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College Football Insider Blog (<http://blogs.ajc.com/college-football-insider-blog>)

Ole Miss on verge of joining SEC's elite

9:59 am September 16, 2013, by Andy Johnston



Hugh Freeze has led Ole Miss to a 3-0 record after Saturday's win at Texas. (AP)

Coaches and players say they don't look ahead, but I can.

Like every week, there are obviously critical SEC games on Saturday, including Auburn at LSU and Tennessee at Florida.

But another huge game looms on Sept. 28.

Ole Miss at Alabama.

I wasn't sold on the Rebels this year.

- They're too young.
- Their defense isn't stout.
- QB Bo Wallace is too inconsistent.
- Hugh Freeze needed more time at the ultimate level.

And one or all of those things might show up at some point.

But the Rebels shut down Texas 27-0 in the second half Saturday – insert Mack Brown joke here – on their way to a 44-23 win at Austin.

And from the highlights I saw and the articles I read, they looked manly in doing so – insert another Mack Brown joke here.

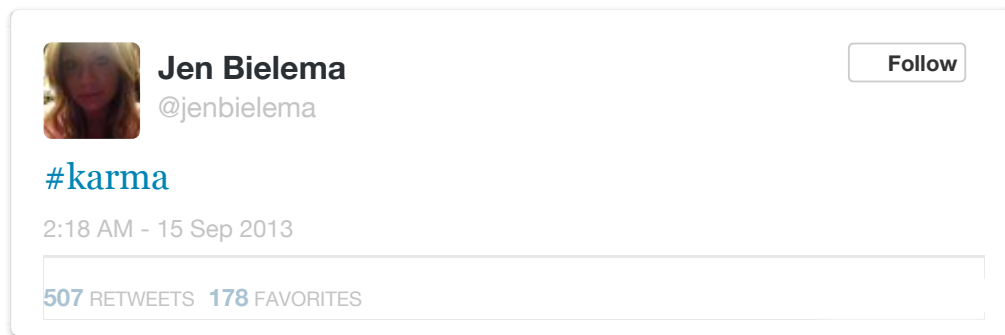
Ole Miss, which moved to 21st in this week's AP poll, gets a week to work and study and improve before playing Alabama, which shouldn't have much trouble with Colorado State this week.

The Rebels are maturing quicker than I thought.

Are they ready to take another step toward joining college football's elite?

Around the SEC


- Here's what Jen Bielema – Arkansas coach Bret Bielema's wife – tweeted after that wacky ending between Arizona State and Wisconsin.



Remember, Bielema made the surprise move to leave Wisconsin to coach the Razorbacks last winter.

- Mike Evans. Mike Evans. Mike Evans.
- Sources say QB Justin Worley's time might be up at Tennessee, even though his numbers – 61.4 completion rate, five TDs, one interception – are decent.
- Bielema is turning Arkansas into a Big Ten team. RBs Alex Collins (418 yards) and Jonathan Williams (393 yards) have looked great against UL-Lafayette, Samford and Southern Miss. The opposition gradually stiffens with Rutgers this week and Texas A&M the next.
- Nick Marshall was great on Auburn's game-winning drive against Mississippi State. He looked poised and confident. We have to remember that he played in SEC games as a freshman at UGA, but this is his first go-around as a QB, which could come into play at LSU on Saturday.
- South Carolina's Mike Davis is better than I thought. Gamecocks fans sainted Marcus Lattimore, but Davis – who played at Stephenson High in Stone Mountain – gradually is winning their hearts.
- Is Dan Mullen's time running out in Starkville? The Bulldogs gave up Auburn's last-minute drive and have lost seven of nine games since starting 7-0 last year.

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