Aggies defeat No. 1 Crimson Tide 41-38 in instant classic

From Jimbo, with love
Jimbo Fisher celebrates 56th birthday with win over former boss Nick Saban

By Ryan Faulkner
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Over five months ago, Texas A&M head coach Jimbo Fisher made a bold promise:

“We’re going to beat his ass.”

On the surface, this claim had substance, with many left wondering why Fisher would single out one specific coach — Alabama’s Nick Saban. After all, Saban had already accomplished almost everything there is to do in college football — two national championships, three conference titles, nine bowl wins, and a College Coach of the Year award.

But beating Saban, his former boss, in head-to-head competition had significance of its own.

“I have the utmost respect for Nick Saban,” Fisher said. “I always have, I always will and I consider us friends. But we’re competitors. I have the utmost respect for him and I respect him for that.”

Starting in 2010, Fisher worked under Saban as his offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach for Louisiana State University. The two won a national championship together with LSU in 2012, but after Saban left for the Miami Dolphins, the duo’s path split.

Fisher recording the first-ever victory over his former boss. While the win is great, Fisher said he will not be fully satisfied until he sees how his team performs throughout the rest of the season.

“We can be special. Our football team is learning to play against other great football teams and have success. That’s what matters to me,” Fisher said. “It shows a lot of character, and it shows a lot of belief in themselves. It shows a lot of belief in their teammates.”

At halftime, Alabama went into the locker room trailing on the scoreboard for the first time since Oct. 17, 2020, when the Tide took on Georgia in an eventual 41-24 victory over the Bulldogs. For the Aggies, it all came down to the fourth quarter, with A&M only leading by one touchdown, 31-24.

Redshirt sophomore quarterback Zach Calzada found his groove. With the 12th Man behind him, the signal caller led the Aggies to score in all three possessions during the final quarter. Additionally, Calzada was 10 for 10 before throwing an interception in the middle of the second quarter.

“There is not a harder position in sports to play than quarterback,” Fisher said. “[Zach] is very proud of Zach. He’s a high-character young man. He cares, and it matters to him.”

For the ground game, junior running back Devon Achane stole the show. Spiller ran for 126 yards and one touchdown. One highlight of the night for the maroon and white was Achane’s 96-yard kickoff return for a touchdown in the third quarter.

Achane’s 96-yard kickoff return for a touchdown in the third quarter. From Jimbo, with love — Jimbo Fisher celebrates 56th birthday with win over former boss Nick Saban

On Saturday, Oct. 9, the unranked Aggies upset the undefeated No. 1 Crimson Tide in front of 106,815 fans at Kyle Field. Not only did the win put A&M back on track after two consecutive losses to open its SEC campaign, but it also gave Fisher another win of his own — proof he could do what was thought to be impossible and take down his former boss, mentor and colleague.

With 24 straight wins and an undefeated record against his earlier pupils, including four wins over Fisher, Saban’s dominance threatened to continue with no end in sight; beating the seven-time national champion seemed to be a far unattainable to those who, at one point, worked under the man.

But from his words, Saban’s downfall was inevitable because “one’s man was going to do it, in time.”

And though he didn’t necessarily expect it, Fisher himself became the grand champion whose arrival was forecasted in his own prophecy.

“Think back to me saying ‘I’m going to do it, in time’,” Fisher said. “That’s going to be me, at some point, working under the man.”

The Aggies’ 41-38 victory over the Crimson Tide was the result of months of hard work put forth by the A&M football team.

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Senor defensive back Leon O’Neal Jr. recovered the ball fumbled by Alabama at the end of the first quarter. O’Neal returned the ball to Alabama’s 41-yard line allowing A&M to score a touchdown in the following drive.

By Jennifer Streeter
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