

August 16, 2008

Offensive, defensive units both show improvement

Newcomers shine in final scrimmage

Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - It was difficult to gauge the overall winner between offense and defense during Middle Tennessee's final full scale scrimmage of fall camp Saturday night; however, that's probably just the way third-year head coach Rick Stockstill likes it.

- **Photos:** [Fall Scrimmage Photo Gallery](#)

The offense reached the end zone five times and had two long field goals off the strong foot of freshman [Alan Gendreau](#), while the defense totaled 12 tackles for loss, including four sacks, one interception and a fumble recovery in the two-hour workout inside Floyd Stadium.

"I thought we played a little better on defense than the last scrimmage," Stockstill said. "The offense made some plays and moved the ball at times and the defense, especially the 1s, played better but we still missed some tackles out there that we have to get corrected, and we gave up too many big plays, too many explosive plays."

Two of the more explosive plays were via the passing game when senior [Joe Craddock](#) connected with freshman [Malcolm Beyah](#) on a 60-yard touchdown pass and with sophomore [Wes Caldwell](#) on a striking 15-yarder to cap the first possession with a score. Caldwell split two defenders in the end zone and Craddock's pass was on the money, hitting the sure-handed receiver in stride to complete a six-play, 70-yard drive.

"Wes has had a great camp and he's worked hard," said Craddock, who was 8-of-10 for 146 yards and the two touchdowns, along with one interception. "Wes, along with [Michael Cannon](#), has surprised me this camp. Maybe he has surprised everybody but the overall speed on the offense is better. We seem to have more playmakers and I'm excited about them."

Sophomore quarterback [Dwight Dasher](#) was 11-of-19 for 97 yards and he also ran for a touchdown. The two quarterbacks combined to complete 19-of-29 passes for 243 yards; however, the Blue Raiders' projected starting corners - [Alex Suber](#) and [Rod Issac](#) - did not participate in the scrimmage.

Beyah, who has impressed as a freshman in his first fall camp, led all receivers with five catches for 115 yards, while Caldwell hauled in four passes for 41 yards. Both receivers hit paydirt after running crisp, precise routes.

On the offensive side of the ball it was a day for young playmakers as veteran tailbacks [Desmond Gee](#) and [Phillip Tanner](#) were limited to only a handful of plays, and receivers [Patrick Honeycutt](#) and [Michael Cannon](#) also were only on the field for a brief time.

Redshirt freshman [D.D. Kyles](#), who made the move from receiver to running back Thursday, led the ground game with 18 yards on four carries, including an 8-yard scoring run, while Gee rushed for 17 yards on his two carries. Tanner had 14 yards on just three attempts. Freshman [Sancho McDonald](#) was another player in a new position who continues to impress. McDonald moved from quarterback to receiver Thursday and had three catches for 12 yards.

"We know what (Honeycutt and Cannon) can do and we know what (Gee and Tanner) can do," Stockstill said. "None of those young guys have ever played a snap of college ball so they need all the work they can get."

While some of the younger players still are learning formations and the overall offense (and the same can be said on defense for that matter), they are making plays and that has been the most pleasing part of their performance through the first two weeks of camp.

After Craddock led a scoring drive on the first possession the defense held the offense out of the end zone five consecutive drives and collected turnovers on two of them. Craddock was intercepted by senior linebacker [Ivon Hickmon](#) on the fourth series and, after the defense forced a three-and-out, freshman [Kendall Dangerfield](#) recovered a Beyah fumble on the next possession.

"My assignment was the tight end and I stayed with him, saw the ball and made a play on it," Hickmon said, describing his interception after a strong scrimmage in which he totaled six tackles, one for loss, and the interception. "Fortunately, I came down with the interception and helped our defense get off the field."

Beyah proved to be resilient and Craddock showed the ultimate confidence in him one play after his fumble when the quarterback went right back to the young receiver, who caught the pass and went 60 yards for the score.

The defense would later force another three-and-out but Gendreau came on to boot a 50-yard field goal with room to spare. He



The Blue Raiders held their final scrimmage of preseason camp on Saturday and will enjoy a day off on Sunday. ()

would later add a 43-yard effort to go 2-for-2 during the scrimmage.

"Alan kicked well again. I wanted to see how far he could go on the one and he kicked it from 50. It looked like he kicked it pretty good," Stockstill said. "I'm pleased with Alan but, again, there are five people in the stands right now so we will have to wait and see. He is a very confident young man so I don't think he will be intimidated, or at least I hope he won't be, when we play Troy."

The defense came up big in situations, particularly the eight third-and-6 plays from the 26. The defense won six of the eight with a 26-yard touchdown pass from Dasher to [Eldred King](#) and another 26-yarder from Dasher to McDonald being the only offensive touchdowns.

"As a defense we need to win every part of the scrimmage, which is our mindset every time we take the field," Hickmon said. "We still have to do a better job of finishing plays but overall we were enthusiastic and ready to play. I can definitely tell we are getting better and that is a positive sign."

In addition to Hickmon's strong play, [Kevin Brown](#) had five tackles, including one for loss, and [Wes Hofacker](#) had four tackles, including a sack and two total hits for lost yardage.

The Blue Raiders will enjoy their first off day Sunday before returning to the field Monday afternoon.

Printed on May 23, 2012

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/33477>