

# Tagovailoa propels No. 1 Bama past No. 22 Texas A&M, 45-23

Tuscaloosa, Alabama - Tua Tagovailoa heaved his first pass to a diving DeVonta Smith in the end zone for a touchdown.

The 30-yarder wasn't a replay of their winning connection in the national championship game, but it did set the stage for No. 1 Alabama's 45-23 victory over No. 22 Texas A&M on Saturday. The game was close for a while before turning into yet another Crimson Tide romp.

"We knew coming into this game it would be a 60-minute dogfight, and that's kind of what it was," tailback Damien Harris. "They played us close in the first half, but we knew if we just kept grinding away, that eventually we'd be able to pull away."

OK, it was more of a 27-minute dogfight, but that's more than other Tide opponents have mustered.

Tagovailoa passed for 387 yards and four touchdowns and ran for another score for the Tide in its first test against a ranked team. Kellen Mond and the Aggies (2-2, 0-1) couldn't put up nearly the fight they had in a 28-26 loss to No. 3 Clemson.

Tagovailoa completed 22 of 30 passes before leaving after Henry Ruggs III took a shuttle pass 57 yards for a score late in the third. He hit tight end Hale Hentges for two more scores. Hentges had only one catch in the first three games and said he hadn't had a two-TD game since his high school finale.

"I never dreamed of getting two," he said. "I always thought about just getting one."

Harris didn't get many touches but had a 35-yard run and a 52-yard catch.

"We were fortunate that we made a lot of big plays on offense," Tide coach Nick Saban said. "We really threw the ball effectively and scored a lot of points, but we really didn't control the game. We didn't control the line of scrimmage. We struggled to run the ball offensively with consistency."

Mond completed 16 of 33 passes for 196 yards with a touchdown but was intercepted twice, including on his first throw. He collected 98 yards rushing despite getting sacked seven times.

The SEC's top rusher, Trayveon Williams, found little room to run. He gained 31 yards on eight carries.

Texas A&M seemed poised for a while to give the Tide its first test of the season. But Tagovailoa & Co. scored 10 points in the final 1:09 before halftime for a 31-13 lead.

Tagovailoa set up a touchdown with a 52-yard pass down the right sideline to Harris. Then freshman cornerback Patrick Surtain Jr. intercepted Mond's deep ball and the Tide drove for a field goal.

Texas A&M coach Jimbo Fisher was impressed with Tagovailoa and his supporting cast.

"He's good. I mean he's good," Fisher said. "He's got good people around him. I mean he's got really good people around him, and we tried to pressure him, and he scrambled and they've got a good scheme, and they did a good job. He was very effective at what he did, and we've got to play better."

Texas A&M flirted with an upset of No. 3 Clemson, when Mond passed for most of his 430 yards in the second half. The Aggies couldn't muster any kind of threat after trailing just 21-13 in the second quarter.

Alabama all but put a game away before halftime with the big-play capabilities of Tagovailoa and the Tide. Bama had a pair of scoring drives under a minute before the half, making it 10 already this season. Tide has outscored opponents 148-20 in the first half.

	1	2	3	4	Total
<b>Texas A&amp;M</b> (2 - 2)	7	6	3	7	<b>23</b>
<b>Alabama</b> (4 - 0)	14	17	14	0	<b>45</b>

	<b>Texas A&amp;M</b>	<b>Alabama</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Downs	22	24
3 <sup>rd</sup> down efficiency	3 - 12	4 - 10
4 <sup>th</sup> down efficiency	0 - 0	0 - 0
Total Yards	393	524
Passing	263	415
Comp-Att	23 - 44	25 - 33
Yards per pass	6.0	12.6
Interceptions thrown	2	0
Rushing	130	109
Rushing Attempts	28	28
Yards per rush	4.6	3.9
Penalties	4 - 50	9 - 82
Turnovers	2	0
Fumbles lost	0	0
Interceptions thrown	2	0
Possession	32:36	27:24