

Raiders Move to 2-0 in SBC with 35-0 Victory

MT records first-ever SBC road shutout

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DENTON, Texas - Eugene Gross scored a pair of rushing touchdowns and the Middle Tennessee defense recorded its first road shutout since 1995 in a 35-0 victory over North Texas Saturday night at Fouts Field.

The Blue Raiders (3-2, 2-0 Sun Belt) dominated the contest from start to finish on both sides of the ball, limiting the Mean Green (1-4, 0-1 SBC) to just 103 yards of total offense and forcing three turnovers on defense and outgaining the home team, 366-103. The offensive output was the best for Middle Tennessee this season.

The win was the first for Middle Tennessee over North Texas in the six-year history of the series and the first road shutout for the Blue Raiders since October 7, 1995, a 43-0 triumph over Austin Peay and a span of 121 games.

The Blue Raiders got out to a fast start thanks to the defense. J.K. Sabb sacked UNT quarterback Woody Wilson and safety Jonathan Harris recovered the fumble. Eugene Gross scored from 15 yards out, capping a four-play, 26-yard drive for an early 7-0 Middle Tennessee lead.

The Blue Raiders took their next possession 63 yards, with Gross punching it in from a yard out for a 14-0 Middle Tennessee advantage midway through the opening period.

Middle Tennessee took a commanding 21-0 edge late in the second quarter after an almost six-minute drive, with Clint Marks hitting Bobby Williams for a four-yard TD.



After halftime the Blue Raiders punted on their first possession but then drove 78 yards on nine plays, with DeMarco McNair diving in from a yard out for the score. McNair ran the ball seven of the nine plays on the drive, pushing the Middle Tennessee lead to 28-0.

The Blue Raiders put the final nail in the coffin with less than a minute to play in the contest, with Desmond Gee capping a 15-play, 80-yard drive with a one-yard plunge for the final 35-0 score.

Middle Tennessee's rushing attack gained 212 yards on 57 carries, while Marks was an efficient 13-of-18 for 154 yards, the one touchdown and no interceptions. The Blue Raiders did not have a turnover in the contest.

Middle Tennessee hosts Louisville Friday at 7 p.m. at LP Field in Nashville, Tenn.

GAME NOTES

ROAD SHUTOUT: Middle Tennessee recorded its first-ever shutout of a Sun Belt Conference opponent on the road when it blanked North Texas, 35-0. It was just the second SBC shutout overall since the Blue Raiders joined the conference in 2001 with the other one coming at home against Utah State (21-0) in 2004. It also marks the first shutout by the Blue Raiders on the road since defeating Austin Peay, 43-0, in 1995 - a span of 121 games.

FIRST QUARTER EXPLOSION: The Blue Raiders jumped out to their best start of the season with 14 first quarter points against the Mean Green. Coming into tonight's action, Middle Tennessee had been outscored in the opening period, 40-6.

SABB MOVES TO NINTH: Senior J.K. Sabb wasted little time moving up the career tackles for loss list when he picked up a TFL on the first possession of the game. Sabb hit the UNT quarterback for a sack and forced a fumble to pick up his 22.5 TFL to move into ninth place on the all-time list by surpassing Keith Pauldo (22.0). He later added a second to move his career total to 23.5.

DEFENSE SHINING IN SBC: A big reason Middle Tennessee is off to a 2-0 start in conference action is the play of the defense. After giving up a touchdown on the opening drive in the win over FIU, the defense has gone 24 straight possessions without giving up a point. In the two league games, Middle Tennessee has given up just six points, forced four turnovers, and given up an average of just 175.0 total yards per game.

GROSS MOVES PAST RAY: With two touchdowns against North Texas, senior Eugene Gross moved into seventh place on the all-time scoring list. Gross surpassed former placekicker Keegan Ray, who had 214 points from 1996-99. The Statesboro, Ga., native now has 216 career points and stands 44 points behind Kippy Bayless (260) for sixth on the all-time list.

TOUCHDOWN MACHINE: Eugene Gross scored his 34th and 35th rushing touchdowns of his career to inch closer to third place on the all-time list. Gross, who has 36 career touchdowns at Middle Tennessee, needs three more rushing scores to tie Kippy Bayless for third place. Gross now has five rushing touchdowns on the season after collecting 14 in 2005.

HARRIS COMES UP BIG: Senior safety Jonathan Harris came up big against North Texas by collecting an interception and a fumble recovery - all in the first quarter. It was Harris' first interception of the season and the second of his career (vs. Vanderbilt in 2005) and the fumble

recovery was the first of his career.

MARKS GETS 32ND: Senior signal-caller Clint Marks tossed his 32nd career touchdown pass in the second quarter when he hooked up on a 4-yard strike to Bobby Williams. Marks is now just one touchdown pass shy of equaling Mickey Corwin for fourth place on the all-time list. It was Marks' third TD pass of the 2006 season.

GROSS IN TOP TEN: With 88 yards rushing tonight against North Texas, senior Eugene Gross surpassed Lebrian McGill for 10th place on the all-time rushing list. Gross now has 2124 career rushing yards and needs just six to take over ninth place from Kelverrick Green (2,150).

QUICK HITTERS: Middle Tennessee is 2-0 in SBC play for the first time since 2003 ... The 35 points tonight matches the most MT has ever scored against UNT ... After having 17 turnovers in the previous five meetings against UNT, the Blue Raiders did not have one miscue in tonight's win ... FB Coy Williamson made his first collegiate start tonight against North Texas ... QB Clint Marks started his 26th straight game under center tonight ... Middle Tennessee scored on its opening possession of the game for just the second time this season (field goal at Maryland) ... WR Bobby Williams hauled in his second career touchdown pass tonight and the first of the season ... Reggie Doucet came up with his third interception of the season tonight in the third quarter against the Mean Green ... WR Jonathan Grigsby recorded the longest reception of his career when he hauled in a 53-yarder from Clint Marks in the third quarter ... The 53-yard Grigsby reception went down as the second longest pass play of the season ... RB DeMarco McNair turned in his fourth career rushing touchdown tonight and the second of the season when he leaped in from 1-yard out in the third quarter ... Freshman Phillip Tanner recorded his first collegiate sack against UNT.

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