



# ARKANSAS

VS TEXAS A&M



34

SEPTEMBER 30, 2023

AT&T STADIUM

22

## GAME NOTES

- » QB KJ Jefferson broke two program records - career touchdown responsibility (78 - 58 passing , 20 rushing) and most total yards.
- » QB KJ Jefferson has thrown for at least one touchdown in 16 consecutive games under center. His 58 career passing touchdowns rank third in school history. Jefferson finished 9-for-17 with 132 yards and one score.
- » OL Devon Manuel made his first career start at left tackle.
- » RB Raheim Sanders caught a season-long 38-yard pass from KJ Jefferson in the first quarter. Sanders finished with two receptions for 36 yards and had 11 carries for 34 yards.
- » WR Andrew Armstrong hauled in a season-long 48-yard receiving touchdown in the fourth quarter from QB KJ Jefferson.
- » WR Isaiah Sategna had a career long 39-yard kickoff return. Sategna finished with 87 all-purpose yards (82 KO return, three PR).
- » K Cam Little's 52-yard field goal is the longest in Southwest Classic history and tied for sixth-longest in AT&T history. His three field goals tie for most in a Southwest Classic game.
- » K Cam Little is the first Arkansas player to make two field goals of 50+ yards in a single game since Steve Little vs. Oklahoma State in 1976 (53 & 57).
- » P Max Fletcher's 64-yard punt is the second-longest in a Southwest Classic game. Fletcher booted six punts for 328 yards (54.7 average) with four 50+ yard punts.
- » LB Chris Paul Jr. finished as the Hogs' leading tackler, carding nine stops (seven solo), including one tackle for loss.
- » DB Lorando Johnson recorded his first career interception - a 20-yard pick-six to start the third quarter. It's Arkansas' third pick-six of the season.
- » LB Jordan Crook tallied his first career forced fumble. Crook also totaled a season high five tackles (two solo).
- » Since the start of the 2020 campaign, Sam Pittman's first season as head coach, the Arkansas defense has totaled 42 interceptions in 41 games.

## WEATHER



INDOOR

## GAME INFO

### CAPTAINS

Brady Latham, Cam Little, KJ Jefferson, Raheim Sanders

### COIN TOSS

Texas A&M won the toss and deferred to the second half.

### UNIFORMS

ARK - White Helmet, Red Jersey, White Pants  
TAMU - Maroon Helmet, White Jersey, White Pants

### ATTENDANCE

59,437

## ARK SCORING

FIELD GOAL | 1Q | 8:15

Cam Little 52-yard field goal.

FIELD GOAL | 2Q | 13:00

Cam Little 25-yard field goal.

INTERCEPTION | 3Q | 14:54

Lorando Johnson 20-yard interception return.

FIELD GOAL | 3Q | 7:58

Cam Little 50-yard field goal.

TOUCHDOWN | 4Q | 3:53

KJ Jefferson pass complete to Andrew Armstrong for 48 yards.

## STARTERS

### ARKANSAS

QB KJ JEFFERSON  
 RB RAHEIM SANDERS  
 WR ANDREW ARMSTRONG  
 WR ISAAC TESLAA  
 TE NATHAN BAX  
 TE LUKE HASZ  
 LT DEVON MANUEL  
 LG BRADY LATHAM  
 C BEAUX LIMMER  
 RG JOSH BRAUN  
 RT PATRICK KUTAS

### TEXAS A&M

DE LANDON JACKSON	QB MAX JOHNSON	DL WALTER NOLEN
DT CAM BALL	RB AMARI DANIELS	DL MCKINNLEY JACKSON
DT ERIC GREGORY	WR EVAN STEWART	DL SHEMAR TURNER
DE TRAJAN JEFFCOAT	WR AINIAS SMITH	LB TAUREAN YORK
LB JAHEIM THOMAS	WR MOOSE MUHAMMAD III	LB EDGERRIN COOPER
LB CHRIS PAUL JR.	TE MAX WRIGHT	DB BRYCE ANDERSON
CB DWIGHT MCGLOTHERN	OL MARK NABOU JR.	DB JACOBY MATHEWS
S HUDSON CLARK	OL TREY ZUHN III	DB TYREEK CHAPPELL
S JAYDEN JOHNSON	OL BRYCE FOSTER	DB DEMANI RICHARDSON
CB MALIK CHAVIS	OL LAYDEN ROBINSON	DB JOSH DEBERRY
NB LORANDO JOHNSON	OL CHASE BISONTIS	



## Arkansas Postgame Quotes Head Coach Sam Pittman



Texas A&M vs Arkansas  
Saturday, September 30, 2023  
AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas

**COACH SAM PITMAN:** I want to congratulate Texas A&M. They were very prepared, very physical team today. Ran the ball well, threw it well. Played great defense. Put a lot of pressure on us. And give them credit. They were very physical.

Our team is a little beat up. We've got a few injuries. I appreciate the effort, the fight that we had throughout the entire game. I thought when Snaxx (Lorando Johnson) picked the pass, that that would springboard us, but we just couldn't get anything done in the red area. And really in the second half, offensively, couldn't get a first down.

So give A&M the credit. We've got a lot of work to do. But I like our kids. I think they'll come back and fight. But wasn't a good outing today.

**Q. Coach, you had another fourth down decision there late in the first half. You had the punt team out there, called a time out. What went into the decision to go for it there?**

**COACH PITTMAN:** Well, it was six inches. Sometimes you make decisions on how everything's kind of feeling during the game and things of that nature, and we hadn't stopped them. They had missed a field goal, but we hadn't stopped them. No matter where the starting point was, we had three time-outs left. I thought if we make the first down right there, that we could go down and either cut the lead to 1 or take the lead.

And we missed the cutoff on the back side and Rocket (Raheim Sanders) got hit on it. And then we had them third and 12, you know, right after that. And I'm thinking, okay, we're going to be fine. And they were almost out of field goal range, all those things. And they get a first down and score with 12 seconds left -- the worst thing could have happened off of certainly missing a fourth and inches.

But that was the thought going into it. We hadn't been able to stop them and I thought, you know, we might could take the lead knowing they had the ball back as well.

I know there's a risk, too, if you don't make it because you're sitting there at the 40. I just felt very confident about our short yardage. We had a really nice game plan. I thought we'd make it. We just didn't.

*Quotes provided by Caption Pros – (480) 419-3809*  
[www.captionpros.net](http://www.captionpros.net)



***Q. Is there a schematic or strategic reason for KJ [Jefferson] not being under center on those plays?***

**COACH PITTMAN:** No, not really. I mean, once he gets under center, you know, the front on the defense is certainly going to change. Not really. We just felt -- honestly, if we felt better about him sneaking, you know, we would do that. But no, not -- just as fact that they're going to have five guys within the A and B gap.

This week, I felt really good that we were going to get the first down. I mean, we looked good in practice and this, that, and the other. But just didn't happen.

***Q. So you started out pretty good on offense, two field goal drives. But then something happened on third down conversions. What led to lack of push, lack of pass protection today?***

**COACH PITTMAN:** I think though, when you look at it, we weren't any good when we went and got field goals. We were converting third and 12 and third and 8, you know what I mean? We had two ugly plays and a first down. Two ugly plays and a first down.

So we never were really in any kind of rhythm. If we got four yards running on first down, that was like really, really good.

I think what happened is we quit converting those third downs. Because I think we converted our first three in a row, and then after that we went on a dry spell. I'm not for sure if we didn't convert maybe two more the entire game, you know what I mean? But most of them, besides the fourth and 1, most of them were lengthy in yards, 6 plus. Either we couldn't protect it, we couldn't get open, or we couldn't catch it if we got open. There wasn't many of those.

