

# After a first-half fiasco, Auburn players pick each other up and come back out locked in to claim the win over San Jose State

Mikayla Kelly | 9/11/2022

“Lean on Me,” blasting in the Auburn football locker room Saturday night was the perfect way to cap off their team-effort, comeback win over San Jose State.

It was a college football Saturday filled with struggle and upsets all around. After trailing the Spartans 10-7, Auburn came back out after a disastrous first-half with a new mentality, determined not to join that list.

“I even said it to a few guys, ‘bro, it hasn’t been a good day for SEC teams. Let’s not fall into that category,’” Auburn linebacker Owen Pappoe said. “Let’s come out hot and do what we do.”

Auburn did just that in the first drive of the second half.

After motivating themselves to be better for their team, Tank Bigsby and TJ Finley came back out with a vengeance. On fourth down, as Finley was scrambling from a fumble recovery, he connected with Bigsby on a short pass for an 11-yard gain, good for a first down. Tank then carried the ball in for a touchdown, putting Auburn ahead 14-10 and would start the momentum to ultimately win 24-16 over SJSU.

Finley refused to be defined by his below average first-half performance, and in the fourth quarter added a touchdown from a 4-yard rush: redemption from an earlier interception thrown to SJSU safety Chase Williams.

“I can put it behind me so fast,” Finley explained. “My guys on the sideline, they do not allow me to put my head down or even think about what just happened...I wouldn't be as poised as I am without those guys.”

Auburn is now 3-0 in the all-time series against San Jose State, but the Spartans did not make it easy for them. The young San Jose State offense displayed competitiveness in an SEC environment.

In his second start as quarterback for the Spartans, Chevan Cordeiro ended the night 24-of-40 passing for 275 yards. Wide receiver Charles Ross caught five passes for 89 yards and running back Kairee Robinson was responsible for their sole touchdown in the final minute of the first half.

“It felt good when they were cheering, it just pumps me up more. When it’s loud it gives me energy, so I just use that to my advantage. We should have finished in the red zone, but it is what it is,” Cordiero said regarding playing in Jordan-Hare stadium.

SJSU had the opportunity to snag its second SEC upset, the first coming from a win over Arkansas, 31-24 in 2019.

Courtesy of the Auburn defense, the Spartans struggled in the red zone.

Auburn's defense was picking up the slack when the offense was in shambles. When SJSU had first-and-goal at the 1, the Tigers kept them out of the end zone, forcing a 33-yard field goal instead.

"I am just disappointed we couldn't score when we needed to, ending up with field goals instead of touchdowns," SJSU head coach Brent Brennan said. "I credit Auburn with red zone defense, that is big."

Derick Hall led with eight tackles, while Pappoe contributed seven. Eku Leota and Marcus Harris each had a sack, as did Keionte Scott, the first of his Auburn career.

Auburn now stands at 2-0 and will host Penn State this Saturday, hoping to tie the series, while San Jose State is entering a bye week.

"We know Penn State is a good team. It goes back to us focusing on ourselves... We find ways to improve our football team, and that would've been the goal if we won by 50," Auburn head coach Bryan Harsin emphasized. "Our mindset has to be about us finding ways to improve each week. We have to because our opponents are getting better."