

# Quotes from Monday's Football Press Conference

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## Coach McCollum's Opening Comments

I'm not going to spend too much time talking about last week. It was a very disappointing loss for us. After going back and watching film, we're just not executing. I thought our kids came out ready to play. I don't think there's a question about that. We took the ball down on that first drive and executed well and the defense played with a lot of enthusiasm. As the game went, we didn't put things away when we had an opportunity early. Southeast Missouri, and it's a credit to their staff, did a good job of making plays. We've turned the page. It's been a tough



weekend for us, but every team goes through adversity and we're going through ours. We're looking for the positives. We're back at work preparing like we always do, for an Arkansas State team that has got a lot of confidence right now and has won three games. They've got a new staff, the kids are playing hard, and it will be a great challenge for us. But our concern is our football team and getting confidence. Our team, coming off of the first three games, didn't play with a lot of confidence, and we didn't play with a lot of confidence this Saturday. So we have to come back and believe in ourselves and believe in what we're doing and get some confidence. The way you get better is to go right back to work. In this profession you know when you get down a little you have people that were behind you, but really may not be behind you. The straddlers become straddlers again. Our kids have understood that and I understand that. Now we have to get back-to-back with each other. We're going to pull this thing together and get ready for the challenge this weekend. **McCollum on addressing his team's confidence**

It's like I said after the first three games; we have a fragile team. We have to learn how to win. This team has got to learn how to win. The thing you have when you have adversity, after a disappointing loss, you have to pull everyone together. Now that all of this has come about, you have people around you that are happy about it. Now questions have come up on your kids, on our coaches, and everything. When you go through adversity, that's just part of it. Adversity also makes you stronger.

We're going to find the guys who are going to pull together. We had a great practice last night. We had a great team meeting yesterday. These kids want to win. They're good kids. We've just got to get back-to-back with each other and go out and work this week to get better and that's what we plan on doing. **McCollum on injuries**

[Dwone] Hicks is day-to-day and we should get [Brandon] Westbrook back. Not having those two, who are two of your leaders offensively is a blow to the team. Westbrook will get back, and not only as a good football player, but also as a leader on the offensive line, so hopefully we should have him ready to go. **McCollum on an improving Arkansas State team**

They're a lot better than a year ago. They're almost a different football team. They're playing hard. They've won three games. They're 1-0 in the conference right now and leading the Sun Belt. They have a lot of confidence and we've got to go to their place. We've been road tested and gone through some tough environments, so this is another tough challenge for us. They're doing good things, the kids are playing hard, and they've bought into the new staff. So we know it's going to be a challenge for us, so we have to get Middle Tennessee ready. **McCollum on Saturday's game atmosphere**

There's no doubt that's what we want here. That's what we want to continue [happening]. That's the most disappointing thing about not playing as well as we know we can was walking into our stadium and seeing 27,000 and the tailgating around the stadium and seeing the excitement around the program. That's why we, as a staff and players, are disappointed because we've dreamed of those opportunities. But we need them to continue happening. We're going to work very hard to get better. Seeing the way our student body turned out shows that we're growing in that aspect. It was a setback for us, but it's also one that we want to learn from and not let it beat us up. That's what we're going to continue doing and we're going to do it in a positive way. **McCollum on whether or not the team's first three games had an effect on Saturday's outcome**

I have no idea. I will not stand up here and make excuses about anything. We didn't play well. We had opportunities to do things, but we got a penalty here or a penalty there or we would hurt ourselves by not executing or have a lost-yardage play or whatever. We had a great week of work going into it. The kids were excited about being at home. But at the same time, they hadn't learned how to win in the first three. We did some good things. We played tough and we played hard on three tough road trips. No, it didn't have anything to do with that other than we didn't come out of that with a lot of confidence and that's where we have to get better. **McCollum on the possibility of changing scheduling philosophy**

I don't schedule, but I think after the year's over we'll look back and see what's best for the program and what's best for the kids. It was tough and, hopefully, somewhere we're going to be able to look back and find a reward for it. Yes, it is tough, but we still had opportunities to win this last game and we didn't. That's my job to get us ready to do that. It's our job as a team to work hard this week. But we worked hard the week before. When you're 0-3, how can you overlook anybody? We've just got to get back-to-back with each other and fight through the adversity part of it and fight through the negatives that we're going to hear. And we've got to fight through all of the things where everybody jumps in and everybody's excited and all of a sudden the questions come up and the non-loyal ones poke their heads out. We all understand that because it's part of the game and it's part of this profession. But we've got each other and that's where we've got to grow. We're not going to go around and pout and hold our heads down and all of that. We had a bad day Saturday and we had a tough day on us yesterday, but it's over. It's time to get prepared for our next challenge. **McCollum on possible lineup changes**

We'll find our after this week of work. There will be some. We're going to do the things that give our kids a chance to be successful and we're going to get the ones out there who are hungry. But I don't

know right off the top of my head who that's going to be right now. **McCollum on Robert Billings**  
 Robert did a great job. Robert Billings did a super job giving us a chance by getting the ball downed inside the one-yard line and giving the defense an opportunity. We held them there and the offense came back and put a touchdown on them. Robert's been consistent. He's really only had one bad game since he's been here and that was against Tennessee. But he came back and is doing a great job and he'll have to keep it going this week, because their punt returner is one of the best in the country in James Hickenbotham. They do a super job on punt returns and kick returns and everything. So our Pride team has got to do a super job this week. **PLAYER QUOTES**

**DB Muhammad Rashada on Arkansas State**

"They have three wins. They are a pretty good football team and are a lot different than last year. We beat them last year but that has nothing to do with this year. They're different and we're different and we just have to prepare." **DB Muhammad Rashada on the Blue Raiders**

"We're 0-4, but we haven't started conference play yet. Hopefully we'll get rolling. North Texas started slow last year and then won the conference. Hopefully we can feed off that and get things going. We need to get that first win out of the way. We have to learn how to win. We could have won Saturday, but we didn't take advantage of our opportunities. The defense has to finish and get off the field on third downs." **QB Andrico Hines on the team's struggles**

"It's nothing physical. We have great athletes on both sides of the ball. It's all mental. Once we come together as a team, the old Middle Tennessee will come back out." **QB Andrico Hines on Arkansas State**

"This is not last year's team. I know they don't have the same team. They have a great bunch of guys over there. They have three wins right now and are on the right track. They're at the top of the conference. But I think once we take care of Middle Tennessee, everything else will take care of itself." **QB Andrico Hines on the first conference game**

"This is what you play for, a conference championship. The other games are "exposure" games, the big games, but the conference is what you set your goals for. You want to win the conference and go to a bowl game, so right now we're 0-0 in the conference and that's all that matters." **QB Andrico Hines on North Texas starting slow and then winning the conference last year**

"You don't want to think like that, but if that's the way you have to look at it, then yes. They started off 0-5 and it was kind of embarrassing for us to lose to them last year. You could say it was an embarrassment for us to lose Saturday, but things happen for a reason. We're coming together more as a team because it happened. You hate for it to happen like that. I'm just glad it didn't happen in a conference game. We still have a lot of goals ahead of us and our season is far from over. **QB**

**Andrico Hines on the mood of the team after Saturday**

"We have to get better. They played their hearts out, you can't take anything away from SEMO. It's all on us - what we're going to do from here and that's all it's about right now."

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