

Tougher, together Bulldogs clobber Panthers; make statement of sorts in opening win on the road

Written by Levi Johnson, Sports Editor
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ATLANTA - En route to rendering the Georgia State Panthers a non-competitive foe, with a surge of overwhelming play in the stretch run of the opening game for both teams Thurs. night (Aug. 30), at the Georgia Dome, Buddy Pough's South Carolina State Bulldogs made a statement of sorts.

However, on the heels of clobbering the host Panthers 33-6, before a reported crowd of 18,921, the very pleased but reserved Bulldogs chose not to over evaluate an out of the blocks performance that casts them as a team with the potential to be special.

Almost to a man, the Bulldogs simply talked about just doing what each had to do to get a win.

Richard Cue, who directed the input of the "O" players, who compiled a total of 488 yards in 78 snaps from center, cited the togetherness of he and mates, as they rose to the occasion in many critical situations versus Bill Curry's cats.

"We had to overcome a lot, including the two picks I threw; but when it came down to making the plays when we had to have them, I thought we really came together as a team," said the junior Bulldogs signal caller, who contributed 300 yards to the offensive total, with his 19-29-2 aerial showing that was accented by him completing three for touchdowns. "But what we did was what we expected to do. We came down here feeling pretty good about our chances of going back with a win.

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"Obviously, we can take a lot of good things from this (opening) win but at the same time we made enough mistakes not to leave here thinking we've got it made. We opened the season like we wanted to but we still have a lot of work to do to get ready for our next game, which is our first one in the conference."

While taking it to the Panthers, the Bulldogs established a new mark as two receivers totalled 100 plus yards in the same game. Reserve receiver Lennel Elmore, who sat out the 2011 campaign due to academic reasons, led the way with 3 catches for 117 yards, including his early first quarter 72 yard reception that staked the visitors out to a 7-0 lead with 14:06 left to play. Flanker Caleb Davis hauled in 10 passes for 110 yds.

Cortney Ingram termed the opening show "good"; however, he too, says it's way too early to celebrate.

"It's always good to get that opening game under your belt; especially when it's on the road against a quality opponent" said Ingram, who plays the Dog position in the S.C. State aggressive defensive unit. "But we know we have to get better if we want to get our championship back.

"Tonight got us going in the right direction; so the thing for us to do now is find ways to do better as a team. We have what I think can be a very good one but we can't afford to get too far ahead of ourselves. We just need to take it one game at a time (if we want to be successful in the end)."

Up by 11 (14-3) at the break, the Bulldogs, boosted by ball carriers who netted 113 yards via the overland route and a stop trooper group that allowed the home players to register just another field goal over the final 30 minutes of action, put the game away with a 19-3 run.

Buddy Pough, although admitting that his players certainly were not at the top of their game in all phases of play, nonetheless said he was satisfied after the opening game.

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"We didn't do a number of things well but overall I'm pleased with how we played in our opening game. Georgia State presented us with some tough challenges throughout the game; and I've got to say, for the most part, we responded well," gauged the Bulldogs veteran coach, in the aftermath of his 11th season opener.

"I thought what helped us a lot is toward the end we were able to wear them down. We played with a lot of toughness and our physical play; especially in the fourth quarter made a big difference. It wasn't our best performance but it was good enough to beat a Georgia State team on the road."

Added split end Tyler McDonald, "This is just the beginning. We haven't done anything yet!"