So physically, they dominated us on the edge. They did exactly what we thought they would do, exactly. And they were very aggressive. But we just never had really an explosive play until the game was really over. And that was on the last catch for a touchdown.

***Q. It looks like you put together a really good roster, but you're just having so much trouble protecting KJ [Jefferson]. Why do you think that's been such an issue through all these games?***

**COACH PITTMAN:** I think part of it is, you know, we're playing pretty good defensive ends, but you're going to play them every week, you know? They've got good ones. Part of it is we're young. We got a lot of learning curve to do.

We do have, in my opinion, the best tackles we have out there, you know what I mean? And to be honest with you, sometimes two of them were on a seven-man protection

## 2023 Southwest Classic

### Arkansas Head Coach Postgame Quotes

Page 3

---

where we're using the backs and tight ends, and they were busting it. They busted it twice and got to us on that.

Sometimes we're holding the ball too long and sometimes there's no time to hold the ball. You're on your back. So I think we have really a lot of good on good reps during the week, which makes us strain and things of that nature. But if I knew the answer to how we could protect him better, you know, obviously last week we tried to move a little bit more, roll a little bit. We had success with those. They were five and six yards. They weren't 60, but they were success.

We tried to make it and boot, tried it on the first or second play of the game. They had a blitz into it. I don't know if we got sacked on that or he got back to the line of scrimmage. It seems like the times we were trying to get the movement, the protection outside, get it away from having just go win one on one, they blitzed into it.

So got a lot of work to do. But I still think we've got a good enough offensive line to protect him, I do. We're just not doing it right now. Somebody -- it's not five of them, it's somebody. And as you well know, if one of them has trouble, you're in trouble. We're just not as consistent as what we have been in the past.

***Q. Were you pleased with the offensive strategy and play calling today? Or is it just you can't protect so it's helpless, I guess?***

**COACH PITTMAN:** No, I don't think so. I mean, we tried to run stretch, we tried to run inside. We tried to run some counter-type situations. On our first stretch play, we threw the ball out to the bubble and it was a mile-wide open hole, and we just, you know -- we threw it outside to the bubble. And got no yards on the play.

That's a little bit part of the RPO thing is I wish he had gave it at that point. You can't do that. You have to go off of reads and things of that nature.

To try to answer your question, we tried everything that we had practiced that we thought would work and it didn't.

***Q. How's the status of the young man who was injured (John Morgan)? Do you have any word on him?***

**COACH PITTMAN:** John Morgan. He had movement everywhere. He was -- good spirits isn't the word but he was communicative. He visited with me. Said "Coach, I'm fine." But he did have some soreness in his neck. So they took the precautionary, which they should,

## 2023 Southwest Classic

### Arkansas Head Coach Postgame Quotes

Page 4

---

and they're good at what they do and they took care of him. But he had movement everywhere and he's at the doctor.

Luke Hasz broke his clavicle on that first or second play of the game. Moody (Davion Dozier) got a concussion. I think there was one more. I can't remember right now. Who? Yeah, [Dwight] McGlothern got a concussion.

***Q. You've been coaching a long time. Seven sacks, 15 tackles for loss. Can you ever recall a time --***

**COACH PITTMAN:** Oh, man, let me think. Oh, I'm sure when I was a line coach, somebody dominated me like that. But if it was, I've tried to forget about it, you know? Oh, hell, you don't have many games like that ever. So I'm sure I did.

When I was at Missouri, I think we played Colorado or something, they sacked us like a gazillion times. But I can't -- it might have been Colorado. I don't remember.

***Q. Is that a season-ending deal for Luke [Hasz]?***

**COACH PITTMAN:** I would assume so. I had a running back when I was coaching at Trenton High School that got it in the first game and he came back for the last two or three in a ten-game season. I don't know. If anybody can come back faster, it will be him. But now we're sitting in week 5 with one bye, 8 weeks. If we're fortunate enough to get bowl-eligible, he might could be back for that maybe.

***Q. What did you think of the [Texas] A&M offense for the game? I know you guys forced some turnovers, which was good. What did you think of the game Bobby [Petrino] called and just what did you think of their offense overall today?***

**COACH PITTMAN:** I think they can run the football. Quarterback is a good player (Max Johnson). He made a mistake there on the bubble where Snaxx (Lorando Johnson) got it. He's played a lot of football. He's one that we lost to last year.

But I think he took whatever we were giving him and did a nice job. We made some adjustments at halftime. I thought we were pretty good -- we played a little better ball in the second half on defense. But we basically didn't stop him on the first half. maybe out of four times, he scored three of the four. Missed a field goal. So his game plan was really good.

***Q. Coach, so all offseason, you guys preached physicality and finishing. Through five games in season, how would you assess the team's physicality level?***

*Quotes provided by Caption Pros – (480) 419-3809*

[www.captionpros.net](http://www.captionpros.net)



## 2023 Southwest Classic

### Arkansas Head Coach Postgame Quotes

Page 5

---

**COACH PITTMAN:** Certainly not what we want it to be. Probably didn't look very good today. I would say last week, better than today. And I'd say the week before, not very good. Probably the week before that, not very good. The first game, how do you know? I mean, we scored so much, so fast. So to answer your question, probably not very good -- which you knew the answer to that question, I think.

***Q. Coach, when you lose [Luke] Hasz so early in the game, how much does that change the offensive game plan?***

**COACH PITTMAN:** I don't know. I mean, man, he's so valuable. I did not mean that negative. I did not. I didn't. It was an easy question to answer.

He's so valuable to us. You go back to LSU and take him out of there and what's it look like? About like that, you know. Not like that, but I'm talking about the big plays that he brings to us. Isn't that crazy, he's freshman, too, and you're talking about him. But we've got other guys that need to step up and have their opportunities. But losing him was a big blow to us offensively.

***Q. [Isaac] TeSlaa, I think he had maybe one catch for no yards today. How do you maybe get him unlocked a little bit? And with the tight ends still, who do you try to get going?***

**COACH PITTMAN:** We played [Var'keyes] Gumms, and obviously, we've got four over there. And we were relying heavily on [Luke] Hasz. And 30 (Var'keyes Gumms) was the guy kind of backing him up. So that's probably where we're going to go. We may try to get Ty Washington cranked up a little bit more.

Your second question, that's one we got to figure out, too, because he's a really good receiver, I think. But guys, it's hard to throw a football when you're on your back, I mean, or you're scrambling. So he might have been open a few times and just didn't have enough time to get him the ball, you know what I'm saying?

So we know who he is and we know that we need to get him the football. Obviously didn't do a very good job of it tonight and there's probably some sort of reason. Either he couldn't get open or we didn't have enough time to get him the football.

***Q. Coach, after three straight losses, you mentioned being on your back and stuff a lot. Is it time to reevaluate what you're doing offensively? Or is it just keep practicing what we're doing and --***

**COACH PITTMAN:** I mean, you always evaluate what you're doing, you know? And the thing that is bothersome, because sometimes you go play somebody and they're doing

*Quotes provided by Caption Pros – (480) 419-3809*

[www.captionpros.net](http://www.captionpros.net)



something that you didn't practice, you know what I mean? They're putting this spy or whatever it may be; line movement that you didn't practice. What's bothersome about it is we practiced it and what they gave us was we practiced it.

And so, I don't think we have too much offense in or anything of that nature. I just -- I don't know that you or I could say we'd do this, this, and this well. And so I think we thought the stretch play was going to help us, and we didn't do it very good, either.

So maybe it is cutting something back and just saying, okay, we'll run four plays and that's it. But whatever it is, didn't work at all tonight. And it's a legit question.

