No. 2 LSU blanks Blue Raiders 44-0

Middle Tennessee finds going tough at Tiger Stadium

September 15, 2007 · MT Media Relations

BATON ROUGE, La. - No. 2-ranked LSU continued its early-season assault and Middle Tennessee was the latest victim as the Tigers rolled to a 44-0 triumph at Tiger Stadium Saturday night.

LSU (3-0) used its heralded defense and a consistent offense to take control of the game early and methodically built a 23-0 halftime lead. The Blue Raiders (0-3) held their own defensively, forcing a pair of turnovers and holding the high-octane Tigers to three field goals with the short field, but the Middle Tennessee offense found the going difficult against the speedy LSU defense.

LSU marched to the Middle Tennessee 12 on its opening drive but settled for a 29-yard field goal when the Blue Raider defense held after Gary Tucker busted up the middle for an 8-yard sack on a third-and-6 play.

The Tigers increased the lead 10-0 when they marched 80 yards in 10 plays on their next possession to close the opening quarter. They would add one touchdown and two field goals during the second quarter on the way to a 23-0 halftime lead.

LSU did not have a turnover in its first two games but Middle Tennessee's defense forced two in three possessions in the second quarter to give the Blue Raiders good field position.

Linebacker Dana Stewart provided the Blue Raiders with the first turnover when he intercepted Ryan

Perriloux and returned the ball 18 yards to the LSU 44 with 11:47 remaining in the second quarter. It was Stewart's first career interception. The Middle Tennessee offense; however, was unable to capitalize and ended up turning the ball over on downs when quarterback Joe Craddock's fourth-and-3 pass intended for Bobby Williams was broken up.

One play later receiver Demetrius Byrd hauled in a 63-yard touchdown reception from Perriloux on a ball that was just out of the reach of Middle Tennessee corner Bradley Robinson to give the Tigers a 17-0 lead with 9:59 remaining in the half.

After the Blue Raiders went three-and-out, the Middle Tennessee defense came away with its second turnover in three possessions when corner Alex Suber forced and recovered a fumble at midfield. Again, the LSU defense clamped down and Middle Tennessee went three-and-out. Middle Tennessee's defense held LSU to a 35-yard David field goal to give the home team a 20-0 lead with 3:04 remaining before intermission.

Like the two previous teams to face LSU this season, Middle Tennessee's offense had little success against the Tigers, who held the Blue Raiders to 26 yards on 25 plays in the first half, including minus 19 yards rushing. LSU has allowed just one touchdown in its first three games.

Things didn't get much better in the second half as LSU never let up, scoring three third-quarter touchdowns to extend the advantage to 44-0 entering the final stanza.

The Blue Raiders will play their home opener against Western Kentucky Thursday. Kickoff at Floyd Stadium is 6 p.m.

POSTGAME NOTES

DASHER PLAYS WELL: Middle Tennessee freshman quarterback Dwight Dasher enjoyed his most extensive playing time of his young career at No. 2 LSU Saturday when he came on in the fourth quarter and engineered a pair of nice drives. Dasher led Middle Tennessee in rushing with 30 yards on 12 carries - both career highs - and he completed 2-of-4 passes for 22 yards, also career highs.

RETURN MACHINE: Sophomore Desmond Gee, who tied the school record last week at Louisville with seven kickoff returns, added seven more against LSU. Over the last two games, Gee has tallied 14 returns for 279 yards and both totals are the most ever by a player in back-to-back games.

STEWART GETS PICK: Senior Dana Stewart, a former walk-on, recorded his first career interception against No. 2 LSU. The Springfield, Tenn., native stepped in front of a Ryan Perriloux pass and returned it 18 yards to thwart a Tiger second quarter drive. It was the Blue Raiders' first interception of the season and LSU's first turnover of the year.

FIRST FOR TUCKER, HARRINGTON: Redshirt freshman Gary Tucker recorded his first collegiate sack tonight against LSU and it came at an opportune time for the Blue Raiders. On LSU's opening possession, Tucker's sack held the No. 2 Tigers to a field goal. Later in the quarter, Andrew Harrington picked up his first sack as a Blue Raider when he dropped Ryan Perriloux and forced him into an intentionally grounding call.

QUICK HITTERS: Middle Tennessee was shutout for the first time since Oklahoma blanked the Blue Raiders 59-0 last year in Norman and marked just the fourth time in the last 125 games they have not scored ... LSU is the highest ranked opponent the Blue Raiders have faced since joining the FBS

in 1999 ... OT Franklin Dunbar made his team-best 21st straight start tonight ... Middle Tennessee fell to 0-13 against nationally-ranked teams since joining the FBS in 1999 ... DT Wes Hofacker did not play tonight due to an illness ... DT Derek Mason made his first career start tonight against LSU ... Freshman DT Dwight Smith saw his first collegiate action tonight ... Alex Suber recorded his first career fumble recovery in the second quarter ... Freshman WR Wes Caldwell saw his first collegiate action against LSU ... Walk-on Jeremy Perry saw his first collegiate action tonight as a linebacker as did RB Marquise Branton and WR Ben Graves ... QB Dwight Dasher registered his first collegiate completion tonight during the fourth quarter when he hit Bobby Williams for 3 yards ... Freshman Wes Caldwell made his first career reception when he hauled in a Dwight Dasher pass in the fourth quarter.

Printed on May 24, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/27579