No. 16 Oklahoma drops Blue Raiders

Middle Tennessee falls 59-0

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NORMAN, Okla. - Middle Tennessee's first trip to Memorial Stadium to face Oklahoma was not a pleasant experience as the No. 16-ranked Sooners dealt the Blue Raiders a 59-0 setback in front of 84,326 here Saturday.

The 59-point margin of defeat was the greatest for the Blue Raiders (2-2) since moving to college football's highest level in 1999. Middle Tennessee managed 95 yards total offense, which were the fewest since collecting 69 against Illinois in 1998.

Oklahoma (3-1) got on the scoreboard on its opening drive when Garrett Hartley split the uprights from 28 yards out to give the Sooners a 3-0 lead with 10:54 remaining in the first half. Middle Tennessee's defense actually made a nice stand on the drive to force the field goal.

The Sooners had the ball first-and-goal at the 4 but J.K. Sabb threw Adrian Peterson for a three-yard loss and on second-and-goal from the 7, Trevor Jenkins stopped Peterson for a 4-yard loss to set up third-and-goal at the 11. Justin Rainey successfully defended a third-down pass, forcing Oklahoma to settle for the field goal.

It went downhill from there; however, as Oklahoma took advantage of two Middle Tennessee first-quarter turnovers and parlayed them into scores on the way to a commanding 24-0 advantage after

just one quarter.

The Blue Raider defense, which entered the game ranked No. 11 nationally in total defense, was at a disadvantage throughout the first half as the Sooners maintained excellent starting position.

Middle Tennessee head coach Rick Stockstill had said it would be a long day for the defense if the Blue Raider offense could not sustain drives and keep the Sooners off the field, which proved prophetic.

The Blue Raiders ran just 22 plays on their eight first-half possessions. Additionally, Middle Tennessee was guilty of four turnovers - three on offense and one on special teams - in the opening half. The Sooners parlayed the miscues into 28 points and scored on all seven of their first-half possessions.

They scored on their first possession of the second half before the Blue Raiders finally forced a punt on the Sooners' ninth possession. Middle Tennessee's fifth turnover, a Joe Craddock interception, gave Oklahoma the ball at the 1; however, Dana Stewart recovered an Oklahoma turnover at the 4 to provide the hard-working defense with a well-deserved stop.

Middle Tennessee steps back into Sun Belt Conference action when it faces North Texas in Denton, Texas, next Saturday.

POSTGAME NOTES

SABB PASSES CALDWELL: Senior J.K. Sabb moved into the top 10 at Middle Tennessee in tackles for loss when he registered four in the loss to Oklahoma. Sabb, who is ninth on the career list, now has 22.5 tackles for loss to edge past Keith Pauldo's total of 22 he set from 1997-00. Sabb needs 1.5 more to overtake Mick McCullough for eighth place.

HIGHLIGHTS FEW, BUT ...: Middle Tennessee gave up 59 points in its loss to Oklahoma Saturday; however, the defense was constantly in bad situations with the Sooners generally playing with a short field. They also scored on a punt return, an interception return, and were the beneficiary of five Blue Raider turnovers. The Blue Raider defense would not give up in the second half, though, as Dana Stewart and Tavares Jones recovered turnovers to curtail what could have been even greater damage. Stewart's recovery came inside the 5-yard line, and Jones collected his turnover recovery with the Sooners driving inside the Blue Raider 40 in the fourth quarter.

FRANKLIN MISSES OU GAME: Senior offensive tackle Germayle Franklin, who was scheduled to make his 32nd straight start today, did not make the trip to Norman due to the death of his mother, Jacqueline Thomas, this past Sunday. Franklin flew to his hometown of Waycross, Ga., on Sunday afternoon and attended the funeral that was scheduled for today.

SCORING STRING BROKEN: Middle Tennessee failed to put points on the scoreboard in the loss to #16 Oklahoma for the first time since 2000 when Florida downed the Blue Raiders 55-0. The Blue Raiders had scored in 69 straight games entering tonight's action. Over the last 113 games, Middle Tennessee has failed to score points only three times (at Louisiana-Monroe in 1999, at Florida in 2000, and at Oklahoma in 2006). Middle Tennessee managed just 95 yards total offense, which were the fewest since gaining 69 at Illinois in 1998, the program's last year as a Division I-AA member.

QUICK HITTERS: Middle Tennessee's 59-point loss marked the largest margin of defeat in the I-A

era ... The Blue Raiders are now 0-10 during the I-A era against nationally ranked teams ... Today's game was the 24th in the I-A era against a team from either the ACC, Big East, Pac-10, SEC, Big 12 or Big 10 (I-A era began in 1999) ... Oklahoma's 73-yard pass play in the first quarter was the longest against MT since Utah State's Kevin Curtis hauled in a 79-yard pass against the Blue Raiders in 2002 ... Sophomore Brandon Perry played in his first game of the season when he entered the contest in the third quarter ... The 61-yard punt return for a touchdown by Oklahoma marked the first time the Blue Raiders have given up a score on a punt return since Arizona's Dennis Northcutt brought one back 80 yards against MT in 1999.

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