

August 11, 2007

Blue Raiders hold first scrimmage

Team goes through 87-play workout

MT Media Relations

NOTE: It was announced a few weeks back that new season ticket holders for 2007 could pick up their complimentary car flag at Sunday's Fan Day. Due to a shipping error, the flags will not arrive on campus until Aug. 16. Fans who qualify can either receive their flag by mail or come by the Hall of Fame building on Aug. 17 to pick the flag up themselves. Any questions, please contact Brad Smith at 898-5322.

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee held its first scrimmage of fall camp Saturday with the Blue Raiders going through an 87-play workout to conclude the first week of drills. The scrimmage ended with mixed reviews as second-year coach Rick Stockstill indicated there is still a lot of improvement in front of the team in the coming weeks.

"It was a decent scrimmage," said Stockstill. "There was a lot of inconsistent play on both sides of the ball and our kicking game needs a lot of work. We did do a good job of protecting the football and for a first scrimmage we really did not have a lot of penalties.

"I thought our running backs ran well and made plays in the passing game and [Bobby Williams](#), [Jonathan Grigsby](#), and [Wes Caldwell](#) made some nice receptions. Defensively, we just gave up too many big plays and missed too many tackles. Our effort needs to pick up on both sides. It was just a very average day but luckily we still have three weeks of work left to get things corrected."



The Blue Raiders ran 87 plays offensively during their first scrimmage of fall camp on Saturday evening. ()

Offensively, [DeMarco McNair](#) rushed six times for 29 yards and a touchdown while [Phillip Tanner](#) gained 32 yards and freshman [Marquise Branton](#) added 26 yards. McNair opened the scrimmage with runs of 9 and 13 yards.

Starting quarterback [Joe Craddock](#) completed 4 of 5 passes for 81 yards and two touchdowns, but was picked off by [Bradley Robinson](#) to end the opening drive of the scrimmage.

"I was disappointed in Joe today," added Stockstill. "He missed some throws and reads and just needs to be more consistent. He also had some nice throws but he has to play better if we are to be successful."

Backup [Patrick Jackson](#) completed 3 of 8 for 29 yards, while [Gene Delle Donne](#) went 1-for-4 for 27 yards. Freshman [Dwight Dasher](#) did not attempt a pass but he ran the ball extremely well and showcased his elusiveness.

"[Dwight Dasher](#) had a good day despite limited snaps," said Stockstill. "He passed well during our 7-on-7 drill and he ran well during the scrimmage. He was a definite bright spot."

Williams and Grigsby led all receivers with two receptions each, while [Desmond Gee](#) added one along with Caldwell, [Ben Graves](#), and Tanner. Both of Grigsby's grabs went for touchdowns.

"I think the attitude is there player-wise, but we have to continue improving and eliminate the mental errors," said Williams. "We have a good chance to be a great team but we have to pick it up and make more plays.

"Coach (Justin) Watts has really pushed us and you can see the receivers playing with more confidence and more physicalness. It's so important that we have receivers step up in order to help this offense."

Defensively, the Blue Raiders registered five sacks, nine tackles for loss, two interceptions, and a pass breakup. Senior [Erik Walden](#) recorded a sack and two tackles for loss, while [Chance Dunleavy](#), [Gary Tucker](#), and [Trevor Jenkins](#) also added sacks.

"We are not playing at the level we are capable of playing," said Walden. "We have to bring our younger guys along. At the same time, people have to step up and I believe the next few days are going to determine a lot for some people.

"There is no pressure on us defensively. We have high expectations for ourselves. We have to gel and continue to work on the little things each day because we have high hopes for this defense."

The Blue Raiders will hold Fan Day on Sunday at 2:30 PM in Murphy Center and will hit the field again on Monday for their second two-a-day workout. Middle Tennessee will open the 2007 season on Sept. 1 at Florida Atlantic.

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