Raiders Start Quickly but Fall, 30-21, at North Texas

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DENTON, Texas - Middle Tennessee jumped out to a quick lead, but homestanding North Texas scored 24 straight points and sealed the game with two second-half field goals for a 30-21 Sun Belt victory Saturday night at Fouts Field.

Middle Tennessee jumped out to an early 14-0 lead after opening the game with a 16-play, 75-yard drive for a score, then held on defense and marched right back down the field on its next possession for the two-touchdown advantage. Lee Baker scored on a 1-yard run on the first possession, then Eugene Gross took one in from 15 yards out for the second score.

The Mean Green the stormed back to score 24 unanswered points in the second quarter and take a 24-14 lead into intermission.

The Blue Raiders broke their third quarter scoring drought when quarterback Clint Marks hit Kerry Wright with a 15-yard strike to make the score 24-21, but UNT added a field goal on the first play of the fourth quarter and another with under five minutes to play to make it 30-21.

The Blue Raiders drove down the field and were inside the 10 in the final minute before Marks threw his second interception of the contest.

Gross rushed for a season-high 113 yards on 20 carries and one TD in the contest, as well as catching six passes for 45 yards. Wright caught six passes for 59 yards and the one score, his 13th career TD reception, tying the senior for seventh on the all-time list.

Middle Tennessee returns home next Saturday for a 2 p.m. contest versus Arkansas State at Floyd Stadium.

POSTGAME NOTES

MIDDLE TENNESSEE AT NORTH TEXAS
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SEASON-HIGH ON THE GROUND: Middle Tennessee rushed 43 times for a season-high 144 yards in the game. Sophomore Eugene Gross accounted for 113 of those yards on 20 carries. The Blue Raiders also added two rushing touchdowns, the sixth and seventh of the season for the squad.

GROSS OVER 100: For the first time this season, Middle Tennessee had a back rush for more than 100 yards when Eugene Gross churned up 113 yards on 20 carries against North Texas. It marks the third 100-yard game in Gross' career (141 vs. Idaho and 102 vs. New Mexico State in 2003).

WRIGHT TIES FOR 7TH: Senior Kerry Wright's third quarter touchdown reception was his second of the season and 13th of his career. Wright moved into a tie for seventh place on the all-time touchdown receptions list with Mike Pittman (1984-87) and Vince Parks (1988-92).

RINGLEY GETS START: Junior Kyle Ringley, a former walk-on, (Oliver Springs, Tenn.) made his first career start today against North Texas at center. Ringley, who also played in his first collegiate game today, was the starting center entering fall camp but suffered an ankle injury and missed the team's first two games. He was available last week at UL but did not get into the game. Marcus Gates, who started the first three games of the year at center, made the start at right guard.

GROSS FOR SIX: Sophomore Eugene Gross recorded his team-leading fifth touchdown run when he burst through the North Texas defense for 15 yards in the first quarter. It was Gross' 15th rushing touchdown of his career.

TIDBITS: Middle Tennessee scored its first points of the year in the third quarter when Clint Marks threw a touchdown pass to Kerry Wright and the defense held UNT scoreless in the third. For the year, MT has been outscored in the third period 35-7 ... WR Taron Henry from Murfreesboro's Riverdale High School made his first collegiate start today ... Kerry Wright has caught at least two passes in 16 straight games ... Backup snapper Jonathan Parks played in his first game of the year when he came in during the third quarter ... Middle Tennessee dropped its overall Sun Belt record to 11-10 and 4-7 on the road ... WR Linnie Yarbrough made his first collegiate reception against UNT when he hauled one in during the third quarter ... Middle Tennessee falls to 0-4 all-time against North Texas, 0-2 at Fouts Field ... MT falls to 11-10 all-time in Sun Belt play, including 4-7 on the road.

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