

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Missouri football shuts up Tennessee on both sides of the ball

By [Alexander Smith](#)

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COLUMBIA — Gary Pinkel said he felt bad for Butch Jones.

Missouri's head coach knew what his counterpart was going through: having to put a young quarterback on a big stage after an injury to the starter.

"I've been there before," Pinkel said.

By "before," the coach must have meant four hours prior to his press conference, when redshirt freshman Maty Mauk stepped onto Faurot Field for his third straight start.

While Tennessee quarterback Josh Dobbs struggled through a 31-3 blowout loss, Mauk looked like a poised veteran.

He ran for 114 yards — the first time a Tigers quarterback has broken the century mark since James Franklin in 2011 — and added 163 through the air. His three first-half passing touchdowns broke the game open, and an excellent performance from the offensive line resulted in 339 total rushing yards and a decisive win one week after the toughest game of the season.

The defense was also phenomenal. It held the Volunteers to a lone 51-yard field goal and provided a resounding response to a victory guarantee made by Tennessee offensive lineman Tiny Richardson last Saturday.

"We just wanted to go out and show him that we're not soft," defensive end Markus Golden said. "We're tougher than them. We're tougher than all their linemen. He was soft out there."

The lesson for anyone who doubts the tenacious Tigers' defensive line?

“When you talk, we’re gonna make you eat your words.”

After a nightmare overtime loss to South Carolina, the Tigers had to rebound to stay afloat in the SEC East race. Pinkel held a team meeting early in the week to address those who were still hurting.

“Why in the world would you ever even be thinking about last week’s game when there’s so much out there?” Pinkel asked. “There’s no common sense there. Are you kidding me? We’re 7-1, 3-1 in the league. We’ve got four games left in November. I’ll take that the rest of my career. Forever.”

Fans showed up to Saturday night’s game with visions of a missed 24-yard field goal still clanging in their heads.

The perfect hangover cure seemed to be an overmatched opponent.

“We’ve got some guys that are quick, man,” Pinkel said. “Those guys just need a little space. You know how explosive they are. Tennessee’s got really good athletes. So does Georgia, so does Florida, so does South Carolina. But those guys ... that’s recruiting. Bringing guys in here with great speed and quickness.”

The lopsided margin took a while to develop. Baggett even rocked another short field goal off the left upright.

But after two early three-and-out drives, Mauk got his groove back.

With the scoreboard blank, Missouri faced third-and-goal from the Tennessee nine-yard line.

Dorial Green-Beckham caught a short pass from Mauk on the left side of the field. With no open field in front of him, he decided to sprint across both hashes and left several Volunteers eating turf en route to the end zone.

Later in the half, Mauk was looking for a play to his left. Forced right by one of the Volunteers’ mammoth linemen, his route to escape seemed blocked. But he looked up the field and Bud Sasser pointing deep down the field.

Mauk stared at the end zone and saw L'Damian Washington wide open. The senior receiver caught the ball at least 15 yards from the nearest defender, and the route was on.

Now 8-1, the Tigers face three more SEC games to decide their postseason fate.