***Q. Heading into the Ole Miss game, what's your biggest obstacle with this team? I mean, after three losses, it can weigh on your psyche getting them back to focusing in on this game. What's the challenge there?***

**COACH PITTMAN:** Yeah, I like the team, I do. Unfortunately or fortunately, you guys are not able to be in the locker room after the game, you know what I mean? So you don't really know what's in there. I like our kids. I think we still have the team. I think they're fighting. We've got to coach better. In some areas, they have to play better.

But I like the attitude of the team. It hurts them when they lose. So I didn't think we didn't fight today. I thought we got our -- we got whipped. Offensively especially. But I don't think we didn't fight, you know what I mean? And so, when you lose the fight is when you're done. I don't feel that way at all really, to be honest with you.

***Q. Eventful day on special teams. What did you think of that unit's performance?***

**COACH PITTMAN:** I thought we played pretty well until the punt return, you know? Made our field goals and kicked the ball well, punted well. Ainius Smith had to return for a touchdown and kind of sealed what was already -- I mean, the game, the way we were playing offensively, it would be hard for anybody to think we were going to get back in it. But that punt return sealed everything, you know.

Other than that, I thought we played pretty good. You can't take those away, you know what I mean? You can't take the fourth and 1 away. You can't take third and 12 away. You can't take them away. So as a unit, we gave up a touchdown return on a punt. But I thought every other player of the special teams unit was really good. He had two good punt returns, though, I guess.



## 2023 Southwest Classic

Arkansas Head Coach Postgame Quotes

Page 7

---

***Q. People looking at the score might think the defense didn't have a very good game, but they really only gave 20 points and got you 10 What did you think of the defense? And following up, I get the team is still fighting. But man, it's been a tough three losses to pretty good teams and now you have to play Ole Miss in Alabama. On paper it looks like a tough road to hoe.***

**COACH PITTMAN:** Yeah, we've known that for a long time. Every time you go out there there's always a chance you're not going to win, you know what I mean? So you're going, man, Lord, please let us win. But the bottom line is, if you don't, what do you do?

Only way I know how to do it and you have to go back and you have to fight. I mean, you've got to evaluate what's wrong and try to fix it or throw it out and do something else.

But I like our team and I think they'll continue to fight. I think our coaches will. Defensively, I didn't think we played well at all in the first half, and I thought we played well in the second half, a lot better, against what I think is a good offense.

I thought we had too many wide-open guys in the first half and too many long conversions on third down that I didn't think we needed to get that. But I thought we really played a lot better second half.

***Q. I don't feel like we've talked about the defense. You've got three turnovers today. No penalties today. How do you think your defense played? I feel like they're getting better and better each game.***

**COACH PITTMAN:** I do, too. They're playing more guys. They had different packages for different personnel. But Snaxx (Lorando Johnson) picking that pass and scoring, then we come back and we get an opportunity -- I mean, get a fumble on the 30-freaking 7 or 8. And we kick a field goal, you know?

Same thing, when I went for it on fourth and 1, that was on the 40 and they go score on us. You know, it's just, we didn't take advantage of it. They did.

But they're playing hard. I don't know what happened to Landon Jackson either. I think he turned an ankle. Those guys got 'em motivated and they are playing hard and starting to play smarter and starting to cover better.





## Arkansas Postgame Quotes Student-Athletes

Texas A&M vs Arkansas  
Saturday, September 30, 2023  
AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas



***Q. KJ, in the second half, there was a period of time where every dropback, it looked like you had pressure. Maybe what led to the pressure that you got and what were y'all not doing right against the pressure?***

**QB KJ JEFFERSON:** It started with communication. Everybody being on the same page, O-line, tight ends, running back, including myself to be able to transfer protection or know where the pressure is coming from. Make sure everyone is on the same page. That's what it boils down to, just communication up front.

***Q. Last weekend and again today, low red zone. Had trouble punching it into the end zone. Can you put your finger on one that's going wrong down there when you get close to the end zone?***

**QB KJ JEFFERSON:** I've got to go back and watch the film, but from my point of view, it will always be execution. We get in those situations, we have to come away with touchdowns in those situations. Those touchdowns lead to more touchdowns and building our confidence when we do get in the low red zone.

Moving forward, that will be a big point of emphasis that we have to focus on when we get into those situations and those scenarios, that we have to come away with points rather than just kicking field goals.

***Q. What did you see on the fourth and short play? And are you comfortable if they ask you to get under center to take the snap?***

**QB KJ JEFFERSON:** Of course I'm comfortable with taking the snap under center. We work it. We practice it all week. So I'm comfortable under center.

As far as the fourth and short, I mean, like I said, we've got to execute. We know it's 1 yard we've got to get, a game of inches. We know we've got to come away with those. In those situations, we've got to be able to strain and be tough and be willing to get the first down.

***Q. I know it wasn't the result you want, but how good is it to be back? Did you feel like you had to knock some rough stuff?***

## 2023 Southwest Classic

Arkansas Student-Athletes Postgame Quotes

Page 2

---

**RB RAHEIM SANDERS:** It's definitely great to be back with my teammates and back on the field. But at the same time, we just took the L, just waiting until this week to prepare for Ole Miss. But it's not just about me. I'm glad to be back. But glad to be back with the teammates as well.

**Q. It's hard to throw the ball when you're on your back. Seven sacks. And I know you're a tough guy to bring down, so other quarterbacks might have been sacked more than that. How tough is that?**

**QB KJ JEFFERSON:** Pretty frustrating. It starts with communication up front, with everybody knowing what's going on, who they're pointing to. where the pressure is coming from. It starts up front with communication.

It's pretty frustrating at times where you're getting sacked and things and you have a big play, got guys running wide open down the field and can't get the ball to them. It's pretty frustrating. Like Raheim [Sanders] said, put our head down and get back to work and take it one day at a time.

**Q. Landon and Hudson, you guys did a solid job. You created points with turnovers and only really gave up 20 points. What did you think of Bobby Petrino? What did you think of the Aggies offense and how they executed?**

**DL LANDON JACKSON:** I think they have a talented offense. I think Max Johnson is a really talented quarterback. Then we have to come out and play a lot better in the first half. I think we came out the second half and played really well. But we've got to play a complete game.

**DB HUDSON CLARK:** Yeah, I'd say the same thing. We have to play better in the first half. He came out firing on all cylinders, him and all the receivers. So just try to play the first half like we played the second half.

**Q. Hudson, you have a lot of success in this building in your high school days. Is it frustrating not to be able to have that success here in your college days?**

**DB HUDSON CLARK:** It's frustrating any time you take a loss. We have to take that and take it to heart and see how we're feeling right now and try to not have the same feeling next week.

**Q. Landon and Hudson, what were your thoughts on Max Johnson? Seems like he gave them a little more than game manager type stuff and made some plays. Just what made him tough today?**

## 2023 Southwest Classic

### Arkansas Student-Athletes Postgame Quotes

Page 3

---

**DL LANDON JACKSON:** I think he's able to just read the field really well. He knows when it's time to get out of the pocket. When he does, he can move a lot better than we initially thought. He's great on his feet. He made some great throws tonight and I think he's overall a really good quarterback.

**DB HUDSON CLARK:** He put balls in great places and he extended plays with his feet. I think he had a really complete game.

