# Quotes from Today's Blue Raider Press Conference

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**McCollum's Opening Remarks**
We're coming off another disappointing loss. We're coming off a loss where we're not making our breaks. I felt like our kids went out and we had a great week of work last week and we had great meetings, but we came up short. I give credit to Arkansas State. They did a good job. It's tough to win when you turn the ball over two times in the red zone and you miss field goals in the red zone. We have got to learn to win. We're a struggling football team right now that is not playing with a lot of confidence. We've got to go back to work and get that done. We're going into another tough challenge, another game on the road against an SEC team that is a greatly improved football team. We know the challenge ahead of us and we've got to have another great week of work to get ready for it. **McCollum on Dwone Hicks' status for the Vandy game**
He's day-by-day. He is doing a lot better. He wasn't quite ready last week against Arkansas State, but we should know something by Wednesday or Thursday if he is going to be full speed. We won't play him unless he's full speed. **McCollum on whether or not he thinks Hicks will be ready**
You know, Dwone's the type of kid, if there's anyone who can get ready with what he's gone through, then he'll be ready. He wants to play, but I also don't want an 80 percent guy out there. If he's 100 percent and feels good about it and he's cleared to go then yes, he'll be the first one to not let anyone keep him from playing. **McCollum on what Hicks' absence has meant to the offense**
It's tough. You've got a guy going for the Heisman and when you lose a guy like that, not only what he does on the field, but his leadership, it's tough. I mean, Dwone's been a four-year starter here and we've won a lot of games with Dwone. And it's how the other kids react around Dwone. The leadership we need, you lose that. We lose the physical element that Dwone brings. Anytime you lose a player of that caliber then it hurts. But that's when other people have to step up and get the job done. But you really would like to have Dwone back. **McCollum on whether the offense or defense will be most important against Vandy**
We've got to get Middle Tennessee better to start with. We're hurting ourselves too much. We move the ball, and then we turn it over. Whether it be a fumble or an interception or a bad decision. When you haven't won a game, you've got to get confidence and learn how to win. We haven't done that. When you're struggling, you don't get breaks and you have to make breaks and that's what we've got to be able to do. We haven't been able to overcome that yet. We're going against a Vanderbilt

team that is playing hard and they're very well coached. We have a lot of respect for them. We know from watching the previous games, and they have had a week off, which always helps a team. We know we have to get prepared this week for another great challenge against an SEC team.
**McCollum on the difference between last year's VU team and this year's VU team**
Attitude. The players are playing hard. When you look out there you see that they have done a tremendous job. Coach Johnson and his staff, we knew going into it they would do a great job there. Their players have bought into what they're doing and they're playing with great effort and they're doing things on offense that they're capable of doing. It's a tough challenge, and especially with us struggling. We've got to find a way to overcome us right now. **McCollum on VU's Benji Walker's first-ever start at QB**
We saw him in high school, so we know what kind of player Benji is. When you go into the season and Benji and [Jay] Cutler were competing all the way to the first game, so that means there's not too much difference in the two players. Cutler did a tremendous job with the offense and as you watch Cutler you see that he's such a physical guy and he has taken some shots. That says a lot for him. But Benji came from a great high school program and is a great athlete. Their offense is probably not going to change too much with Benji. Since they went neck-and-neck all the way to the first game, there's probably not too much difference in them. **McCollum on his defense's improved performance against Arkansas State**
It's encouraging. But when you lose you can see the positives, but we still didn't win. I think when you're struggling on one side of the ball then you look for the other side to make a play and we had opportunities. I was disappointed that we gave up a long run early in the game that got them all into it. But I was proud of holding them to a field goal. Then, after a turnover, we held them to a field goal. In the second half they raised it to another level and that's what needed to happen. But we had opportunities to get an interception here or there or create some turnovers. When we're struggling, this is a team game and there's nothing that says the defense can't score and theirs did. You want to find a way to make a break for ourselves and that's where the team is growing up. We're going against an offense this week that runs the ball very well and we've got to do a great job of stopping the run and we've got to be ready for the pass and the play action off of it. **McCollum on Andrico Hines**
Andrico is a competitor. Andrico hurts more than anybody. Andrico wants to win more than anybody. He can't press himself because he can't do it all and he doesn't need to do it all. He's got to continue making better decisions. I mean we can't throw an interception for a touchdown without our defense on the field. It's still a growing process for him. We believe in Andrico and he gives you a lot of things that give you a chance to win, also. But we can't fumble and we can't turn the ball over, especially when you're struggling and especially in the red zone when you're doing a great job driving the ball down the field. We've got to make plays. When you're struggling somebody has got to step up and say 'I'm going to make the play.' That's what we've got to continue doing. We believe in Andrico. He settled down after the last interception and drove us all the way back down the field and gave us a chance to win. He had the last pass to [Tyrone] Calico that was a close call that would have put us on the one and give us a chance to win the game. We just need a break like that to get us going.
**McCollum on improving but not having a win to show for it**
We're all looking for answers. I have never been 0-5. We're all looking for answers. Now is the time that you get the negatives. You get the disloyal people sticking their heads out. People take shots at you. It's something we have to learn and deal with. I have to learn and deal with it. We haven't had that in three years. This is new, but I also know that adversity makes you grow stronger. We're going to find a way to get back-to-back with each other and we're going to get better. One thing I know is that when you're struggling you go back to fundamentals and working harder. That's what we're

