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Frank Fortune

Game Recap: Football | 10/23/2016 12:08:00 AM | Marc Gignac

Georgia Southern Football Holds off New Mexico State 22-19

The Eagles play host to longtime rival App State Thursday in Paulson Stadium.

LAS CRUCES, N.M. – [Kevin Ellison](#) rushed for 117 yards and threw for 101, and the Georgia Southern defense and special teams forced three turnovers and blocked a punt as the Eagles topped New Mexico State 22-19 in sun Belt Conference football action Saturday night at Aggie Memorial Stadium.

Ellison carried the ball 20 times and completed seven of eight passes with two going for touchdowns. [Wesley Fields](#) ran 12 times for 88 yards and caught a 42-yard touchdown pass, and [Keigan Williams](#) had two receptions for 42 yards for Georgia Southern (4-3, 3-1).

Tyler Rogers completed 22 passes for 250 yards and two touchdowns and rushed 13 times for 56 yards for New Mexico State (2-5, 1-3). Larry Rose III rushed 22 times for 81 yards and Gregory Hogan had five receptions for 52 yards.

With the Eagles leading 22-12, Rogers connected with Johnathan Boone for a 32-yard touchdown pass, and Parker Davidson hit the extra point to trim the margin to three points with 1:19 to play. The Aggies had just one timeout left and had to try an onside kick, but [Malik Henry](#) scooped up the bouncing ball to seal the victory for GS.

[Chris DeLaRosa](#) had 10 tackles, including two for loss, to lead the Eagles and [Ukeme Eligwe](#) had nine stops and a tackle for loss. [Younghoe Koo](#) finished the night with three field goals.

The story

With the Eagles trailing 12-6, Georgia Southern's defense and special teams changed the contest by giving the Eagles three straight possessions inside the Aggie 40-yard line, starting late in the third quarter.

The first turnover came when [Jamal Johnson](#) forced a fumble that [Jessie Liptrot](#) recovered at the Aggie 40-yard line. GS went with a steady mix of Ellison and Fields runs to move the ball deep into Aggie territory but had to settle for a 29-yard field goal by Koo.

The Eagles tried a surprise onside kick on the ensuing kickoff and recovered it but were flagged for offside to nullify the play. On the re-kick, Hogan let the ball bounce in front of him and kicked it free while trying to scoop it up, and [Chaz Thornton](#) provided excellent coverage and beat Hogan to the ball for the recovery at the 13-yard line.

Ellison hit [Matt Breida](#) with a swing pass on the right side on third-and-6, and Breida found paydirt on the nine-yard touchdown pass. Koo missed the point after, his first miss of the season on PATs or field-goal attempts, and the Eagles led 15-12 early in the fourth.

The Eagle defense forced a punt, and Jacory Belvin came free up the middle and blocked it with his left hand, giving GS the ball at the NMSU 40-yard line. Ellison hit a wide open Fields on a screen pass, and the sophomore sprinted down the left sideline for a 42-yard touchdown. Koo added the PAT, and the Eagles led 22-12 with 10:21 left in the game.

New Mexico State moved the ball inside the GS 30-yard line, but [Joshua Moon](#) picked off Rogers at the 12-yard line to end the threat with six minutes to go. Georgia Southern picked up two first downs on the ensuing drive to milk 4:06 off the clock before turning it over on downs.

The Eagle defense came up big after a GS turnover midway through the third quarter. Noah Brown strip sacked Ellison from behind, and Kourtland Busby scooped up the ball and ran 16 yards to the Eagle 17-yard line. The GS defense forced a three-and-out, and Davidson's 34-yard field goal try went wide left to keep it a one-possession game.

Georgia Southern moved the ball into the Red Zone on its first three possessions of the game but came away with just six points on a pair of Koo field goals. New Mexico State forced three turnovers in the game but did not score any points off of the miscues. The Eagles forced three and scored nine points and added seven off the blocked punt.

Quotables

Head coach Tyson Summers

On the start

"On our first three drives, we got a lot of yards but didn't get a lot of points and let them hang around instead of getting off to a faster start."

On the fumble recovery off the kickoff

"Special teams continue to be big for us. We were flying, really flying down the field and wind up getting it, and we were able to convert."

On the defense

"We made some adjustments with the D-line at halftime, and they were able to create plays behind the line of scrimmage. We took their run game out and forced them to be one-handed. We didn't tackle well in the first half but did a much better job in the second half."

On the onside kick that was flagged

"We continue to shoot ourselves in the foot with penalties, and I am as frustrated as I can possibly be about it. They come at key times, and we don't do them small. We have to cut those things out."

Junior linebacker Chris DeLaRosa

"Every game we go into, we expect to win so obviously, it's been frustrating the last three weeks. It feels so great to get the win tonight."

Senior quarterback Kevin Ellison on the screen pass to Fields

"We work it every single day in practice, and I was wondering when we were going to run it in a game. Wes (Fields) did a great job of chipping the linebacker so he didn't kill me and getting to space, and our offensive line did a great job of giving him room."

Game Notes

- Captains: #5 Darius Jones Jr., #27 Ironhead Gallon, #36 Matt Breida, #60 Andy Kwon

- Georgia Southern won the toss and took the ball. It's the sixth time GS has won the coin toss this year.

- With his three field goals in the game, Younghoe Koo has now made all 12 of his field goal attempts this season. His 13 straight field goals set a new school record for the most consecutive field goals made in a season. Tim Foley made 12 straight in the 1985 season. Foley holds the school record for most consecutive field goals at 19 set during the 1995-96 seasons (last 12 of 1995, first seven of 1996).

- [Jacorey Belvin](#) recorded his first career blocked punt in the fourth quarter. It led to [Wesley Fields](#)' third touchdown reception of the season, and the fourth of his career.
- [Kevin Ellison](#) rushed for 117 yards in the game. It was just the third 100-yard rushing game for the Eagles this season, and one of other ones also came from a quarterback ([Favian Upshaw](#), 1-8 at South Alabama).
- [Seth Shuman](#) saw his first collegiate action, becoming the eighth true freshman to play this season.
- [Joshua Moon](#) recorded his second collegiate interception in the fourth quarter.
- [Kevin Ellison](#) has topped 100 yards in each of his three career games against New Mexico, ncluding a 159-yard rushing game in Las Cruces in 2014 and a 117-yard game Saturday night.

Next up

Georgia Southern plays host to longtime rival Appalachian State Thursday at 7:30 p.m. on ESPNU. It's a Blue Out, and Eagle fans are encouraged to wear blue to Paulson Stadium.

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