Harris helps No. 1 Alabama outlast Texas A&M 27-19

College Station, Texas - Nick Saban thinks his players have gotten too wrapped up in the constant talk in the media about how good they are.

And he shared just what he thinks about that after the top-ranked Crimson Tide struggled to put Texas A&M away in a 27-19 win on Saturday night.

"I'm trying to get our players to listen to me instead of listening to you guys," he said referring to reporters. "All that stuff that you write about how good we are and all that stuff they get on ESPN is like poison. It's like taking poison. Like rat poison. I'm asking them: `Are you going to listen to me or are you going to listen to these guys about how good you are?'"

Damien Harris ran for 124 yards and a touchdown, and Jalen Hurts had a touchdown pass and ran for another score to help Alabama remain undefeated.

The Aggies (4-2, 2-1 SEC), who entered the game as 26½ point underdogs, made the game interesting, but in the end freshman quarterback Kellen Mond was simply too inexperienced to help them topple a team as talented as Alabama.

Alabama (6-0, 3-0) had rolled past Vanderbilt and Mississippi by a combined score of 125-3 over the last two weeks, but got much more of a test from the young Aggies.

"We definitely needed a reality check," senior linebacker Rashaan Evans said.

Mond was 19 of 29 for 237 yards with a touchdown and an interception. He also ran for a touchdown and lost a fumble.

"There's no moral victory in this deal," Texas A&M coach Kevin Sumlin said. "When you play that hard and you play that long nobody's happy."

Hurts threw for 123 yards and ran for 56.

"Are we happy? Are we pleased? No," he said. "But we are happy that we can walk out of here with a win."

Mond connected with Damion Ratley on a 32-yard pass on fourth-and-9 to get the Aggies to the 3 late in the third quarter. They were facing another fourth down later in the possession when Mond evaded one sack and got the ball off just as he was hit, finding Christian Kirk for a 2-yard touchdown pass to get the Aggies to 24-10. Kirk grabbed the ball just before his knee hit the ground.

The Aggies were driving again early in the fourth quarter when Minkah Fitzpatrick intercepted Mond near the goal line for his first pick this season.

But Alabama couldn't move the ball and had to punt out of the end zone. Cullen Gillaspia, who wears Texas A&M's beloved 12th man jersey, blocked JK Scott's punt in the end zone for a safety to make it 24-12.

"I think we proved something to ourselves," Gillaspia said. "We can play with anyone in the country."

Texas A&M couldn't do anything on its next drive, with Mond getting sacked twice and losing two yards on a run to force the Aggies to punt.

Alabama added a field goal with about two minutes left to make it 27-12.

Mond cut the lead to 8 with a 1-yard run with 17 seconds left, but the Aggies ran out of time to do anything else.

"He hasn't always done everything right but he has given us a chance in all of these games to be successful," Sumlin said.

Alabama took its opening drive of the second half 75 yards, capped by an 8-yard touchdown pass from Hurts to Henry Ruggs to extend the lead to 24-3 early in the third quarter.

"My biggest disappointment is we're ahead 24-3 in the game and we didn't finish the game," Saban said.

Later in the third quarter Robert Foster simply dropped what should have been an easy catch before fumbling after a catch on the same drive. It was Alabama's first turnover since Nov. 24, 2016 - a span of 638 plays - and earned Foster a talking to from Saban as soon as he reached the sideline.

The Aggies led 3-0 early after Daniel LaCamera made the longest field goal of his career and the first over 50 yards with a 52-yard field goal.

The lead didn't last long as Damien Harris ran 75 yards for a touchdown on the first play of the next series.

Alabama got an unexpected test in this one which will certainly give Saban plenty of things to work on with his team. The win wasn't as pretty as most of their victories have been this season, but a closer game like this could be good experience for Alabama as the season continues.

Texas A&M and Mond have come a long way since squandering a 34-point third quarter lead in the 45-44 loss to UCLA in their opener. If he keeps making the kind of plays he did on Saturday and can limit his mistakes Texas A&M should be in good shape as SEC play continues.

	1	2	3	4	Final
Alabama (6 - 0)	7	10	7	3	**27**
Texas A&M (4 - 2)	3	0	7	9	**19**

	Alabama	Texas A&M
1st Downs	16	16
Passing	6	9
Rushing	8	4
Penalties	2	3
3rd Down Conv / Attempts	4/ 14	3 / 14
Total Plays	66	69
Total Yards	352	308
Yards Per Play	5.33	4.46
Total Drives	14	13
Passing	123	237
Comp / Attempts	13 / 22	19 / 29
Yards Per Pass	5.59	8.17
Interceptions	0	1
Sacks - Yards lost	3 - 19	4 - 27
Rushing	232	71
Rushing Attempts	44	40
Yards per rush	5.27	1.78
Punts (Number - Yards)	5 - 146	5 - 238
Average punt length	29.2	47.6
Punts blocked	1	0
Penalties	6	6
Turnovers	2	1
Fumbles Lost	1	1
Interceptions	1	0