

August 3, 2007

Blue Raiders to hit the field Monday 105 veterans and newcomers report on Sunday

MT Media Relations



Franklin Dunbar and 33 other lettermen will begin preparation for the season opener with the start of practice on Monday. ()

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Head Coach Rick Stockstill will welcome 105 veterans and newcomers Sunday as the team reports for the start of fall drills. The first official practice is set for Monday at 5:25 PM.

"We are very excited as a staff and team to get practice started," said Stockstill. "The players had a tremendous summer in the weight room and in conditioning and Russell Patterson and Jason Spray deserve a lot of credit in that department.

"These guys had a taste of success last year and they are anxious to get out there and try to improve on what was accomplished a year ago. I am really anxious to see how some of the young guys, like redshirts from last season, respond because we will be counting on a number of them to play big roles in the fall."

On Sunday, the transfers and freshmen will spend most of the day in academic orientation meetings before taking physicals later in the afternoon. Following dinner, Stockstill will hold a senior meeting, followed by a team meeting, before calling it a day.

The NCAA's mandatory acclimatization period will begin with Monday's practice and will conclude with Friday's drills.

"The first week of practice is always tough because you still have to juggle summer classes with workouts," added Stockstill. "Our plan is to install as much as we can in the first week and then start focusing on what we can and can't do. I hope to scrimmage on Saturday to see exactly where we stand.

"We have to be smart on how we practice because we have so many games early in the season. Most of our hitting will come early in camp so we will be a fresh team when the season starts."

A total of 34 lettermen and 13 starters will highlight the list of players reporting to camp, while 24 newcomers and 30 invited walk-ons will be a part of the group as well.

Offensively, six starters are back including tackles **Franklin Dunbar** and **Mark Thompson**, guard Brandon Nix, wide receivers **Taron Henry** and **Bobby Williams**, and tight end **Clinton Corder**. Dunbar is a preseason all-conference pick and has started in 18 straight games.

Offensive lineman **David Price**, fullback Hunter Birtsch, wide receivers **Desmond Gee** and **Jonathan Grigsby**, and tight end **Stephen Chicola** all started at least three games a year ago and return to the fold as well. Gee enjoyed an eye-opening freshman campaign by earning first team all-conference honors as an all-purpose player.

On the defensive side of the ball, starters **Wes Hofacker**, **Trevor Jenkins**, **Tavares Jones**, and Sean Mosley all return up front, while **Bradley Robinson**, **Damon Nickson**, and **Roy Polite** are back in the secondary. Jones and Nickson were also on the preseason all-conference team, along with all-time sack leader **Erik Walden**.

Walden, a candidate for preseason SBC Defensive Player of the Year, set a school and conference record in 2006 by recording 11.5 quarterback sacks. The senior is also the

school's all-time leader in sacks and is easily within reach of setting the SBC career record.

Jake Padrick, Joe Craddock, Ivon Hickmon, Mark Thompson, Chance Dunleavy, Wes Hofacker, D.D. Kyles, and SaCoby Carter are all coming off surgeries and will be limited in practice. Kyles and Carter will be out about three weeks.

"We just have to watch how many reps they get early in camp because they are coming off surgeries," added Stockstill. "We just don't want to rush them back too soon."

The Blue Raiders will open the 2007 season on the road against conference foe Florida Atlantic on September 1. Kickoff is slated for 3:00 PM CST.

CAMP PRACTICE SCHEDULE

Monday, August 6: 5:25 PM to 7:30 PM (Open to public)
 Tuesday, August 7: 5:25 PM to 7:30 PM (Open to public)
 Wednesday, August 8: 5:25 PM to 7:30 PM (Open to public)
 Thursday, August 9: 5:25 PM to 7:30 PM (Open to public)
 Friday, August 10: 5:25 PM to 7:30 PM (Open to public)
 Saturday, August 11: 9:35 AM - 11:35 AM and 4:40 PM to 6:45 PM (Open to public)
 Sunday, August 12: Fan Day 2:30 PM - 4:30 PM (Open to public)
 Monday, August 13: 8:45 AM - 11:00 AM and 4:35 PM - 6:40 PM (Closed to public)
 Tuesday, August 14: 3:45 PM - 6:05 PM (Closed to public)
 Wednesday, August 15: 8:45 AM - 11:00 AM and 4:35 PM - 6:40 PM (Closed to public)
 Thursday, August 16: 3:45 PM - 6:05 PM (Closed to public)
 Friday, August 17: 8:45 AM - 11:00 AM and 4:35 PM - 6:40 PM (Closed to public)
 Saturday, August 18: 3:05 PM - 5:00 PM (Stadium) (Closed to public)
 Sunday, August 19: 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (Closed to public)
 Monday, August 20: 8:45 AM - 11:00 AM and 4:35 PM - 6:40 PM (Closed to public)
 Tuesday, August 21: 3:50 PM - 6:00 PM (Closed to public)
 Wednesday, August 22: 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (Stadium) (Closed to public)
 Thursday, August 23: 3:50 PM - 5:30 PM (Closed to public)
 Friday, August 24: 3:50 PM - 6:00 PM (Closed to public)
 Saturday, August 25: 10:40 AM - 1:00 PM (Closed to public)
 Sunday, August 26: No Practice
 Monday, August 27: Game Week

*All times are subject to change due to inclement weather.

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