Quotes from Tuesday's football press conference

Blue Raiders begin preparation for Red Wolves

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Head Coach Rick Stockstill Review of Kentucky game:
"The Kentucky game is behind us as players and coaches. After reviewing the tape I felt the way I did before watching it. I couldn't be any more proud of a bunch of guys and the way they competed for 60 minutes. It was a game we could have won if we would have done a few things better. I was extremely proud of our fight, enthusiasm and our passion. If we continue to play like that we can be in every game we play."

Are you surprised your young receivers, three freshmen and a sophomore, appear to be the strength of your offense at this point?
"Not really because we didn't have any other choices. Coming in (to this season) we only had Michael Cannon, Patrick Honeycutt and Wes Caldwell with experience at the receiver position and Wes had just played one game. The young guys are continuing to learn and the mistakes they are making are being reduced each week. I think Joe (Craddock) has made it easy for them with the balls he has thrown. They have not had to make too many difficult passes because Joe has made such accurate passes. I am not surprised at how well they have played."

Since you have been head coach at Middle Tennessee your team has just two conference road losses. Why is it that your team seems to be so comfortable on the road?
"We don't approach it any different as far as being an away game or home game. We don't

emphasize anything differently. We prepare early in the week the same we do every week. We do talk about what we are going there for and prepare ourselves mentally but the routine doesn't change. I think we have a good mindset and focus that our players block out the opposing crowd, opposing atmosphere and prepare ourselves mentally on the job we have to do."

On Arkansas State's running game:
"I think this is the best running attack our defense has faced this year when you consider their quarterback and running backs. They are averaging almost 300 yards rushing a game. They have run the ball against some good teams and this is a huge challenge for our defense. This is the first time we have seen a legitimate threat of running the ball by the quarterback as well as the backs. We have to be sure to get off blocks and we can't give up big plays."

Do you feel you have enough guys making plays to make a difference for you?
"I think we need a couple guys. At receiver, I think Sancho McDonald has to become more consistent and he will as he continues to play. Patrick Honeycutt gives your great effort every play no matter what he's doing and he will get more involved and be rewarded. The balls just haven't been going his way yet. We have to get more out of the running game with Phillip Tanner and Desmond Gee. Kentucky was just too good for us up front in the running game. We had no chance. I think we have playmakers but we have to get more out of running game."

Talk about Joe Craddock's play at quarterback.
"I think Joe has played very, very well, especially these last two games. He is so accurate right now with the ball. I think these last two games he has played as well as any quarterback I have been around or watched. He is doing a good job running the team, making great decisions, playing with confidence, all the intangible things. There are growing pains you go through as a quarterback and last year he was making those and, unfortunately, he got hurt during the season. At this stage of his career, he has started maybe six or seven games. To me, you are seeing the maturation of a quarterback. That's what players are supposed to do, get better as they play and that is what he's doing."

Is this offense more like what you wanted to run when you were hired in 2006 when you said you wanted to have "basketball on grass."
"I've always wanted to spread the field, throw it and make it fun for everyone. I think the linemen like it. When we start running the ball better it will be more fun for the tailbacks because they will be more involved in the passing game. It's fun for the receivers and the quarterbacks. The quarterbacks get to run a no-huddle offense, it's up tempo and we really didn't have enough skill guys to do what we wanted to my first two years. We were able to mold our personnel to what we want to do. We will continue to recruit skill players and get them in here. This is closer to what I wanted to do when I first got here."

LB Danny Carmichael
Talk about Arkansas State quarterback Corey Leonard and running back Reggie Arnold?
"From games in the past Corey is a dual-threat quarterback. He runs the ball hard and makes good decisions. If you let him get in the open field he can make you miss. Arnold is a tough, hard runner. You have to wrap up because he can break tackles."

Why is it that Middle Tennessee always seems to have good games against Arkansas State?
"We treat them like every other team. We seem to have some good games against them. They have

some great games this season and they have played well in all three games. This is an important game because it's a conference game."

Talk about the road success this team has in conference games since coach Stockstill has been hired.
"The only thing different on the road is the crowd. They are business trips. We go there to take care of business and then we come home."

QB Joe Craddock
It this the type of offense you anticipated when coach Stockstill was hired?
"When coach Stock brought in coach (G.A.) Mangus as offensive coordinator he said I was going to enjoy this offense and I took it to mean we would be throwing the ball more. We just have more skill players now than the previous two seasons and the results are showing."

Does freshman receiver Malcolm Beyah give you more options as a quarterback?
"The play he caught for a touchdown was a fade to the outside. I saw the defense and wanted to try to get him the ball on a slant and see if he could split the defense. He did and he scored. He is such a threat with his speed and ball-catching ability."

You seem more comfortable these last two games. What has been the key to your success?
"I don't really know. Early in the season we had a lot of injuries on the offensive line and I was wondering if we would even have enough to protect with but as we have played and those young guys have developed there is more of a comfortable level. It's great to have those playmakers at receiver and our offensive line improves each week. It's a good feeling as a quarterback."

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