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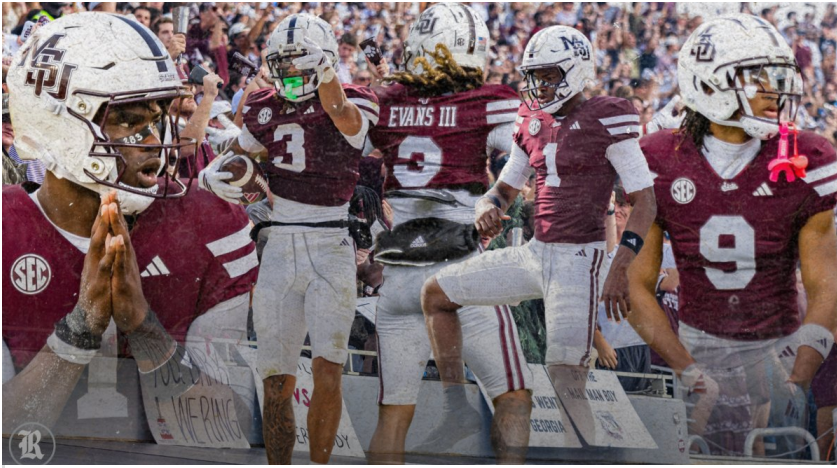
Football

Sports

Miller's football predictions: 8 wins are within reach for the Bulldogs

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Noah McCord

Four years.

It has been four years since Mississippi State football won more than five games in a single season. But that streak could end this year.

With the return of players and coaches such as Kamario Taylor, Kelley Jones, and Zach Arnett, the potential for success has skyrocketed.

Head Coach Jeff Lebbby has not been seen as one of the more powerful coaches in the Southeastern Conference, and his 7-18 record as the MSU head coach supports that. It is not that Lebbby does not have coaching experience in the SEC; he has been in the conference since 2020 and was the offensive coordinator for Oklahoma and Ole Miss. Being a head coach requires more than focusing on the offense, which could explain Lebbby's record at Mississippi State.

In 2024, when Lebbby accepted the head coaching job at MSU, he took over a program that had fallen short after the loss of Mike Leach, a college football legend. Leach coached the Bulldogs for three seasons, leading them to three bowl games and 19 wins.

Lebbby's first season with the Bulldogs ended in a 2-10 overall record, followed by a 5-8 record in the next season. Seven wins across two seasons may not satisfy Mississippi State fans, but the progression is noticeable.

At the 2026 Football Media Days in Tampa, Florida, all 16 SEC head coaches along with three select players went through numerous press conferences to speak about what they see from their teams, as well as other teams in the conference, heading into the new season.

When rival coach Lane Kiffin was asked about Mississippi State, he had nothing but positive remarks.

"[Lebbby] had a really hard task; that roster was really down when he got there, and they'd been struggling," Kiffin said at 2026 Media Days. "I know the record probably isn't what Mississippi State people like, but I've seen tremendous improvement in that program, and Lebbby's going to continue on that path and do great things."

Now that Lebbby has two seasons under his belt and one conference win, it is time for him to step up and lead the Bulldogs to the success that everyone wants to see.

Aside from Lebbby, MSU football has powerful players returning and notable transfers added to the roster.

Kamario Taylor is not just another Mississippi State quarterback; he is the future of MSU football and the name everyone has been talking about.

Taylor, a sophomore Mississippi native, is the hope and strength that MSU football needs. With two starts and 11 total appearances last season, Taylor scored 13 touchdowns for the team and led them in the 2026 Duke's Mayo Bowl.

Now that Taylor is the starting quarterback for the Bulldogs, he has drawn national attention because of his talent. At Media Days, the renowned former Alabama head coach Nick Saban had positive remarks about Taylor.

"You've got Kamario Taylor, who nobody's really heard much about at Mississippi State," Saban said. "This guy could be the truth and the light right now. He is really, really good."

Taylor is the highest-ranked quarterback to sign with Mississippi State in school history, and he was the eighth-highest-ranked quarterback in the 2025 recruiting class; his stats say he is who he is.

"We have had a great amount of quarterbacks come through the program, so it's a blessing," Taylor said at Media Days. "It's an honor for me to be highly

ranked like that, and it motivates me to show people why Mississippi State chose me and why I chose Mississippi State."

A football team cannot be successful with just their quarterback, though. That is where other players like Kelley Jones and Anthony Evans III come in.

Jones, a senior cornerback, grew quite the fanbase over the last season.

Fans have made Instagram accounts, posters and songs showing their love for Jones, motivating him to execute in the way they expect.

"I'm very thankful and very grateful to even have things like that," Jones said at Media Days. "The thought that people are even thinking about me like that is just insane."

Jones recorded 34 total tackles and two interceptions in the 2025 season, and has been listed on the Pre-season All-American First Team Cornerback for this season.

Jones has high hopes for the season, and he knows his team is capable of finding success.

"Knowing what Coach Lebby, with the mindset he got going into the season that we overly understand now, we are ready to make history," Jones said.

Offensively, Mississippi State has a deep receiver room, creating competition within the team and allowing any string to make plays on the field.

"There's a bunch of guys making plays when they have the opportunity to," head coach Jeff Lebby said during a post-scrimmage press conference on August 16th. "There's great competition there. We've got to continue to mold those young guys the right way so they can do some pretty special things and unique things for us."