going to do. Hopefully, we'll look back and remember all of the negatives and we'll remember the ones that jumped in and jumped out. That's part of the profession, how easy it is one day and how tough it is the next day. That's just part of it. But it's also a growing part of it. It's something that I want my kids to learn and understand because that's not just in football, that's in life. Everything we do, we want to better our kids, not just for now, but for later on. So, this is part of life. There's lots of worse things going on in the country and the world going on right now other than what's happening right here. But it's not OK to lose here and nobody is proud of that. Our kids are giving great effort and our kids are playing hard. We've just got to have some kids step up and make plays and fight through this thing. **McCollum on whether or not this is the most frustrating thing he has ever dealt with as a coach**
No, because I am going to wake up every day and I'm going to look myself in the mirror and see what I can do to help these kids and this program to get better. Do I like losing? No. Is it frustrating losing? Yeah. Is it frustrating seeing the kids play with great effort and not getting a win? Yeah, that's frustrating. Myself and the staff are going to do everything we can to give the kids an opportunity. We have got a team that has gone through a rough start and hasn't gained confidence going through it. So, we've got to have breaks. We've got to make some plays. We've got to have good things happen to us and we've just got to keep overcoming the adversity of it. It's frustrating, but not to the point where I'm not going to come to work everyday and hold my head up and keep a smile on my face and keep this thing positive. No, I'm not going to let the negative folks get me down like that. That's not going to happen. **McCollum on the mental state of his team**
They're ready to win. They're ready to go back to work. They're disappointed, but they also know that a play here or a play there turns the whole thing around. Now, who's going to be the guy to step up and make it? That's what we've got to have. **PLAYER QUOTES**
**LB Randy Arnold**
"We need to make plays and better decisions as a team. We have to step up and and make plays and believe we're going to win. This is a good game to focus on and get back on the right track. We have to take it one game at a time and get better, focus on ourselves. We can't worry about anybody else right now. We are coming together as a team. The defense did play better [against Arkansas State], but we have to make plays. It makes the game easier on both sides of the ball. Not having a win, though, always makes you feel like you have to get better." **WR David Youell**
"It's just a matter of making plays when we have the opportunity. We turned the ball over [against Arkansas State] and we can't let it come down to a referee. The coaching staff preaches that we can't turn the ball over and now we see why. It's time for us to get our first win. We can't look at the big picture anymore, trying to win the Sun Belt. We have to take it one game at a time and get that first win." **On Vanderbilt**
"Vanderbilt has a lot of confidence. They've bought in to the philosophies of the new staff. But we have to worry about ourselves right now and execute our gameplan." **DB Tony Sutton**
"We have to battle as a team and meet our goal of winning our first game. It doesn't matter how far away we're playing or who we're playing. We have to come together and correct our mistakes right now. It's all about Middle Tennessee. Whatever we do, so long as we correct our mistakes, we can win a ballgame." **On being 0-5**
It's not so much frustration. It hurts to lose and we're all looking for answers. We're looking for one little thing we can do better to get that win." **On playing in front of big crowds**
Having a good crowd is always a good thing. But as long as we have each other and cheer for each other on the sidelines, we'll play just the same.

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