

Auburn vs. Mississippi State
September 26, 2015 | Jordan-Hare Stadium

Auburn Head Coach Gus Malzahn

Opening Statement...

“First of all, the kids played extremely hard. The story of the game is we were in the red zone four times and we scored six points. One time we were down to the half-yard line and we snapped it and it went over the quarterback’s head. We had a very good first drive, and then he got down to third and three and threw the interception. That is the biggest factor in the game. Our defense fought. They did a good job against a very good quarterback, one of the better players in the entire country with a good offense. Our kids played their guts out. We have a new quarterback that started tonight. We thought he did a very good job for his very first time. He competed and fought. When we had to throw it, we didn’t protect him great, but he competed and did some good things. There are a lot of things we are going to build on, that’s what I told our team. They fought their guts out and they played extremely hard. We have a lot of things that we can build upon. We will get better.”

On the running game...

“I thought we ran the ball pretty efficiently. We are a run and play action team. One of the positives is that we got back to running the football. Like I said, the big thing, offensively, is that we had two times in the red zone and we didn’t get any points down there. That’s really the story of the game.”

On why Auburn didn’t take more shots down field...

“We did try a couple of times. We had a lot of different reads that had a deep component down the field. But if you will notice, most of the time those guys were playing 10 to 15 yards deep and back pedaling. So there were some times, towards the end where we had a couple and the protection broke down.”

On the frustration after the loss, but still improving in certain areas...

“I think you have two aspects of it. We did do a lot of things better. Our kids competed and they fought their butts off. We had a new starting quarterback. We made a few mistakes right there, but he competed. I will tell you, this team is going to get better and they are going to fight and that’s the positive. They don’t feel very good right now, obviously. Like I said, we had some opportunities and we didn’t get it done. They were a good team, but we had opportunities. Our defense gave the offense the ball in the second half numerous times where we needed to respond and didn’t, or couldn’t. There are a lot of good things we can build upon.”

On the assessment of Sean White at quarterback...

“Overall I thought he did a solid job for his first college experience, period. He did some good things and he made a mistake or two. We thought he would make a mistake or two. Anytime you’re playing an SEC opponent, especially in the West, and you’ve got a guy making his first start, there are going to be some mistakes. But, I think everyone saw that he competed. He did some good stuff and he’s a competitor.”

On the offensive line play...

“Anytime you have to throw the ball late, they did some good things. They are some good defensive lineman. We had to throw the football and they knew it and they got through a couple of times.

On what he told Sean White after the interception on Auburn's first drive...

"He knew that he made a mistake and he felt bad about it. That was his first start and, to be honest with you, I said 'Keep your head up and keep going with it.' He responded well after that and he's capable of being a good quarterback."

On the difference in the first and second half for the defense...

"The defensive staff kind of figured out what they were playing. They were having trouble running the football and they were really committed to throwing the football. The defense did a great job on third downs in the second half. I'm not going to say that was the big thing. They gave the offense some chances in the second half."

On if Sean White performed well enough to continue to start next week...

"We take each game week-to-week, but he competed and I thought he did some very good things."

On change of offensive tempo...

"You saw tonight we had our pace and then slowed some things down. We had different tempos tonight, and like I said, I go back had two opportunities in the red zone got zero points. We had four opportunities and six points."

On Jeremy Johnson playing more in first half...

"There are a couple packages and a couple plays he was more familiar with than Sean, and that was our plan. There was one play that he was fixing to do, and then they called timeout."

On disappointment of being 2-2...

"We should be disappointed, but we're going to get better. Everybody kind of sees these preseason rankings and all that. It doesn't mean anything until about halfway through. You can see we got a bunch of young guys, a bunch of inexperienced guys, and we got a chance to grow, and that's what we are doing. We're going to take this thing one game at a time, and we are going to get better, I promise you that. We will see what happens. We got beat tonight and we don't feel great, but our kids competed, and from a coaches' standpoint we know we can get better."

On being 0-6 in last six SEC games...

"I just think about right now and our team right now and what we need to do to get better, and we will turn it around."