Troy Makes Big Comeback in 21-20 Blue Raiders Loss

Trojans score twice in final three minutes to take victory

November 25, 2006 · MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Troy quarterback Omar Haugabrook threw a pair of touchdown passes in the final two-and-a-half minutes, erasing a 13-point deficit and defeating Middle Tennessee, 21-20, Saturday at Floyd Stadium. Haugabrook hit Justin Bray with a 19-yard strike with 2:19 remaining in the contest before the Trojans recovered the ensuing onside kick. The Trojans then marched down the field and converted a 4th and 17 in the final minute before hitting Gary Banks with a three-yard strike for the game-winner. Middle Tennessee built the 13-point lead with the help of a pair of trick plays. Freshman Desmond Gee ran for a touchdown and threw for another, both on trick plays, and the Middle Tennessee defense made a huge goal line stand in the fourth quarter that looked the seal the victory. But the Trojans and Haugabrook made all the plays late in the final period. Troy plays at Florida International next Saturday and can claim a spot in the New Orleans Bowl with a victory. Middle Tennessee managed just 203 yards of total offense in the game, including only 79 yards after halftime. But the unit took advantage of field position and Gee was the difference-maker on the scoring plays. The Blue Raiders and head coach Rick Stockstill dipped into the bag of tricks twice in the contest, running the fumble-roosky in the first half and a reverse pass in the fourth quarter for the team's only touchdowns of the game. Gee was a part of both plays, taking the ball from quarterback Clint Marks and running in from four yards out in the second period and tossing a 15-yard scoring strike to Stephen Chicola in the fourth quarter. Troy drove the length of the field on the opening

possession of the game but stalled at the Blue Raider 16. A 33-yard field goal by Greg Whibbs was blocked by linebacker Justin Rainey, keeping the game scoreless in the early going. The Trojans had another positive drive on their next possession, reaching the Middle Tennessee 31, before Rainey intercepted an Omar Haugabrook pass and returned it 29 yards to the Troy 48. The interception was the first of Rainey's career. The Blue Raiders took the ensuing drive 39 yards before stalling at the Troy 2. Colby Smith put the Blue Raiders ahead 3-0 with a 26-yard field goal. The Middle Tennessee defense forced a punt and the offense took over its next possession at its own 34. DeMarco McNair rushed for 22 yards and Clint Marks hit Luke Paschall for 30 yards on the drive. A Marks quarterback sneak on fourth and less than a foot gave the Blue Raiders 1st and goal at the Troy four yard line. On third down Stockstill went into his bag of tricks and pulled out the fumble-roosky, with Marks sticking the ball between a squatting Gee's legs, who took it four yards over the leftside for the score and a 10-0 Middle Tennessee advantage. The Trojans got on the board in the second quarter after a short punt from deep inside Blue Raider territory. The drive took just five plays, with Haugabrook running it in from eight yards out, cutting the Middle Tennessee lead to 10-7. But the Blue Raiders answered before the half, with Marks hitting Bobby Williams for 14 yards to keep the drive going after a Troy timeout. The two hooked up again for 18 yards and McNair rushed for nine before Smith booted a career-best 48-yarder into a slight wind as the gun sounded, giving Middle Tennessee a 13-7 halftime edge. After both defenses buckled down in the third quarter, allowing a combined 15 yards, the Blue Raiders took over at the Troy 48 after a short punt. Gee rushed eight yards on a reverse handoff and McNair carried three times for 21 yards. On 3rd and 1 at the 15, the Blue Raiders ran the same reverse handoff to Gee to the other side, except this time the freshman tossed a pass to a wide open Chicola in the endzone, giving Middle Tennessee a 20-7 lead four minutes into the fourth period. The Trojans answered with a 78-yard drive, converting a pair of fourth downs on the drive. On 4th and 1 at the Blue Raider 2 yard line, Haugabrook was stopped on a quarterback sneak by senior linebacker J.K. Sabb, keeping the game at two-score advantage. Troy would not go away, though, holding the Blue Raiders and then driving 53 yards for a score, capped by a 19-yard strike from Haugabrook to Justin Bray with 2:19 remaining in the contest, cutting the deficit to 20-14. The Trojans recovered the ensuing onside kick and moved to the Middle Tennessee 10 yard line in just five plays. The Blue Raider defense knocked running back Kenny Catthouse for a loss and then sacked Hougabrook, forcing 4th and 17 with just 27 seconds remaining. Hougabrook tossed a pass down the middle into double coverage, but Smokey Hampton made a leaping grab to set up 1st and goal at the three yard line with 19 seconds remaining. Hougabrook then hit Gary Banks on a slant pass for the tying score and Whibbs added the game-winning extra point. The Blue Raiders had one final heave on the final play of the game after a good kickoff return from Damon Nickson, but the ball was batted down by Troy defenders. **POSTGAME NOTES**