***Q. Sam Pittman told us that when you lose the fight in your team, then you've lost your team. He said the team is still fighting. Could maybe y'all go through and talk about what you see in the locker room in terms of will there be a bounceback? How deflating, maybe, is it where you are with two road games left?***

**RB RAHEIM SANDERS:** Really, I think what's going to keep us together is the guy that's not playing at the moment and realize they're still here for us. Putting the word in, and just no negativity on the outside of it. So really, the guy that's not playing and not getting that much reps and just on special teams at the moment, just put in a word for both sides of the ball and have that tendency on both sides of the ball. I feel like that's going to take us to the next level and make us stay together.

***Q. Any other thoughts?***

**DL LANDON JACKSON:** We've got a team of workers. Everybody is ready to get back to work on Monday. I've always been taught not to look in the past. Once the game is over, it's over. It sucks you lost. But you can't get down about one loss and it turns into losses the rest of the season. So I think our team is going to do a really great job of staying together, and we're going to go to Ole Miss and play a great football game next week.

***Q. This is a question for the defense. What did it mean for you guys to see A&M go for it on the final few seconds of the fourth quarter and then make a stand and hold them at the goal line?***

**DL LANDON JACKSON:** I think their coaches were confident in their offense, but I think that showed a lot for our defense that we're not just going to bend over and give it to them because they're up and the game is over. So we made the stop. And that just shows -- I guess their coach was really confident in their offense.

***Q. For the defense, it seems like every week, y'all are kind of put in one kind of pickle, a short field situation. How do y'all keep your spirits up and keep that same mentality when every week it seems to be happening?***

**DL LANDON JACKSON:** Man, we work it in practice. We've got to be able to -- I mean, stop them. We can't let them score. I mean, we have to at least be able to hold them to a field goal whenever the ball is in the red zone. There's no reason we should let them in and score. That was completely on the defense going into the half when they got the ball right there, and we've just got to play better defense in situations like that.

**DB HUDSON CLARK:** Yeah, I think whenever we get put in those situations, we have to have the mindset that we do in any area of the field that we're not going to bow down to them.

***Q. For the, Landon and Hudson, you guys have preached all off season, really the whole team, about physicality. Through five games obviously physicality might not be where you want it to be. How can you use that for the next couple of weeks and improve the physicality on both the offense and the defensive side of the ball?***

**DL LANDON JACKSON:** It starts with practice. We have to bring it more in practice and come Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, we have to have really physical football practices to get to the level we want to be at on Saturdays.

***Q. When you lost Luke [Hasz] on the first series of the game, what did you lose there and maybe what do you think of the tight ends coming up behind him?***

**QB KJ JEFFERSON:** I think the tight ends stepped up big-time. I think they were ready for their opportunity when it presented itself. I felt they were well prepared. Losing Luke, you are losing a guy that is willing to sacrifice a lot. Versatile guy, block, catch, run. So you're losing a guy that's pretty valuable to the offense of the team as well. So it was pretty frustrating, but I feel like he'll be back stronger than ever now.

***Q. Sam [Pittman] says you're the leader of the entire team. What's your take with where you are with two tough road games right ahead of you?***

## 2023 Southwest Classic

### Arkansas Student-Athletes Postgame Quotes

Page 5

---

**QB KJ JEFFERSON:** We're going to take them one day at a time. I feel like, like you said, the team ain't separating, we're not dividing at all. I feel like we're just coming together stronger. We're in an adverse situation right now, so I mean, as a fighter with your back against the wall, you're going to come out swinging. That's the mentality we have got right now. We have our back against the wall and we're going to take it one day at a time and keep working.

**Q. It's obviously a real scary deal with John Morgan. Sam [Pittman] gave what sounded like a pretty encouraging report that he's going to be okay, thankfully. I saw the whole team run out there and kind of get around the cart. What was that moment like for you guys? How scary was that and I guess how big a relief? Maybe KJ and Landon, you can take it, maybe Rocket (Raheim Sanders) if you want to say something.**

**QB KJ JEFFERSON:** Just shows that we're here for each other. It's bigger than football, when it comes down to something like that happening on the field. So it's -- at that point, we're not thinking about football a lot. We're thinking about, that's our brother out there lying down like that. You know what I'm saying? In a situation that he couldn't control at this moment in time. So we all just ran out there to make sure we give good -- great energy, encouraging words, praying for him, and we just want to see him back healthy.

**DL LANDON JACKSON:** Man, he's our brother. We love him. I think that's the reason we all went over there. He's a great guy, and I mean, we'd do that for anybody on the team.

So Coach Pittman said he's doing pretty well. So I'm ready to see him next week and will be praying for him.

**RB RAHEIM SANDERS:** I wouldn't wish that on anybody, our team or a team we're playing against. Being our brother, like they said, just being with him 24/7, we be with each other more than the coaches be with us. At the end of the day, that's our brother, and like I said, I don't wish that on anybody else.

**Q. I know it's a tough loss and a tough day. You got asked earlier about the fourth down stop at the end. Landon and Hudson, I don't think you had a chance to answer that. Is that something you can carry over into next week? A little bit of momentum or anything, or maybe that's a dumb question, but I'll ask it anyway.**

## 2023 Southwest Classic

### Arkansas Student-Athletes Postgame Quotes

Page 6

---

**DL LANDON JACKSON:** Not at all. Coach T-Will (Travis Williams) talked to us after and he was like, man, it just shows you've got that fight in y'all. I think we do. So I think that will carry over in the practice next week and give us, I mean, kind of a positive ending. You know, obviously not a positive we lost, but last play of the game was in our favor. So I think it will be kind of good momentum going into next week.

**DB HUDSON CLARK:** I just think we fight until the clock hits 0, so I think it's a testament of the defense we can carry into next week.

**Q. KJ, I have two questions for you. First question, you guys are 4-5 on third down and then 0-9 the next time. What changed on those third down conversions that kind of slowed momentum there?**

**QB KJ JEFFERSON:** Like I said, communication. It starts in the front with communicating. Making sure the receivers know what's going on. Making sure the O-line knows what's going on. Everybody just knows what's going on, on the same page.

Going into it, that's going to be a big point of emphasis going into the next week. Just being able to keep the chains moving, not putting ourselves in third and long situations and being able to just punt the ball. So want to be able to understand on the field, offense on the field and stay ahead of the chains.

**Q. Speaking of next week, it's home for you, Oxford (Ole Miss). I know how emotional you were after that game two years ago. How big is this game for you heading into Oxford next week?**

**QB KJ JEFFERSON:** It really hasn't hit me yet. My main thing is being able to get back on track. Try to great back in the winning column. So my main thing is making sure I'm doing what I can with my teammates in the locker room, making sure I'm gelling everybody together, make sure I'm leading everybody the right way and we're going to see come Saturday.

**Q. Landon, Coach [Sam] Pittman told us you may have rolled your ankle today? How are you doing physically?**

**DL LANDON JACKSON:** I'm going great. It's a little sore. But I'll be full go come Monday. I'll get in for treatment tomorrow morning, but overall it's good.

## 2023 Southwest Classic

Arkansas Student-Athletes Postgame Quotes

Page 7

---

***Q. KJ, you mentioned that the up-front communication on the offense, is that a matter of grasping the offense still? You're still trying to get a hold of the offense, or what do you think is going on with the communication issues that you're mentioning?***

**QB KJ JEFFERSON:** I mean, it just -- the main thing is being able to just know where we're going to, who we're spotting the protection to, and making sure -- I mean, and allow a hostile environment.

I can say something to you, you might not hear me all the way. You might think I said this or that or so. Just making sure everybody is on the same page. When I said "communication," I meant when we're in a hostile environment, it's loud and being able to communicate and know Rocket (Raheim Sanders), what's going on, "Hey, go here." That's what I mean by "communication."