Anthony Evans III, a Georgia wide receiver, fell into the footsteps of former teammate Brenen Thompson, who has gone on to play in the NFL. Evans announced his return in early January.

Evans started in all 13 games last season and finished second on the team in receiving yards and receiving touchdowns.

"We're gonna score from far," Evans said at Media Days. "That's what we live on. Play free, fast and freaky."

When the team has multiple players following in the footsteps of Evans, they are clearly in good hands. The last two seasons have seen improvement in terms of how many wins MSU has pulled off, but this season has the potential to go 8-4.

My predictions:

September 5th: The first home game of the season against the University of Louisiana at Monroe with a night kickoff. On September 6th, the Bulldogs will wake up 1-0.

September 12th: On the road against the Minnesota Golden Gophers, a Big Ten Conference team. The Gophers went 7-0 at home last season, but if they put up a fight, the Bulldogs could hand them a home loss and fly back to Starkville as a 2-0 team.

September 19th: MSU will head to South Carolina to play in their first conference game against the Gamecocks, who ended their season 4-8 and 1-7 in conference play. As a 2-0 team, the Bulldogs have a promising chance to keep their undefeated record at this point.

September 26th: The Bulldogs will be back home in Davis Wade and host the No.25 Missouri Tigers for the second conference game of the season. This game could go one of two ways: MSU pulls off the win, or they get handed the first loss of the season. One of Mizzou's key players, Ahmaud Hardy, is out for the beginning of the season due to an injury. If Hardy is not back by this game, the Bulldogs should have no problem defeating the Tigers, but if he is back, they will need to put up a fight.

October 3rd: The game. The No.13 Alabama Crimson Tide will travel to Davis Wade for an 11:00 a.m. kickoff. Both teams could be 4-0 at this point, but one will end the night 4-1: Alabama. It will be challenging, but the Dawgs can defeat the Tide.

October 17th: The LSU Tiger Stadium is not called Death Valley for no reason. Former Ole Miss head coach Lane Kiffin now leads the No.11 Tigers, and it will be extremely difficult to beat his new team. The Dawgs will be 5-1 on their way back to Starkville.

October 24th: The Bulldogs will return to Davis Wade after a tough loss, but fans will keep showing up. The No.10 Oklahoma Sooners will make their way to Starkville. It could be pulled off, but with the way the teams look in pre-season, the Sooners will take the win, leaving MSU at 5-2.

October 31st: After a week at home, the Dawgs will travel to Austin, Texas to play under the lights on Halloween. The third loss of the season could be against the No.5 Texas Longhorns. There is not much to be said about this game; it will be a fight.

November 7th: After a loss to the Longhorns, fans and players will be upset. A game must be won, and this will be the one. The Vanderbilt Commodores will play under the cowbells and fall under pressure. The Dawgs will be 6-3 on the season.

November 14th: A win will be made, and morale will rise once more. The Auburn Tigers will head to Davis Wade for a total toss-up of a game. This game could go either way, but if the season goes as planned, the Dawgs could come up on the higher end of the stick and end the night as a 7-3 team.

November 21st: Tennessee Tech. Do not overlook them just because they are not in the SEC. After facing off against SEC teams and putting up a battle week after week, this game should be a comfortable win. MSU will be 8-3.

November 27th: The Egg Bowl in Oxford. The Rebels lost coaches, players and fans; their season is a wildcard. If the Dawgs are 8-3 entering this game, they could pull it off. It is too soon to tell, but as of pre-season, the Rebels will take this one. The Bulldogs will end 8-4, and compared to the last two seasons, that is considered a successful season.

In any sport, some of the games that are assumed to be the easiest can put up the biggest challenge, and that is what college football is all about. The Mississippi State football team needs to act on what they have been preaching and show the South that they do belong in the SEC. This is their year. They need this to be their year.

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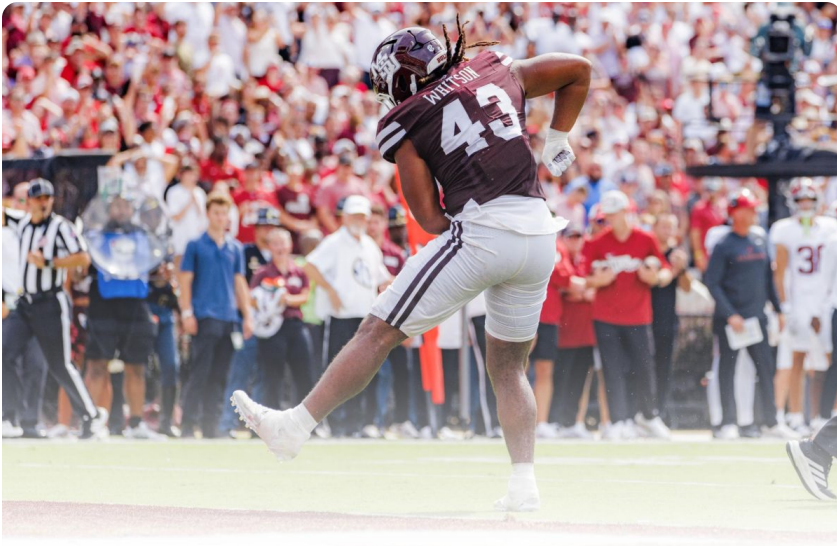
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