

Problem solved: No. 1 Alabama crushes Mississippi, 66-3

Tuscaloosa, Alabama - The most dominant two-game stretch of football Alabama has ever played under Nick Saban - and that's saying something for a team with four national championship trophies in the last eight years - left the coach seemingly no more satisfied than if his players had just had a solid day of practice.

"We're pleased with the outcome," Saban said. "Nothing's perfect, but we need to certainly work on the things we need to improve."

Jalen Hurts threw two touchdown passes and ran for a score and No. 1 Alabama let loose on Mississippi 66-3 on Saturday night. The Crimson Tide emphatically put down a foe that had been problematic in recent years with its highest-scoring performance in 11 seasons under Saban.

It was the most points Alabama had scored in a game since 1979 and the first time it has scored 50-plus in consecutive Southeastern Conference games since 1945.

Alabama has scored at least 50 in four of its last five SEC games, a fact that Saban was not the least bit interested in addressing after beating Ole Miss.

"You know what? I don't really care about how many points we scored in the last four games," Saban said. "I'm only worried about how many we score in the next game. So, I don't have any feelings about how many points we scored in the last five games or however many SEC games we've played. I'm really worried how many we score in the next game and how we stop the next team that we play. That's the focus on what we need to dominate next."

Ole Miss (2-2, 0-1 SEC) had won two of the last three meetings with Alabama (5-0, 2-0), scoring 109 points - more than any other Tide opponent over the last three years. The Rebels are the only SEC team to beat the Tide since 2014, and they handed Alabama its only home loss in the past 30 games at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Saban said leading up to the game that sometimes the "ultimate disrespect" is when another team quietly believes it has your number. Not anymore. Coach Hugh Freeze is gone - resigning amid a university investigation into his personal conduct - and the days of Ole Miss being a threat to Alabama left with him and all those blue-chippers he brought to Oxford.

"It was just us doing our job," said defensive back Minkah Fitzpatrick, who had eight tackles and a sack. "They come to our house and Coach Saban said we had to defeat somebody, not just win the game. I think we did a real good job of defeating them, demoralizing them, and playing our game."

The Tide made it look easy. Hurts hooked up with a wide-open Josh Jacobs down the middle for an 18-yard score early in the second quarter, and then mimicked holstering his finger guns after tossing the TD pass. Hurts tumbled over tacklers on a 10-yard keeper that made it 35-3 at the half.

In the last two weeks, Alabama has outscored Vanderbilt and Ole Miss by a combined 125-3. The 63-point margin was the Tide's largest since beating Vandy 66-3 in 1979.

Can interim coach Matt Luke keep this Ole Miss team, which can't play in the postseason because of a self-imposed bowl ban for NCAA infractions, focused and playing hard this season? There are winnable games in the SEC West, but will the Rebels' hearts be into playing out the string?

"The most important thing for us moving forward is to go wash this tape, flush it, and move on to the next one," Luke said. "We still have eight games to go, eight chances to go win football games. That's the most important thing for us moving forward."

One problem (if you want to call it that) the Tide was having early this season was getting to the quarterback. After registering five sacks in the first four games, Alabama had five against Ole Miss.

Alabama lost defensive end Da'Shawn Hand to a left knee injury in the third quarter when he was blocked low by an Ole Miss player. Hand, a senior, was helped off the field by trainers and then carted to the locker room.

Saban said Hand had a strained ligament and would be evaluated further on Sunday.

Next up for Alabama, the Tide travels to Texas A&M.

	1	2	3	4	Final
Mississippi	3	0	0	0	3
Alabama	21	14	24	7	66

	Ole Miss	Alabama
1st Downs	11	26
3rd down efficiency	0 - 13	7 - 15
4th down efficiency	0 - 2	3 - 3
Total Yards	253	613
Passing	165	248
Comp-Att	14 - 29	15 - 24
Yards per pass	5.7	10.3
Interceptions thrown	2	0
Rushing	88	365
Rushing Attempts	26	51
Yards per rush	3.4	7.2
Penalties	3 - 30	7 - 60
Turnovers	2	0
Fumbles lost	0	0
Interceptions thrown	2	0
Possession	23:23	36:37