## Texas A&M Postgame Quotes Head Coach Jimbo Fisher



Texas A&M vs Arkansas  
Saturday, September 30, 2023  
AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas

**COACH JIMBO FISHER:** These games are never boring. Never are. And we find a way to make them interesting.

But proud of our guys. Come out with a victory. Thought defensively, we were outstanding. Seven sacks again, and I don't know how many tackles for loss. But Le'Veon [Moss] did a great job in scoring. He got seven points scoring.

The first two drives, I was very proud of, too. When Arkansas moved the football, had a good play coming in, we were making adjustments. But when it got to the red zone, we were able to toughen up and hold them to field goals. The difference in the first half was they had two field goals and we had two touchdowns and then we had another field goal.

But our defense being able to play really good red-zone defense. The fourth and 1 was critical. They got a big momentum swing. We were able to take it down and eat the clock and score a touchdown right before half, which was very good.

We were in really good shape, 17-6 at halftime. Felt very good, comfortable coming out. And then made a critical error right there and get the turnover and get the points.

I liked we were able to respond back and drive down. We didn't get a touchdown, but we got a field goal. Wish we could have got a touchdown there. Then went back and forth and had another fumble.

And the defense again played great red-zone defense and holding them to a field. I don't know if they made to it the red zone, but did a great job on sudden change of holding them to a field goal. They were outstanding in the game in what they did.

And then back and forth, moving it back and forth. And got to score on defense. Ainius [Smith] got the punt return. Great to see him come back. Again, he's our guy. He's our juice. He's our energy. He makes those plays and does that and was outstanding in the game from that regard.

Unfortunately, we missed a couple field goals too. We left some points on the board. We only punted twice in the game in the course of three turnovers. And then we would run the clock

*Quotes provided by Caption Pros – (480) 419-3809*

[www.captionpros.net](http://www.captionpros.net)



## 2023 Southwest Classic

Texas A&M Head Coach Postgame Quotes

Page 2

---

out and had a bad snap, which is -- can't happen either. And gave up a turnover. And gave up a touchdown. But we took the error out of it the right way and went back down and ate the clock and took the game away.

But it wasn't pretty. We're nowhere close to playing what we are capable of playing, in my opinion. But the guys played hard. They're physical. They're playing together. They're not hanging their head no matter what the circumstances are and they're playing the next series, whether it's offense, defense, special teams. And we will learn to get better. We need to get better quickly. We got a very good opponent next week in Alabama.

But we got to fix our problems, but very proud of our guys. And we'll celebrate the win and get ready to go tomorrow. Questions?

***Q. I think that's 14 sacks for you in the first two SEC games. What's been the difference for you there, the key to that?***

**COACH FISHER:** Again, technique. We're doing a good job. We're getting the right calls. TJ [Shanahan] is doing a good job of getting calls. He's mixing pressure with bluffs. But some of the bluffs are allowing you to get to the one-on-one matchups you want up front and able to do it.

And what I was proud of today, you got seven sacks and you rush these guys. He got out a couple times on runs. But, man, he kills you scrambling and dumping the ball off and making the big runs. And they did it with the integrity and the discipline to not let him out of the pocket. And did a really good job once they got their hands on him, because K.J. [Jefferson] is an extremely tough guy to get on the ground. And they got their hands on him and were able to get him on the ground.

So I think discipline and maturity of our guys and they're playing good football.

***Q. Couple things, Coach. You mentioned some of the things that didn't go well. With an impressive win like this, how much do those things that you didn't do well, how much does that bother you?***

**COACH FISHER:** Doesn't bother me because we're in this league. In this league, you can't give things away. You need -- we can play better and we do in spurts. We just can't give up the things that happened in that way. And there a lot of things you got to fix. And if you're going to play in the SEC and play consistent week in and week out -- Look, everybody has got good players. They're going to make enough plays on their own that you can't have the self-inflicted ones. And occasionally, you will have something but you can't have multiple. You know what I'm saying? And we have got to do a little bit better job and clean some of those things up.

***Quotes provided by Caption Pros – (480) 419-3809***

[www.captionpros.net](http://www.captionpros.net)



## 2023 Southwest Classic

Texas A&M Head Coach Postgame Quotes

Page 3

---

And same time, I still like the dynamic of our team. This team plays, it's responding to the next situation, and it's got a ton of room to get better.

***Q. And then your thoughts on just the game that Bobby [Petrino] called. And now that it's over, do you have any feeling it means anything more to him?***

**COACH FISHER:** No, I'm sure it does, I mean, playing there. But at the same time, you have to ask him that.

But I thought he called a great game. We had plays that we only punted twice in the game. I mean, we had the interception on the first drive and we had a fumble. But I thought Bobby [Petrino] called an excellent game. We mixed run. We had pass. We spread the ball around. We had different formation, personality. I think he's had a great year all year. I think he's doing a great job, called a hell of a game. We got to execute a little bit better, and we were. I thought we took the air out of it right there, about four or five minutes to go. I think we were doing it, and we got back in it, but then we were able to come back and do it. So I think he's doing a hell of a job.

***Q. Jimbo, can you talk more about the complimentary football, getting a special teams touchdown, a Pick 6 and everything in between?***

**COACH FISHER:** When your defense is pulling points, your special teams is pulling points and setting things up, if you are going to play, I would say this -- people say defense wins championships; offense sells tickets, but that's not true.

If you're a very good football team, all three phases have to be productive and consistently productive. And we've got returners who can do it when we get chances. Unfortunately, for [Randy] Bond today, he used the -- it'd have been money. He hit the upright and missed one. They were long field goals, but he's been great. Thought part of our game was good. I thought the two punts we had, I thought Nik [Constantinou] really hit the ball really well today and what we did. And then they would score on defense. And you have to do those things when you play good people. And that shows you the explosive of our defense too.

***Q. Follow up with Edgerrin [Cooper]. He's just been on fire these last couple of weeks. Just talk about the high level he's playing at.***

**COACH FISHER:** Well, he's seeing it. His eyes are in a good place. He's seeing it. His eye discipline and his eye control, being able to trigger and react. And then he's so athletic and can get to point A very quickly, and he's physical. And when the front guys are causing the chaos

***Quotes provided by Caption Pros – (480) 419-3809***

[www.captionpros.net](http://www.captionpros.net)



they are, a backer like him is his hard to get your hands on, and he makes a lot of plays.

***Q. You mentioned him a little bit in your opening statement. But did it feel like kind of a full-circle, rewarding moment for Ainias [Smith] on the same field that he got hurt on last year to have that kind of game?***

**COACH FISHER:** It really was. You have to ask him that. I'm sure he will tell you it was. It was for me. Happy to see him make those plays and do those things. He's our guy. He's our guy, and always has been our guy. And he does those things ever since he's been here.

***Q. Coach, back-to-back weeks, great performances from Le'Veon Moss. Where have you seen him start to hit his stride?***

**COACH FISHER:** He's seeing it. He's knowing it, and he's healthy. And our love our man. Amari [Daniels], playing well, and Reuben [Fatheree II] they're all outstanding backs, but Le'Veon [Moss] has a juice to him. He's a strength. He's a power. He's a very, very good football player. And I think as he has more success, his confidence is growing. You can see it. The game, like any guy, it's starting to slow down gradually, and he's making plays and doing it. And I'm glad to see it. He's a talented guy.

***Q. You look at today's passing attack, how deep down field it gets. Does it always kind of make you excited to see a fullback get in the end zone for a touchdown?***

**COACH FISHER:** Oh, yes. You got to distribute the ball. When people know those guys in the game aren't going to catch it or you have to defend, it makes it a problem. We're getting the ball to everybody. Bobby [Petrino] is doing a good job of spreading the ball around, our quarterbacks are too.

