

Virginia's last-second field goal shocks Blue Raiders

Cavs comeback for 23-21 win

October 7, 2007 · MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

What would have been one of the biggest wins in school history turned into one of the most gut-wrenching losses for Middle Tennessee when Virginia kicker Chris Gould nailed a 35-yard field goal with four seconds remaining to lift Virginia to a come-from-behind 23-21 win.

Gould, who earlier had missed an extra point that allowed Middle Tennessee to take a 21-20 lead midway through the fourth quarter, atoned for the miss with his pressure-packed kick after quarterback Jameel Sewell calmly moved the Cavaliers down the field and into scoring position with no timeouts and less than one minute remaining.

Middle Tennessee (1-5) had taken a 21-20 lead when Bradley Robinson collected his 11th career interception and returned the ball to the 1. One play later DeMarco McNair plunged in from the 1 and Matt King added the point after to give the Blue Raiders the edge with 7:29 remaining. It was McNair's fifth touchdown in the last three games.

Virginia (5-1), which won its fifth straight game, was the first ACC team to visit Floyd Stadium and the Blue Raiders almost served up a monumental upset in front of a crowd of 23,227 - the fourth-largest in stadium history; however, the Cavaliers escaped with the win following some daring late-game heroics.



The well-played and balanced game saw Virginia roll up 374 yards total offense and average five yards per play, while Middle Tennessee had 308 yards total offense. Freshman quarterback Dwight Dasher led Middle Tennessee with 181 yards and two touchdowns through the air on 17-of-33 passing, and he was also the team's leading rusher with 63 yards on 17 carries.

Dasher threw touchdown passes to Taron Henry and Bobby Williams and McNair accounted for the other Blue Raider touchdown with his rushing score. McNair ran for 49 yards on 17 carries.

Middle Tennessee got on the scoreboard first when Dasher accounted for 54 yards on a 67-yard scoring drive. In fact, the freshman quarterback was also involved in seven of the team's 11 plays on the drive.

The long and efficient scoring drive was capped by Dasher's daring pass to Taron Henry when he threaded the needle and rifled the ball through three defenders for a 24-yard scoring pass. Dasher rushed for 25 yards on five carries and completed two passes for 29 yards on the drive. Matt King's point after provided the Blue Raiders with a 7-0 lead with 5:37 remaining in the first quarter.

Virginia evened the score on a penalty aided drive one play later and scored when quarterback Jameel Sewell completed a 20-yard pass to tight end John Phillips with 2:51 remaining in the opening stanza. The Blue Raiders had actually forced a three-and-out on defense but a penalty on the punt continued the drive. A 15-yard penalty on an incomplete third-down pass also continued the drive as the Cavs tied the score 7-7.

Middle Tennessee drove back down the field but missed a chance to regain the lead when King's 33-yard field goal attempt was blocked. The Blue Raider defense once again forced a three-and-out and the offense started the next drive at the Middle Tennessee 40.

Dasher was at it again and capped another outstanding drive when he found Bobby Williams in the end zone for a 7-yard scoring strike with 9:37 remaining in the half. King's point after provided the Blue Raiders a 14-7 advantage.

Andrew Pearman's 21-yard touchdown run on a third-and-2 option enabled the Cavaliers to tie the game 14-14 with 3:57 remaining in the first half.

The Blue Raiders successfully played keep-away in the first half, keeping the ball for 18:08 of the first 30 minutes. Middle Tennessee, despite being tied, also dominated play on the field particularly in the trenches. Middle Tennessee piled up 241 yards total offense, including 158 through the air in the first half, while the Blue Raider defense limited the Cavaliers to 154 yards total offense, including just 67 yards on 14 carries on the ground.

The third quarter was a battle of field position as neither team found the end zone but on its third possession after the half Virginia finally found paydirt when it put together a 15-play, 85-yard drive that culminated with Andrew Pearman's 5-yard run. Chris Gould misfired on the extra point following a five-year mark off for procedure to give the Cavs a 20-14 lead with 13:58 remaining. It was Virginia's first lead of the game.

Middle Tennessee regained the lead midway through the fourth quarter after Robinson's 11th career interception gave the Blue Raiders the ball at the opposition's 1. McNair cashed in from the 1 one

play later and King's extra point provided a 21-20 lead with 7:29 remaining.

Middle Tennessee forced a punt on Virginia's next possession and the Blue Raiders picked up one first down but on third-and-3 from the 37, Dasher could only get two yards and the Blue Raiders were forced to punt the ball away.

Virginia made the most of its opportunity and scored the game winner on Gould's 35-yard field goal with four seconds remaining.

Middle Tennessee Postgame Notes

BIG PICK: Senior Bradley Robinson, who has registered an interception in back-to-back games, may have had the biggest of his career against UVA. Robinson stepped in front of a Jamal Sewell pass late in the fourth quarter and returned it 21 yards to the 1-yard line to set up a go-ahead Blue Raider touchdown. The pick was the 11th of Robinson's career which ties him with Jimbo Pearson for fifth place on the all-time list.

HENRY GETS SIX: Senior Taron Henry recorded just the second touchdown reception of his career against Virginia. The Murfreesboro hauled in a 24-yard strike from Dwight Dasher to give the Blue Raiders a 7-0 first quarter lead. Henry's only other scoring reception came last year against Tennessee Tech.

TOUCHDOWN BOBBY: Junior receiver Bobby Williams has taken full advantage of his catches in 2007. Williams, who had two catches for 27 yards and a touchdown against UVA, now has eight receptions on the season and three have gone for scores. Williams entered his junior year with just two touchdown grabs and already has three this season.

QUITE DASHING: Freshman Dwight Dasher continues to impress early in his career. The Folkston, Ga., native completed a career-best 17 passes in 33 attempts for 181 yards. In his last two games, which amounts to just six quarters of play, Dasher has completed 27-of-50 passes for 421 yards and five touchdowns. More importantly, the freshman has not committed a turnover since becoming the starter against WKU.

FOURTH LARGEST: Middle Tennessee's crowd of 23,227 against Virginia went down as the fourth largest in Floyd Stadium history. In 2007, the Blue Raiders have already had the fourth and sixth largest crowds in school history with WKU being No. 6.

QUICK HITTERS: Virginia is just the second BCS team to play at Floyd Stadium and the first since Temple of the Big East in 2003 ... DE Erik Walden and WR Desmond Gee, Blue Raider starters, did not dress tonight due to injury ... OT Franklin Dunbar made his team-best 24th straight start tonight ... Damon Nickson made his first start tonight since the Louisville game ... DT Trevor Jenkins made his 19th straight start ... FB Jacob Longoria made his first career reception in the third quarter against UVA ... WR Patrick Honeycutt attempted the first pass of his collegiate career but it went incomplete against the Hoos.