NEW ATTENDANCE RECORD: With 17,812 fans at today's final home game against Troy, Middle Tennessee set a new single-season attendance record. For the year, the Blue Raiders averaged 22,037 fans for their five home contests to break the previous high of 21,314 established in 1998 during a four-game home season. **RAINEY GETS FIRST:** Senior Justin Rainey recorded his first career block when he rejected a Troy field goal attempt in the first quarter. It was the first blocked kick under Rick Stockstill and the 20th in the I-A era, including the eighth blocked field goal during that span. **RAINEY GETS PICK:** Senior Justin Rainey, who was recently voted as one of the team's four permanent captains, came up with another big play when he picked off his first career pass in the first quarter to end a Troy drive. Rainey, who returned the interception 29 yards, had a 50-yard fumble return for a touchdown earlier this season against Florida Atlantic. **CAREER LONG FOR COLBY:** Senior Colby Smith nailed a career long 48-yard field goal as time expired in the first half to

give the Blue Raiders back the momentum and give the home team a 13-7 lead. Smith, who is now 8-for-12 on the season, had a previous long of 45 yards set against Troy last year with just four seconds remaining in the first half. The 48-yarder today was the 30th of Smith's career at MT. **MARKS PASSES HOLCOMB:** Senior Clint Marks threw for 111 yards today against Troy to surpass Kelly Holcomb for second place on the all-time passing yardage list at Middle Tennessee. Marks ran his career total to 7,091 yards and will finish well behind all-time leader Wes Counts who had 8,007 yards during his four-year career (1998-2001). **MARKS MOVES UP SINGLE-SEASON LIST:** Senior quarterback Clint Marks was 12-for-20 for 111 yards in the contest. His 12 completions move him past Wes Counts into ninth place on the all-time list and the 20 attempts pushed him past Kelly Holcomb into 10th place on the career charts. **QUICK HITTERS:** QB Clint Marks made his 33rd consecutive start today ... DB Reggie Doucet made his first start today since the Louisiana-Monroe contest ... WR Luke Paschall recorded a career long 30-yard reception on 3rd-and-10 in the second quarter today ... Desmond Gee has now scored a touchdown in six straight games ... Erik Walden picked up his 17th and 18th career sacks and the eighth and ninth of the season (both are school records) ... MT is now 57-27-6 all-time in home finales and 45-38-6 in regular season finales ... Middle Tennessee's defense held the Sun Belt Conference foes to just 24 second half points this season before allowing 14 to Troy in Saturday's contest ... Damon Nickson's 74 return yards gave him 569 return yards this season, ranking fourth on the single-season list. Also Nickson had 20 returns this year, good for eighth on the single-season list ... Colby Smith's seven punts gave him 64 punts this season, tying Brandon Thomas and Ron Taylor for ninth on the single-season charts ... J.K. Sabb recorded one tackle for loss in the contest, tying James McClellan for seventh on the single-season list with 14.5.

Printed on April 18, 2014
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/22629