***Q. Coach, can you talk about getting the Pick 6 and just kind of the ball game you got from Chris [Russell] today, and how that ends uplifting up the entire bench?***

**COACH FISHER:** Well, they got the defensive score back that we gave away, you know what I'm saying? Which was huge in the game. And get that back -- it was 20-16. So you're one play from getting behind. You always say no matter how much you're controlling the play, that's one play, somebody slips, drops, whatever it is, and that happens. And him being able to score defense, got it back to an 11-point game, got it back to a two-score game. And finally we were able to get it to a three-score game. And Ainias [Smith] took it to a three-score game. Those two huge plays. And very happy for Chris [Russell] the success he's having.

***Q. Your short yardage defensive line today, excellent 3rd and 1, stopped them up front. I know it's physicalness, but what goes into that short yardage success?***

**COACH FISHER:** One, we got a great plan. D.J. [Durkin] has a good plan. He's using them well, and those guys understand leverage, hands, and power, and they're really good players. They are hard to move. We were physical up front. We need to be physical upfront. You got to be in this league. And that 4th and 1 and that stop, I totally understand why they went for it. They're right there at midfield, they get it, get momentum and can get down there and score. Because the score at that time was 10-6, you know what I'm saying. And we were able to get that stop and then got take the clock and get the points right before half were huge.

***Q. Saw you hugging up there with Jerry [Jones] at the end. Just talk about what it's meant to play in this venue. We don't know what the future holds, but just talk about this neutral site.***

**COACH FISHER:** I love the game here. I really do. And I understand why we're taking it back to home and home and all that stuff. I love the game being here, because I think it sets up like a play bowl game, like a playoff game, and the kids in this state have grown up loving and playing in Jerry's [Jones] world (AT&T Stadium). They wanted to play here.

And you know, our fans up in this part of the state, it's an easier -- and we got a lot of kids we're recruiting up here. I love it. And I appreciate Jerry, and everything Jerry does is first class, and the way he's treated us great. And I have a lot of respect for him, and what he's done as an owner and what he does for the Cowboys and everything in football. Very blessed that he's helped us. Jerry's a good guy.

***Q. How do you assess the play of Max Johnson because he's going to be the guy the rest of the way?***

**COACH FISHER:** I think he played an excellent first half. He had one mistake the first drive out. Made a mistake. And then he makes another great play. What I think happened, I think he had that ball tucked in the right arm. And he made a great run. I mean, picked up a first down, and just happened to fumble the ball and we had to take care of it. Other than that, I thought he did a really nice job. Turnovers as a quarterback, they're hard to come by. But I think he's leading. I think he's tough. I think he can take us to where we need to go. We had two starter, I have the utmost confidence in him. I thought he played tremendous football, and kept his poise in the game and brought us right on back.

***Q. On that last play, did you think about taking a knee?***

**COACH FISHER:** Four or five seconds, if you take a knee real quick, I wanted to run the clock out for four seconds. Wasn't trying to score, was just trying to run the clock out. And we didn't move it for three plays, we weren't going to move it on the fourth one. I was just trying to make sure we didn't have a play left in the game, unless you take back the slow safety. And then you get in that situation, guys hit your quarterback and all that stuff right there, because it was -- if it had been third down, yes. Fourth down, I wanted to do something to run four seconds off.

***Q. On some of the runs for Max [Johnson], he came up a little bit hurt. Would you prefer him to slide?***

**COACH FISHER:** Depends on the situation. I mean, some of that -- you can't walk around protecting him all the time. Yeah, you want to be smart and slide. I think the one he fumbled on is the one he got hit on. Might have been one another one.

That's part of football, man. You're going to do that. You got to be smart when you got to be smart, but you got to be tough when you got to be tough.

***Q. Third quarter, Tyreek Chappell gets a finger on the pass to the end zone. Is that a momentum play, goes from 16 to a tie game?***

**COACH FISHER:** We talk about this all the time. Inches. You're fighting for inches all the time. You're trying to take them away from them and trying to create them for yourself.

You go back and watch games. There's probably five or six inches in this game that decided this game. That's five or six plays. And every play, you got to fight for whatever inch you can create for yourself to be able to tip the ball, grab the guy, tackle the guy, whatever it is. And that's my cliché.

That's kind of like our motto, we got to fight for the inches. We can't give them away, and we got to create them. And that was a big play. It was about an inch.

***Q. When you're able to get that pressure up front from your front seven and not after bringing the house, what luxury is that for your --***

**COACH FISHER:** You're not exposed. You can double a guy. Your match-ups can be really good. The more you go, you don't get exposed. And the quarterback -- because when you are getting pressure -- it's man-to-man and you're getting that pressure, all right, you know -- and guys today are so good at throwing the football and you got big receivers. They're open

## 2023 Southwest Classic

Texas A&M Head Coach Postgame Quotes

Page 7

---

when they're not open, if that makes any sense. Front-shoulder throws, back-shoulder throws. But now you're throwing into zone coverages. You're throwing into combination coverages. And when you can rush with four men, it's a lot tougher on a quarterback. The pressures are great. But at the same time, he's in one-on-one situations, so delivering the ball, getting rid of the ball. You got to be careful where you're dumping the ball when you're in the zone, too, because of the picks and interceptions. So it's huge when our front four can do that.

***Q. Talked about how never a boring game with Arkansas. Mentioned the Pick 6. What is it about the way you guys are somehow able to get a momentum-changing turnover whenever your guys play them?***

**COACH FISHER:** Hopefully, we can do it against everybody. That's what we got to do. I keep seeing this team grow.

Again, I keep saying this, I like this football team. It's got a lot of improvement to do. It's got a lot of growth to do, but I love its personality. I love its demeanor. I love its competitiveness and toughness, I really do. And it's learning. It's allowing itself to be coached and pushed. And as we see it from the practice field to even in the time-outs and the breaks, they're finding ways to make plays. They're finding those inches. And very proud of them.

***Q. Arkansas started four of five on third down first couple drives. Finished one of 10. What was working for you guys then compared --***

**COACH FISHER:** Earlier we tried to bring the pressure off the nickel. And got it rubbed right and got us bumped off.

Second one got a dig route. They got in the middle and got in there. And they got a screen and cracked our backer. We were in man coverage, and they cracked the backer and got him in man and got the screen out the door.

And then we changed up some pressures. We changed a couple looks and got some different personnels and were able to make the adjustments about how they were attacking us. And I thought D.J. [Durkin] did really good adjusting right there.

***Q. Can you talk about -- well, you talked about KJ Jefferson, but Rocket (Raheim) Sanders and how tough he is to bring down. But y'all played really well against them today.***

**COACH FISHER:** What I was proud of, the tackling. We tackled very well in this football game and we gang tackled. We swarmed the football. We tackled with leverage. We got guys on the ground and kept him (KJ Jefferson) in the pocket at the same time.

***Quotes provided by Caption Pros – (480) 419-3809***

[www.captionpros.net](http://www.captionpros.net)





## 2023 Southwest Classic

Texas A&M Head Coach Postgame Quotes

Page 8

---

And like I say, those two guys, you go back a year ago, we couldn't get them on the ground. Those two guys, we couldn't get on the ground. They're physical and tough, and they're great players. And my guys on defense, my hat's off to them.

***Q. Looking at stats, four tackles for loss, no sacks against one of the most aggressive defenses in football. Kind of wanted to get your thoughts on the performance of the offensive line.***

**COACH FISHER:** We're getting better. And I keep saying this, we're not where we want to be totally. We're getting sound. You saw [Earnest] Crownover play a lot today. You saw [Kam] Dewberry play a lot. Like I said, we got seven, eight guys in there, man, we feel like we can rotate and play and we don't drop off. You know what I mean?

