

September 8, 2001

Blue Raiders Grab Season's Second Win

MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO - Middle Tennessee's offensive firepower happened often and explosively as the Blue Raiders upended Troy State Saturday night at Johnny Red Floyd Stadium, 54-17.

After last week's 608 offensive yards in the season opening win at Vanderbilt, Middle Tennessee recorded 641 yards against the visiting Trojans, recording back-to-back 600 yard games for the first time in MT history.

Again for the Blue Raiders, it was the left arm of quarterback **Wes Counts** and the churning legs of running backs **Dwone Hicks**, **Jamison Palmer** and **Don Calloway** doing the majority of the damage throughout the first half. Special teams also played a vital part in the win, as kick returners **Reshard Lee** and **Kerry Wright** punched the ball deep into Trojan territory on consecutive kickoff returns.

But it was the acrobatics of All-American candidate receiver **Kendall Newson** who got the Blue Raiders on the board first. Driving from the 25-yard line, Counts rolled to his right only to be chased back across the field by the Trojan defense. Launching a pass thought to be intended for receiver **David Youell**, Newson skied in the back of the end zone to haul in the pass.

If the Blue Raiders had a weakness, it was converting on the two-point play following their many touchdowns. Three times in the first half, Middle Tennessee failed to convert a two-point conversion.

But that didn't seem to matter for the 21,723 fans who showed for the contest, making it the second largest crowd to attend a Middle Tennessee game.

Although failing to reach the 100-yard mark, Hicks recorded two touchdowns and a two-point conversion. The Blue Raider running back corps was led by sophomore **Don Calloway**, who had 95 yards on 20 carries and totaled two touchdowns. Middle Tennessee's offense was also bolstered by the return of senior running back Palmer. Returning from a knee injury suffered last season in the opener against Illinois, Palmer returned to his old form for a 68-yard night and one touchdown.

Troy State, who last week gave national power Nebraska a better game than expected, got on the board in the second quarter with a 35-yard field goal by redshirt freshman Drew Boteler. Receiver Heyward Skipper recorded two touchdown receptions from quarterbacks Brock Nutter and Hansell Bearden respectively.

Middle Tennessee will be on the road for the next two contests as they take on UL-Monroe and UL-Lafayette on consecutive weekends after an offweek. The Blue Raiders return to Murfreesboro on October 6th as they open their Sunbelt season against Idaho.

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