

FOOTBALL



PHOTOS BY TRAVIS WYNN | SPARTAN DAILY

San Jose State running back Tyler Nevens (23) dashes past the Aggies' defensive line before scoring the first touchdown of the game at CEFCU Stadium Saturday.

Spartans defeat New Mexico State

By Estevan Lopez
STAFF WRITER

In its first game without starting quarterback Nick Starkel, the San Jose State football team beat New Mexico State 37-31 Saturday night at CEFCU Stadium.

Junior QB Nick Nash's stellar performance helped the Spartans after Nick Starkel was out because of a left-arm injury in the team's game against Western Michigan on Oct. 26.

"I was a little bit nervous but my teammates [had] so much faith in me [and] I feel like they all have my back," Nash said during the post-game conference.

"They [were] all hyping me up before the game, making sure that I was good. I really appreciated that from them. They just have absolute faith in me. That's my team."

Nash had a perfect first half as he completed 7 of 7 pass attempts for 113 yards and two touchdowns in his first start at QB this season.

SJSU had Nash playing at wide receiver this season and played wideout even when Starkel went down against Western Michigan.

Nash's season totals as a wide receiver so far include 18 yards receiving and zero touchdowns.

However, Nash carved up the Aggies defense with

“ [Nash] gave us the best chance to win [and] that's why we made that decision [to start him],” Brennan said. “Even though he hadn't [played QB] for two weeks, he [has] been playing for two years. . . in big games [and under] these situations.

Brent Brennan
head coach

his dual-threat capabilities as a runner and a thrower at the QB position.

Senior running back Tyler Nevens also had an impressive first half with 81 yards rushing on

10 attempts and a rushing touchdown.

Nevens trampled the Aggies' defensive line all night as his longest rush was a 36 yard carry in the 2nd quarter.

The Aggies had no answer for SJSU's ground game with Nevens averaging 5.2 yards per carry in the game.

"I wanted to relieve as much stress as I [could] from Nash just so he could be comfortable in his own reads and stuff like that, and I think we managed it pretty well," Nevens said in the post-game conference.

The Spartans defense also stepped up this game, firing up the raucous home crowd of more than 10,000 people with big play after big play.

Senior starting cornerback Nehemiah Shelton intercepted the Aggies' QB late in the first half and this sparked the Spartans momentum

they carried into the second half.

The Spartans ended the half with a 24-14 lead.

Head coach Brent Brennan said he was excited about Shelton's first interception of the season.

"For [Shelton] to jump [that route] and pick it off and get it down there in the red zone and for the offense to then take care of it was just awesome," Brennan said in the post-game conference.

The Spartans continued their offensive dominance in the second half as they ended with 209 total rushing yards, 117 of which belonged to Nevens.

The prominent rushing attack helped open up SJSU's passing game as Nash connected with senior tight-end Derrick Deese Jr. all night.

Deese Jr. hauled in 7 catches for 130 yards and one touchdown, marking his first 100-yard game of the season.

Though Nash only rushed for 34 yards on 4 carries, the Aggies defense was desperately trying to contain Nash because of his dual threat abilities. The Aggies were successful but forgot to cover Deese Jr., who exploded on offense.

"What a game . . . and I thought Nick did a great job finding the ball and Derek [Deese Jr.] was just awesome [at] attacking the ball," Brennan said.

The offense thrived with Nash's nearly perfect

SPARTANS

37

AGGIES

31

throws as he had the same amount of incompletions as he had touchdowns. He completed 15 of 18 passing attempts and threw for 3 touchdowns along with 195 yards.

Brennan said Nash is a perfect fit at QB for the Spartans.

"[Nash] gave us the best chance to win [and] that's why we made that decision [to start him]," Brennan said. "Even though he hadn't [played QB] for two weeks, he [has] been playing for two years . . . in big games [and under] these situations."

SJSU (3-2, 1-0 MW) is expected to travel to Fort Collins, Colorado to take on Colorado State (1-3) Saturday at Canvas Stadium.



Nevens (left) and QB Nick Nash start a play in hopes of getting through the defense.

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