

Eagles Stun Gators, 26-20

Written by Staff Reports

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If there were only going to be 11 games in the 2013 season, Georgia Southern was going to make the last one count. Senior Jerick McKinnon, who started at slotback, and moved to fourth on the Eagles'

all-time rushing list, scored the winning touchdown to give the Eagles a 26-20 with 2:57 left in the game. Georgia Southern's defense stopped the Gators' final drive at the Eagles' 17-yard line as the clock expired.

"I am so proud of our football team," said Georgia Southern Head Football Coach Jeff Monken. "This senior class, they talked about what it means to them to win this football game, and that is what college football is all about, days like today. It is a great, great win. The kids were just thrilled. That's a big win for us and for our kids. "

The Gators used their last possession to drive down the field with a first and 10 at the Georgia Southern 24. Florida took a timeout after linebacker Edwin Jackson factored into the incomplete pass on that first play and then the Gators picked up seven yards on Florida quarterback Skyler Mornhinweg 's complete pass and called another timeout. The final two passes fell incomplete with safeties Matt Dobson and Antonio Glover breaking up the plays.

Georgia Southern, now 10-0 in games when not completing a pass, ran for all 429 yards with a

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7.9 per attempt average. The stout Eagle defense held Florida to only 279 yards of total offense, its lowest total since a 2002 game against LSU.

Mornhinweg connected with Solomon Patton on a 46-yard play to the end zone and the Gators added the point after to tie the game at 20 with 5:41 left to play in the game. The Gators used three plays to go 59 yards after a failed fourth-and-two by the Eagles gave them the ball at the Eagle 41.

McKinnon and Ellison both went over the 100-yard mark with McKinnon netting 125 and the final touchdown and Ellison totaling 118 with his two. William Banks, who played exclusively in the second half, totaled 94 yards, including a 53-yard rush that set up the final touchdown. Banks, who had been out with an injury the previous week, scored the Eagles third touchdown to put them up 20-10 at the end of the third quarter.

Kyle Oehlbeck, senior linebacker from Gainesville, had eight tackles, seven in the first half, playing with his usual intensity times 10. Junior linebacker Edwin Jackson played all over the field, making key tackles and leading the Eagles with 10 tackles.

McKinnon broke off for a 66-yard rush to bring the Eagles inside the Florida 10-yard line and Ellison reached over the goal line to give Georgia Southern a 14-10 lead, one it would not relinquish, on the first possession of the second half. Younghoe Koo added the PAT, but would miss the point after on the Eagles' third touchdown.

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Georgia Southern had 50 more yards of total offense in the first half that was dictated by defense and marred by turnovers. In the closing minutes of the first half, Ellison hit the endzone in full stride, splitting the defense with a 45-yard run for touchdown, needing only that one play and 10 seconds to get the Eagles within three points.

Florida's Francisco Velez hit a 22-yard field goal with 12:02 left in the game to put the Gators within a touchdown at 20-13.

The Eagles could have had another score, but fumbled the ball at the Florida three-yard line with 4:17 left in the first quarter. The defense, though, didn't allow the Gators to capitalize on the mistake, forcing them to a three-and out. Junior Valdon Cooper, who started in place of an injured Lavelle Westbrooks at cornerback, was in on special teams and blocked a field goal that would have given Florida a 6-0 lead at the end of the first quarter.

Georgia Southern finishes its season at 7-4 and with its first-ever win over a FBS or BCS team on its 21st try.