USC ends Blue Raiders four-game winning streak

Blue Raiders held to 200 total yards

November 18, 2006 · MT Media Relations

COLUMBIA, S.C. - South Carolina scored 52 unanswered points and used a strong passing attack to end Middle Tennessee's four-game winning streak with a 52-7 victory over the Blue Raiders in front of 70,422 at Williams-Brice Stadium.

The combination of Blake Mitchell and Sydney Rice were too much for the Blue Raiders on what was a beautiful fall afternoon in Columbia. Mitchell completed 21 of 28 passes for a career-best 388 yards and four touchdowns, while Rice hauled in six receptions for 90 yards and two scores. Mitchell's passing yards were the most against the Blue Raiders this season and went down as the seventh-best single-game total in USC history.

The Gamecocks defense did not take a back seat to the Mitchell-Rice show as they held the Blue Raiders to just 200 total yards, including 82 rushing yards, and hurried quarterbacks Clint Marks and Joe Craddock all afternoon.

In the second half, USC tacked on 24 more points and held the Blue Raider offense to just 70 yards to pick up its sixth win of the season.

The Blue Raiders (7-4) struck early as Clint Marks hit Desmond Gee for a 73-yard touchdown to put the visitors ahead, 7-0, just 30 seconds into the contest. It went down as the longest pass play of the season and the longest by the Blue Raiders since Marks hit Kerry Wright for 80 yards against Arkansas State in 2004.

The Gamecocks (6-5) answered later in the quarter with a 12-play, 85-yard drive that was capped off with a 4-yard run from tailback Cory Boyd to tie the score at 7-7. The drive was aided by a defensive holding call and a missed tackle on third-and-goal.

The home team wasted little time in grabbing its first lead. After holding the Blue Raiders to a three-and-out, USC went 67 yards in three plays to make the score 14-7 at the end of the first quarter. The Gamecocks got on the board again when Mitchell hit Rice for a 37-yard touchdown on third-and-10 to give USC a 21-7 advantage. That drive was aided by a 15-yard penalty against MT for illegal use of hands to the face and nullified a Blue Raider sack.

USC completed its first half scoring when Rice leaped high in the corner of the endzone over Bradley Robinson to bring in a 27-yard prayer from Mitchell. That gave the Gamecocks a commanding 28-7 lead halftime.

Middle Tennessee will host Troy next Saturday in its final regular season home game with the winner being crowned Sun Belt Conference Champions and earning a trip to the December 22 New Orleans Bowl. Kickoff is slated for 2:37 PM.

GAME NOTES

BLUE RAIDERS SET TFL MARK: Middle Tennessee recorded four tackles for loss against South Carolina to set a new single-season record with 86 TFLs in 2006. The Blue Raiders broke the previous record of 83 set by the 1982 squad that finished 8-3.

2006 TEAM OWNS SACK RECORD: With safety Damon Nickson's first career quarterback sack late in the second quarter Middle Tennessee broke the record for sacks in a season. The Blue Raiders now have 29 sacks on the year to break the previous mark of 28 sacks set by the 2004 team.

GROSS PASSES CAMPBELL: Senior Eugene Gross had 11 rushing attempts against South Carolina to surpass Joe Campbell for second place on the all-time rushing attempts list. Gross now has 647 career attempts but will not catch all-time leader Mike Moore who amassed 807 carries during his four-year career (1974-77).

GEE GOES DEEP: Middle Tennessee true freshman Desmond Gee got the Blue Raiders on the scoreboard quick by reeling in a career long 73-yard pass from Clint Marks on the games first play. It went down as the longest pass play for the Blue Raiders since Marks connected with Kerry Wright for 80 yards against Arkansas State on Oct. 9, 2004. The play also went down as the third longest play of the season for Middle Tennessee.

GROSS PASSES MOORE: Senior Eugene Gross tallied 57 all-purpose yards to move into fourth place on the all-time list. Gross, who now has 3,955 career all-purpose yards, surpassed Mike Moore who had 3,916 yards from 1974-77. Gross needs 74 more yards to take over third place from Kippy Bayless (4,028).

QUICK HITTERS: Desmond Gee has now scored at least one touchdown in five straight games for the Blue Raiders ... QB Clint Marks made his 31st straight start under center today against USC ... Today's game was the 26th by the Blue Raiders in the I-A era (since 1999) against a team from either the ACC, Big East, SEC, Big 10, Big 12 or Pac-10 ... Freshman Danny Carmichael did not play today due to a foot injury ... Middle Tennessee's opening drive touchdown was the third time this year the Blue Raiders have scored a TD on its opening drive ... The Blue Raiders fell to 5-1 on the season when scoring first ... Jonathan Harris recovered his team-leading third fumble today against USC ... MT fell to 3-25 against the SEC all-time with the loss to USC ... Today's game was the 90th for Middle Tennessee at the I-A level ... TE John Marc Stephens recorded his first collegiate reception during the fourth quarter against USC ... Middle Tennessee committed a season-high 10 penalties for 73 yards with the previous high being seven.

Printed on April 15, 2014
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/22529