

August 7, 2007

## Tuesday's football camp notebook

### Blue Raiders battle through inconsistent workout

MT Media Relations

- **Audio:** [Practice Report](#)
- **Photos:** [Practice Gallery](#)

**STOCKSTILL ON TODAY'S PRACTICE:** "I thought it was okay, just average. The offense got off to a great start and did a nice job during our pass skeleton session then at the end the defense responded, played with some enthusiasm and got the better end of our team drill. We were really up and down and did not show a lot of consistency today."

"I was disappointed in our leadership today and that is something that has to change. When things were going good the leadership was great but when it turned bad I did not see any leadership. There will always be rough stretches of games and that is when good leadership can turn things around."

"The team is really working hard and you can tell they are really into practice. The guys have made a lot of improvement since the spring and that is what you want to see."

**STOCKSTILL ON THE FRESHMEN:** "First of all, our staff is very pleased with this class of newcomers. I think the freshmen defensive backs ([Kevin Brown](#), [Rod Issac](#), [Jeremy Kellem](#)) have been particularly impressive. They are all very athletic and will push for playing time this season. I also like the way offensive lineman [Mark Fisher](#) has jumped in there. I think he has a bright future."

**OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR G.A. MANGUS ON THE OFFENSE:** "We had a good day until we got into our team drill. I think our pass skeleton session was the best we have had since I have been here. Coach (Manny) Diaz told me he did not think any balls hit the ground the entire drill."

**"D" PAYING DIVIDENDS FOR TANNER:** Playing tailback has never been difficult for Middle Tennessee sophomore [Phillip Tanner](#), who rushed for more than 4,200 yards and 76 touchdowns during his prep career at Kimball High School in Dallas, Texas.

Now that the talented 6-foot, 200-pounder has spent a season on the defensive side of the ball; however, Tanner said playing the position has become so much easier.

Tanner played in all 13 games as a true freshman, competing on special teams and seeing action in Middle Tennessee's nickel packages. He finished with 13 unassisted tackles, three assists, collected a sack and added a tackle for loss for good measure.

He will spend the 2007 season trying to get into the open field and make defenders miss.

"I was a little rusty in the spring but I've worked hard in the summer and once I was able to really start focusing on tailback again, everything is so much easier," Tanner said.

Tanner's athleticism and ability to quickly adapt earned him an opportunity to play immediately and help the team from a defensive standpoint in 2006, and he delivered. Tanner said he gained valuable knowledge along the way that is helping him in the present.

"I had to get much stronger last year to play defense, and I did," Tanner said. "I believe the biggest thing is the fact that I had to start watching more film and I was never a big film watcher. Having to adapt to that and develop a better understanding of how watching film helps, has helped me on offense. I understand the importance of film now and it has really helped me pick up blitzes better and do a better job of picking holes."

Senior teammate Demarco McNair said he has been pleased with the overall progress in the offensive backfield but there is a great deal of work ahead.

"We feel we have something to prove and that's the attitude we have," McNair said. "I believe we've been doing pretty well back there and everybody is working hard to get better."

**NUMBER CHANGES:** It happens every year at the beginning of camp and this season is no exception as a number of Blue



The Blue Raiders had to take numerous water breaks today as temperatures reached a heat index of 111. ()

Raiders have changed jersey numbers from a year ago. Following is a list of number changes from 2006: [Bobby Williams](#) (1), [Taron Henry](#) (4), [Anthony Glover](#) (8), [Michael Cannon](#) (13), [Patrick Honeycutt](#) (17), [Roy Polite](#) (26), [Derek Shropshire](#) (46), Jay Robinson (88), and [Gary Tucker](#) (94).

**TIDBITS:** Senior deep snapper Jonathan Parks did not report with the team on Sunday and is no longer on the squad ... The temperature at the start of practice today was 104.8 degrees with a heat index of 111 ... Former running back Eugene Gross stopped by practice today ... [Matt King](#) had two kickoffs today with the average depth being the 1-yard line.

**NEXT PRACTICE:** The Blue Raiders will hold their third practice of fall camp on Wednesday from 5:25 PM to 7:30 PM.

**BLUE RAIDER BLAST:** The final "Blue Raider Blast" will be held in Downtown Murfreesboro on the square, Thursday, August 23, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. This event is geared toward Blue Raider fans, alumni, and supporters in Rutherford County and surrounding areas and all interested parties are encouraged to attend and meet Middle Tennessee players, coaches, athletic administrators and University administrators as the athletic department gears up for the start of the 2007-08 school year. Admission to the "Blue Raider Blast" is free; however, food provided by Whitt's Barbecue will be available for \$5 per plate. The blast will include music, inflatables, face painting and a special guest appearance by Middle Tennessee mascot, "Lightning," to entertain the youngsters.

**FAN/MEDIA DAY:** Middle Tennessee's annual Fan/Media Day is scheduled for August 12 at 2:30 PM in Murphy Center. There will be free hot dogs and cokes given away while supplies last, and games for the kids. Also, tickets will be on sale as well as this year's football media guide. As always, fans can get player autographs and photos so make plans now to check out this year's team as they prepare for the season-opener on Sept. 1.

**FENTON PAYNE AND FRED 5K:** On Saturday morning, Aug. 18, the fourth annual Fenton Payne and Fred 5K Run/Walk to take place on the campus of Middle Tennessee with Director of Athletics Chris Massaro firing the starting gun. The event will get underway at 7:00 AM with registration at Peck Hall. The cost is \$25 with cash prizes going to the winning male and female and the overall masters (40 years and over). There will also be awards to the top three finishers in all divisions, male and female, 9 and under, then 5 year age groups through 80 and over. For more information, contact Mark Hardison at 615-848-9063.

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