

August 13, 2007

Blue Raiders enjoy good practice

Receivers show improvement

MT Media Relations

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

STOCKSTILL ON TODAY'S PRACTICE: "I thought our effort and intensity was a lot better today than it was on Saturday. We got after it as coaches, pushed the players more today, and the kids responded. We still are making a lot of mistakes offensively and defensively but at least we are turning up the effort. I saw a better attitude today and more 'want to' from the players. If we can continue to keep that attitude and intensity at each practice I feel we can get those mistakes corrected."

"We are starting to get a few people hurt now which is a problem with continuity on offense. This is a concern for me right now."

RECEIVERS MUCH IMPROVED: A much maligned position in 2006, the Blue Raider receiving corps has stepped it up and looks to be the most improved area on the team. The unit has shown more maturity and the off-season dedication seems to be paying off as evidence of the first week of fall practice.

"Right now things are going pretty good with the group," said Justin Watts, receivers coach. "We have seven guys who we can count on with starters [Taron Henry](#), [Bobby Williams](#), and [Jonathan Grigsby](#), along with [Desmond Gee](#), [Patrick Honeycutt](#), [Michael Cannon](#), and freshman [Wes Caldwell](#). Caldwell has caught on to the offense and is really coming along nicely."

Williams, a junior, led all receivers a year ago with 36 receptions but struggled with inconsistency. Coming off a great off-season where he totally changed his body, the Jacksonville, Fla., native looks to be a leader on the field and on the stat sheet in 2007.

"Bobby is doing some things physically right now that he could not do a year ago because of the 20 pounds he has added," said Watts. "He is a lot more physical, understands the offense better, and has really improved his blocking."

Two of the biggest surprises so far has been sophomore [Patrick Honeycutt](#) and junior [Michael Cannon](#). Honeycutt missed the entire 2006 season after suffering a knee injury in fall camp and Cannon saw limited action in just seven games.

"Honeycutt and Cannon know every receivers position on the field, so if any of the starters need a break then they can fill in easily," added Watts. "Last year we were not confident putting our number four and five receivers in the game but with these two guys I expect them to be in the second series of the game. They are catching the ball well, know their assignments, and give great effort on every play."

The Blue Raiders return all three starters from a year ago, along with the top five receivers so experience should be a key in 2007.

MCCOY STEPPING UP: A lot has been written about the talent Middle Tennessee possesses on the defensive line. The unit has two first team all-conference picks in [Erik Walden](#) and [Tavares Jones](#), a 13-game starter in Sean Mosley, and tackles [Trevor Jenkins](#) and [Wes Hofacker](#) who might be the steadiest duo in the Sun Belt.

In 2006, the unit accounted for 54 tackles for loss and 22 quarterback sacks and looks to be even better in 2007 with the surprising play of sophomore [Chris McCoy](#). The Villa Rica, Ga., product played in 11 games last season and tallied just six tackles but has really turned some heads with his new found dedication.

"I think he is maturing everyday, growing up, and has set some personal goals," said Les Herrin, defensive line coach. "When you have a player as talented as Chris sometimes the expectations get skewed. If he continues what he is doing right now he will really help this football team. He has been a pleasant surprise."

McCoy, who has trimmed down to 263 pounds, is a weapon at defensive end with his 6-4 frame and long wingspan. He is currently listed behind Walden at left end and has caught the eye of Head Coach Rick Stockstill.

"Chris has really bought in to what Les (Herrin) is teaching," said Stockstill. "Last year he always had an excuse for this or that or my toe hurt or my finger hurt and this year he is playing everyday and not complaining about anything. It really all



Desmond Gee eludes a tackler during a scrimmage on Monday. ()

started back in January with a great off-season workout program, and then he followed that up with a good spring and a great summer, and is coming out here now and putting heat on those guys in front of him."

INJURY UPDATE: True freshman center [Jake Padrick](#) will have shoulder surgery on Friday and is lost for the season. The coaching staff had high hopes for Padrick working his way into the lineup at center but the Ft. Pierce, Fla., native will now rehab and concentrate on returning for spring practice ... FB Hunter Birtsch attempted his comeback this fall from two knee surgeries but to no avail. The senior informed the coaches on Sunday that he could not participate this season, thus ending his career ... FB Brodey Mann was dismissed from the team today due to missing multiple practices ... Also, freshman [Landon Givers](#) is out for the year due to a stress fracture in his lower back.

GRADUATES: Current Blue Raiders [Dana Stewart](#) and Sean Mosley earned their degrees this past Saturday. Stewart, a redshirt senior, earned his degree in exercise science, while Mosley received his in university studies. Former quarterback Clint Marks also earned his degree on Saturday.

TIDBITS: The hit of the day occurred during the team scrimmage toward the end of practice when [Erik Walden](#) crushed freshman [Marquise Branton](#) on a run up the middle and jarred the ball loose to cause a fumble ... Former offensive lineman Germyale Franklin attended practice.

NEXT PRACTICE: The Blue Raiders will practice on Tuesday beginning at 5 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.

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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