

August 1, 2008

A preview of the Blue Raider defense, special teams

Jenkins, Hofacker lead the way up front

MT Media Relations

MTSU has had the most disruptive defense in the Sun Belt over the past two years: 66 sacks and 183 tackles for loss. But they must find a way to replace six starters who created the bulk of those numbers.

All-time sack leader Erik Walden, the only defensive lineman to lead his team in tackles last year in Tavares Jones, and Bradley Robinson, the SBC's second all-time leader in interceptions, are among those who will be hard to replace in 2008.

However, the Blue Raiders welcome back 21 lettermen and five starters, along with four others who registered at least one start during the season. Despite the losses, the Blue Raiders are excited about midterm signees [Jamari Lattimore](#) and [Immanuel Chu](#), and a handful of players who redshirted in 2007.

Stockstill and defensive coordinator Manny Diaz believe to be a good defense you have to stop the run, create turnovers, and get off the field on third down, so expect that to be a point of emphasis as the season approaches. Diaz will also work on his unit becoming a better tackling team, which is an area where the Blue Raiders struggled in 2007.



Lonnie Clemons is coming off his best season as a Blue Raider. ()

Defensive Line

The strength of the defense a year ago was the play of the defensive line, they accounted for 37 tackles for loss, 13.5 sacks, and two interceptions. But the loss of all-conference ends Walden and Jones leaves a big void for position coach Les Herrin.

The good news is that the middle of the line returns with seniors [Trevor Jenkins](#) and [Wes Hofacker](#). Over the past two years, Jenkins and Hofacker have combined for 46 starts with Jenkins making 25 straight. However, Hofacker will be moving to right end in 2008, while talented [Dwight Smith](#) takes over at right tackle. Smith was thrown into the fire as a true freshman last year and responded with 15 tackles and a sack.

Adding depth in the middle will be a talented foursome of [Brandon Perry](#), Jonathan Presley, [Gary Tucker](#), and Sacoby Carter. Perry was off to his best year as a Blue Raider before suffering a season ending foot injury in the second game.

Presley also saw his season come to an end in week four with an achilles injury, and Carter sat out the year as a redshirt. Tucker, who will did not compete in spring practice while recovering from a shoulder injury, played in 11 games his freshman year.

The favorite to take over the left end spot vacated by Walden will be [Chris McCoy](#) who is coming off a great spring. McCoy, who may be the most talented lineman on the team, started three games in 2007 on his way to tallying a career-best 17 tackles. Competing for time behind McCoy will be newcomer [Jamari Lattimore](#).

[Emmanuel Perez](#) and [Antonio Hill](#) will also figure prominently at end.

Linebacker

Luckily, MTSU does not have to replace all three starters, which was the case a year ago. Instead, two starters and a parttime starter are all back in the fold.

[Lonnie Clemons](#) and [Danny Carmichael](#), both of whom will be all-conference candidates in 2008, combined for 19 starts last season and both had career years. Clemons registered 45 tackles and 3.5 sacks, while Carmichael added 55 stops to rank third on the team.

Look for [Andrew Harrington](#) to compete for starting duties as well. Harrington, who missed a couple of games with an injury, earned two starts in 2007 and finished with 31 tackles and two fumble recoveries.

Senior [Ivon Hickmon](#), who is finally healthy, is a favorite to grab the right outside linebacker position. Hickmon played in all 12 games last season and had 21 tackles despite battling nagging injuries all year.

A host of talented players will compete for significant playing time and provide quality depth, including [Cam Robinson](#), [Antwan Davis](#), and Landon Givers.

Robinson and Davis played in seven and 11 games, respectively, with most of their action coming on special teams. Givers, who took a redshirt year as a true freshman because of an injury, should be available when camp opens in August. Coaches love his

attitude and potential, and can't wait to have him on the field.

Secondary

MTSU's defensive backfield is blessed with talent and experience, but depth could be an issue in 2008. The Blue Raiders have seven returning lettermen at corner and safety, and three had multiple starts in 2007.

Manning the corner positions will be junior [Alex Suber](#) on the right side and sophomore [Rod Issac](#) on the left. Suber, a former running back, is coming off a career year in which he finished second on the team with 59 stops while collecting five pass breakups, three fumble recoveries, and 7.5 tackles for loss.

Isaac, who had five starts as a true freshman last year, registered 31 tackles, an interception, and three pass breakups and was one of many surprising newcomers in 2007. He also had a 42-yard fumble return for a touchdown to spark the win over Arkansas State.

Senior [Ted Riley](#) will provide depth at cornerback after a solid junior campaign. The Boynton Beach, Fla., product collected 23 stops and played in all 12 games a year ago after transferring from Eastern Arizona. Newcomer [Marcus Udell](#) will also figure in at corner.

The two safety spots will see hard hitters [Anthony Glover](#) and [Jeremy Kellem](#) picked as the starters. Glover, a senior, is coming off his best year in the Blue and White after finishing fifth on the team with 46 stops and 3.5 tackles for loss. Kellem, who has all-conference credentials and always seems to be around the football, turned in 42 tackles, three interceptions, two sacks, five pass breakups, and a blocked punt in his freshman season.

Backing up Glover and Kellem will be junior [Josh Gregory](#) and sophomore [Kevin Brown](#). Gregory, who transferred from Auburn, spent most of his sophomore season on special teams but did play in all 12 games, while Brown added eight tackles and an interception in nine games.

Special Teams

There was a lot of uncertainty surrounding the special teams department a year ago as the Blue Raiders were looking for a punter, placekicker, and deep snapper. That's not the case in 2008 as the Blue Raiders are set at punter and deep snapper, and will have a wide open competition for the placekicking duties.

Junior [David DeFatta](#) turned in an all-conference type season as a punter last year. The Franklin, Tenn., native averaged 40.9 yards a boot and led the Sun Belt with 28 punts downed inside the 20-yard line.

The placekicking job will be a battle between DeFatta and signee [Alan Gendreau](#). DeFatta took over the placekicking duties from [Matt King](#) the last four games of the season and connected on 4 of 6 attempts, including all four of his extra points.

Gendreau, who will report in August, was an all-state pick in Florida as a kicker and soccer player. The Maitland, Fla., product made 14 of 16 field goals his senior year and has hit from 57 yards.

The snapping duties will be handled by sophomore [Adam Wade](#) out of Florence, S.C. Wade made every snap last year for the Blue Raiders and did not have a bad one all season.

[Desmond Gee](#) will take care of the punt return duties after leading the Blue Raiders in that category a year ago. Gee will also join [Phillip Tanner](#) in returning kickoffs.

Printed on May 23, 2012

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/32884>