And we're building young guys in there, too, that I think are going to be really good. And Steve [Addazio] is doing a really good job. We got the declarations right. They got hats on hats.

A couple times they brought some pressures at the end but -- for the most part. And then we got the running game going, and we were able to break some runs and running the short yardage situations, running the goal-line situations, which is big.

I think we're growing as a football team. I really do.

**MICHAEL KONRADI:** Thank you so much. Appreciate your time.

**COACH FISHER:** Thank you, guys.



## Texas A&M Postgame Quotes Student-Athletes

Texas A&M vs Arkansas  
Saturday, September 30, 2023  
AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas



**Q. Max, I'm not sure if you knew this, but your dad had two touchdowns when he was with the Dallas Cowboys, and now you have surpassed him in this stadium (AT&T Stadium) with three touchdowns is. That kind of a cool moment for him?**

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** I guess it's definitely cool to think about. He had a great career in the NFL. It was fun watching him. And going to all his games and being able to experience that. But it's pretty special.

**Q. What happened on the interception play there in the start of the second?**

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** Honestly, I didn't really see any movement. And that was my read, as if they were rotating or how the nickel was playing. I should have handed it off. My mistake. I got to be better, but came back and fought after that.

**Q. And with what happened to Ainius [Smith] last year, how special was it as a player to see him break that one off?**

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** I think it was awesome for him. I think he circled that game, and he came out and showed a punt return for a touchdown and some big-time catches. So he's a baller.

**Q. In terms of this game, topsy-turvy, kind of momentum swings everywhere. For you guys down the stretch, what was that key to securing that win, and kind of keeping Arkansas at arm's length?**

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** We came out with great execution in the first half. Defense played great all game. We kind of slowed down in the second half. So we got to clean up our mistakes. Not have as much turnovers. I think our guys just came ready to fight, and that's how we did it. We executed in the first half really well, but we have some stuff to clean up.

**Q. Do you guys ever talk among yourselves about if you clean up some of those issues, how good you might be?**

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** I totally agree. I think we should have put up a lot more points than we did. The defense played unbelievable. They shut them down. And I think our guys are going to be excited going into next week's practice, and we're going to clean up those mistakes.

*Quotes provided by Caption Pros – (480) 419-3809*  
[www.captionpros.net](http://www.captionpros.net)



***Q. Le'Veon [Moss] has been really stepping up these past two weeks. What's it like having him in the backfield and what has he been bringing to this offense?***

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** It's been awesome. He's been practicing really hard. Our coach has been on him about getting his protections. He's done a really good job. I don't think he's missed one. He's done a really good job of seeing the cuts and running the ball, holding on to the ball. It's been great to have him back there.

***Q. What's the preparation like this week, maybe any different? I know as a backup, you always prepare, one play away to go into the game. But knowing not only that you will start, but with Conner [Weigman] out, you're going to be guiding the ship for the rest of the way, at least over the course of this game. What's the difference like just knowing that as you go through the week?***

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** I mean, it's definitely, you know, good knowing that I'm going to be in there and starting it off. But I've always prepared the same way, whether I was in or not. We had a great week of preparation this week, and we're looking forward to having another good week this upcoming week.

***Q. Max [Johnson], did you bang your hand up at all on that fumble play?***

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** I did, but I mean, there's no excuse for fumbling the ball. I should have held the ball in my left hand honestly. So no excuse for that. I think just a helmet hit it. It's all good.

***Q. And having started against Arkansas last year, did you take any of that experience to this one? Did you know what to expect at all?***

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** I guess a little bit. I know they're a very physical team. They had a different defense than they did last year. So we had a plan going in for this game. We also had some plays just in case they went back and did some of the three down stuff, but our guys came out with the win.

***Q. I guess I'm the obligatory Evan Stewart touchdown questioner. So would you walk us through that play and what you saw?***

## 2023 Southwest Classic

### Texas A&M Student-Athletes Postgame Quotes

Page 3

---

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** Honestly, when I knew that play was called, I knew we were going to score. We had that same exact coverage that we had in practice all week, and he did a really good job of crossing that defender's face. He was one high, and he did a great job of getting to the other side of the field and made a great play.

***Q. Since the last time we talked to you, Conner [Weigman] announced he's out for the year. And just wondering how you took that news and how has he helped you this week?***

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** I mean, he's been in all our meetings. He's been at practice every day. It's been good to talk to him. But you know, I'm praying for him. I told him I was praying for him. I hope he heals up quick.

***Q. And I was going to ask, how do you balance kind of fighting for the extra yards and knowing when to slide?***

**QB MAX JOHNSON:** I mean, I got to learn to take care of myself more often. Whether that's -- if I got the first down slide, if not, I would rather get out of bounds and not take the extra hit. But if it's on the line, fourth down, I'm going for it.

***Q. Ainius, how did it feel to break off that punt return for a touchdown? Especially considering what happened on that field last year.***

**WR AINIAS SMITH:** Man, it was a breath of relief, you know what I'm saying. I don't know if y'all know, that was my first touch on the season. And it's crazy because it's my last time -- well, the last time I played last year, as y'all know, was on this field and in this stadium. And just to be able to come in, do what I did, it was great. I was just grateful to God, you know what I'm saying, just gave all praise to Him.

***Q. Ainius, did you have any emotions or thoughts when you first got on to the field today?***

**WR AINIAS SMITH:** Yeah, it was cool at first. I don't think my emotions was really running until after I had did my prayer with [Coach] Mikado [Hinson]. After that, I was locked in. I wasn't really even thinking about what happened last year. I was just playing.

***Q. Edgerrin, you got the picture of the hog hunting up pretty quick there. Was that one saved in drafts?***

## 2023 Southwest Classic

Texas A&M Student-Athletes Postgame Quotes

Page 4

---

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** Yeah, I was waiting exactly right after the game. It was saved in there.

**Q. Was that a recent trip?**

**WR AINIAS SMITH:** Literally this week. A recent trip.

**Q. This is for both of you. Max [Johnson] kind of said that when you look at the little details, just how good this team can be if you correct them. How good can this team be?**

**WR AINIAS SMITH:** It's, you know, the amount of space we have to get better, it's crazy. It's crazy. You know. If we have trust in the defense and offense and the amount of improvement we have, it's going to be scary.

**WR AINIAS SMITH:** Me personally, man, I just look at it like, we play so well as a team, you know what I'm saying, if the offense needs a play, then the offense gonna get a play. If the defense needs to make a play, then the defense for sure going to make a play. And if you look, obviously, we did that on special teams today. But it's just like the growth that we can -- that we still have to grow, you know what I'm saying -- I can say this. Let's look at it like this. We came out first half on offense, and we did real well. Defense played outstand. Came out second half. Offense wasn't doing as well. And defense stepped up, you know what I'm saying. I went over to the defensive sideline, and like, Hey, we need y'all. Y'all just keep playing. And they stepped up. Now imagine if we did what we needed to do on offense, like, the sky's the limit. That's how I look at it.

**Q. Ainias, on the touch return, you muffed up the catch and had to go back six yards to get it. I'm wondering what you're thinking as you're running back to get the ball at that point and as you're returning the ball?**

**WR AINIAS SMITH:** Shoot, when I muffed it, I was thinking, all right, now you got make a play, you know what I'm saying. Just don't mess up and don't get tackled. And then I looked up. I seen my dog over there waving me to the sideline. I was like, let's ride. Let's ride. That's all I was thinking.

