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them down. Dayon Hayes back there. Cash [Cashius] Howell back there. T.O. [Tyler Onyedim] back there. They're all making plays. They were really saving our butts tonight.

**Q. On some of those near misses that you've had on some of the deep passes, what's been kind of the conversation like to try and connect on a few more of those?**

**MARCEL REED:** Obviously, we work them in practice.

When you're getting in the game, it's a little bit different with colors flying and all types of things with different protections and how the defense is flowing, how they're getting to me, how they're playing the secondary. We'll connect. Eventually, we'll connect.

It's just a work in progress. It's all over the place right now, and people are talking about it. But it's in our control, and we're going to get it done.

**Q. Y'all's whole thing this offseason was finishing, and so with these last two games looking quite differently, but you guys still coming out on top, what are you learning about your team and y'all's ability to actually finish?**

**MARCEL REED:** I think it's just our togetherness so far this year. When defense isn't playing well, offense is carrying them and holding them up. When we're not playing well, the defense is doing the same that we did for them.

So I think it's just that, us being so together and understanding that it's going to take every single person on the field, whether it's offense or defense, we all understand that. And we play until it hits zero in the fourth quarter.

**Q. Marcel, you kind of just answered this, but Coach Elko earlier said on your deep balls, it kind of looked like you were speeding up your throwing or kind of getting too excited when you see the open man.**

**What do you think it is? And do you think it's more of a reps kind of thing?**

**MARCEL REED:** Yeah, I did come outside, and he told me I was a click early. We go back and look at it, and I was a click early. Maybe I have to put a little bit more air on it.

But there's a lot more things that go into that that we're just going to have to work on and practice a little bit more. But it's just me calming down a little bit and making the throw accurately.

**Q. Marcel, did you see anything from the defense in practice this week that led you to believe, hey, they could have a performance like this?**

**MARCEL REED:** No, I didn't. They kind of switched up their pressures a little



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bit early in the game. And third down, they wanted to send zero a little bit. Sometimes they'd drop a linebacker out on the spot where we want to hit, and sometimes they wouldn't. So they were just kind of switching things up a little bit and trying to adjust to it.

But we started to adjust it to and figure some things out. But overall, it just wasn't good, honestly, third down for us.

**Q. I meant y'all's defense.**

**MARCEL REED:** Our defense. My bad, I didn't really catch it.

**Q. If you saw anything from A&M's defense this week in practice that led you to believe they could have a performance as good as this one.**

**MARCEL REED:** Shoot, we practice the same every week. I guess it's just personal for us this week. We went to Auburn last year, and they beat us in four overtimes. Took us out of the playoff question. Or the SEC championship question. So was the just personal coming into this game. We knew that we had to get this done.

So defense played definitely with a little bit of a chip on their shoulder. Obviously, Cam Coleman was one of our commits. We all knew that. Flipped to Auburn. So they held him down a little bit today. And secondary did a good job. Our D-line and linebackers did a good job of getting pressure on the quarterback, making them get the ball out.

**Q. Le'Veon [Moss] mentioned that he had a stomach bug all week, and he was throwing up during the game, and yet he still had almost 150 yards. How impressed were you knowing that he was doing that while sick?**

**MARCEL REED:** I did not know that. I'm very unaware of him having a stomach bug. I remember him throwing up the Notre Dame game, but I didn't see him throw up this week at all. Actually, he was -- I don't think he was at practice one day. Maybe. I don't know.

**Q. Marcel, Coach (Mike Elko) talked about the fact that this team has a pretty high ceiling if y'all can put a complete four quarters together. Where is your confidence level at knowing what the offense has been able to do the first three weeks and then watching this defensive performance tonight?**

**MARCEL REED:** Yeah. I mean, if the defense plays like that again and we eliminate penalties, we were already ahead of them by 200 yards. We lost 100 yards ourselves from penalties. If we don't, there's probably 30, 40 points on the board. And we don't score 16 with 300-something, 400 yards of offense. Yeah.

**Q. In the fourth quarter, you throw the touchdown pass to Mario**



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**[Craver].** It gets called back. A year ago, does that affect you more than it did today because of your experience and you were able to just maybe -- were you able to kind of shrug it off? I know you didn't get a touchdown on that drive. You settled for another field goal. But I'm just curious, as time has gone by, do you feel like that affects you less now?

**MARCEL REED:** I don't think so. You know, we missed a touchdown. It happens. Now we've got to come back and do another play. Notre Dame, we had two penalties before fourth and 11 call. We had another play. We called another play, and we executed it. It's as simple as that.

When you have setbacks, you've just got to go to the next one.

**Q.** In the beginning of this season, a lot of people began to predict how A&M is going to turn out. They say 8-4. But how do you feel now that you're 4-0 in your whole season? You're now 1-0 in the SEC opener. And you're slowly moving up in the ranks in the SEC. What's a message that you want to give to the fans and people watching, as you've obviously come back better and stronger from last season? What do you want them to know coming on from last season moving forward?

**MARCEL REED:** Just stay with us. I mean, we're going to keep performing to the best of our ability. We're going to keep practicing to go out on Saturdays and have championship execution.

So if you want to be on our side, be on our side. If you don't, then don't.