**Q. And on your other return, the 43-yard, you catch that one like a center fielder going back, and you're almost at the 10-yard line. Is that something they really want you to do, catching that ball like that at that point? Or they want you to let that go?**

Quotes provided by Caption Pros – (480) 419-3809

[www.captionpros.net](http://www.captionpros.net)



**WR AINIAS SMITH:** Coach (Jimbo Fisher) had told me before I went out there, be smart, you know what I'm saying. Just know what we need. We need the ball. And if you end up returning it, then do you what do.

So most coaches, they'll tell you to run back there, get to a spot, set your feet, catch the ball, and then make a play. But it kept sailing and kept sailing, so I was like, well, I'm going to keep running and keep running. And I look down for a second, and I was like, oh, I got too much space to let this go. So then I was like, shoot, let's ride again.

***Q. Edgerrin, what is it -- what changed the last two weeks that's turned that pass rush -- I think y'all have had 14 sacks in two weeks and had trouble before that. What's changed?***

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** I feel like we need to get in that rhythm. And me just working on it and practicing hard and preparing and Coach (Jimbo Fisher) just calling my number to go. I'm ready to go every time. And doing my job as plays will come to me.

***Q. Where do you typically go to hunt hogs?***

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** Actually, it's like 15 minutes outside of College Station. So it ain't too far.

***Q. Edgerrin, were you on the field when Chris [Russell] got the Pick 6?***

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** Yes, I was.

***Q. What did you see on that play? And how critical was it because they were coming for you guys?***

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** Yeah, that situation, you have to just come back and dominate, you know. Coach (Jimbo Fisher) was like, sudden changes like that, let's just do it. Next play.

***Q. Did it make you think of the fumble recovery from last year that you guys had?***

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** Yeah, yeah. It was like the play, just saying that, and seeing my brothers having plays coming to them. Just an exciting feeling. We like to feed off the energy.

***Q. Ainius, you mentioned how you went to the defense and said make a play, and they did. What was your vantage point from the sideline on that one?***

## 2023 Southwest Classic

### Texas A&M Student-Athletes Postgame Quotes

Page 6

---

**WR AINIAS SMITH:** I think I was on like the 40. Like going in. And I think I ran all the way to like 10. And they were talking about, get off the field, get off the field. But I was lit. I looked up for a quick second. And I seen Bryce [Anderson] took the ball. I look down. And I seen Chris [Russell] making the interception. So I'm like, oh, yes, they gonna take to it the crib. And he had an amazing game. Both of these boys did. So I'm just proud of the team.

***Q. Edgerrin, at certain point when you have seven sacks in the game, do you feel -- could you feel a moment when you kind of broke the will of that Arkansas offense?***

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** Oh, yeah, just playing -- I got to give it up to the D-line, first of all. Just playing behind them. And them giving us that energy, it just makes us want to go. Sometimes at moments out there, you get real tired. And them boys down there are some dogs, they just keep going. We stick together. We just got to pick it up every play. And feeding off them. It's a wonderful feeling. And playing around people around you like that.

***Q. Ainius, could you sense Arkansas' frustration when No. 22 (Brad Spence) wouldn't even let go of your legs on that last punt return? You were trying to get up, and he just wouldn't let go?***

**WR AINIAS SMITH:** No, I felt it, you know what I'm saying. I was very confused on why he wasn't trying to let me get lit, you know what I'm saying. I was definitely trying to get turned. But he wasn't letting me. So I'm like, who is this yanking on my leg? But no, I seen that it was him, and I was like, oh, yeah, these boys mad. And I got up, and I was like, yeah, I know. Yeah, I know. Yeah, I know.

***Q. Ainius, I've got a question for and you then I've got another one for Edgerrin. Ainius, on the start of this team and SEC play, first time you guys have been 2nd-0 under Jimbo [Fisher] to start off conference play.***

**WR AINIAS SMITH:** Man, that's a crazy stat, you know what I'm saying. Really just give it up to the coaches, the coaching staff. Give it up to our teammates, you know what I'm saying. We've been going hard each and every week. And I'm just proud of where this team is going. I'm proud of, you know, how we've been practicing. And I'm just like, the sky's the limit, you know what I'm saying. We got to keep going. This is just another steppingstone that we accomplished. We got a long season. We have to keep going.



**Q. Edgerrin, for you, something I saw did have you guys with seven sacks but had you with eight. My question to you is it easier to maybe track down K.J. [Jefferson] or to actually hunt a real hog?**

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** No. I like to be good at both. And that's just the way it is.

**Q. When you have plays like that fourth and 1 at the end of the first half or short-yard situation, you're able to make a big impact and set the offense up to score, what does it do for you guys to be able to play that kind of complimentary football?**

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** Momentum. I feel like football is 90% momentum. Having that energy, that even transferred to offense, and they went down and scored. And all that just keeps stacking. We just go from there.

**Q. What have you seen from Le'Veon [Moss] these last two weeks? He's been getting a lot more of the ball, and he's been doing a lot. What have you seen from him in practice, and how that's showed out on the field?**

**WR AINIAS SMITH:** Just fighting through adversity. In practice, he's been a little banged up. And every time, right before a game, he seems to get in that mode, you know what I'm saying. And today, came out and balled out for us, you know what I'm saying. Balled out for himself. Balled out for his teammates, his family. And I feel like if he keeps going like this, you know what I'm saying, we're going to special, really special.

**Q. Edgerrin, you know, I know y'all talked about the Pick 6, but for you seeing Chris [Russell], in general, I know he had a big last week. Had a big game, I think, in this game last year as well. What have you seen from him the last few weeks? Seems like lately he's in a position to make lot of big plays?**

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** You know, Chris [Russell], he's a hard-working guy. And all this stuff is going to pay off for him. Like I said earlier, just seeing my guys around making a plays, it's a wonderful feeling for me. Touching my heart. And I love how we're all together making plays. And everybody eating.

**Q. Edgerrin [Cooper], can you pinpoint anything that made y'all play a lot better against K.J. [Jefferson] and Rocket (Raheim) Sanders this year compared to maybe a couple years past? Anything that really boosted y'all today?**

## 2023 Southwest Classic

Texas A&M Student-Athletes Postgame Quotes

Page 8

---

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** Just the mentality. I feel like preparation and practice. All these years I've been at Texas A&M compared this the year, the coaches, all of us together, we really wanted to dominate anybody that steps in front of us. And that's what I like. And it's finally coming up and we just got to take it week by week.

***Q. Edgerrin [Cooper], sorry to keep harping on it, but do you go hog hunting throughout the football or is that special to this week?***

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** No, that was just a special this week. No. Try to stay focused and handle my business first. I felt like this week, I needed to take time off and do what I needed to do and posted what I posted after the game.

***Q. Is bagging one usually a good omen for you?***

**LB EDGERRIN COOPER:** Yeah. And it was a good-sized one. So it made everything better.

***Q. Back-to-back weeks now, Le'Veon [Moss] is taking control of the backfield. Where have you noticed him in practice truly develop that mean bully streak to where he's able to throw his weight forward? And how sustainable do you think this offense can be with a great rushing attack?***

**WR AINIAS SMITH:** Man, that kid is special, you know what I'm saying. I feel like all three backs are special, though, not even just Lev (Le'Veon Moss). In practice, we've been harping on finishing plays and finishing drives, and not letting up right before you get to the end zone or whatever, run all the way through end zone. And I feel like that right there in practice, just the mentality that we have has really helped us in the games and made sure to just -- let's finish, you know what I'm saying, let's dominate. Just like [Edgerrin] Cooper's saying.

Thank y'all. God bless. Gig 'em.