Turnovers Costly in 37-17 Loss

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TROY, Ala. - Too many mistakes, including a pair of interceptions that resulted in touchdowns, resulted in a 37-17 Middle Tennessee loss to Troy in the season finale for both teams here Saturday night on a rainy evening at Movie Gallery Veterans Stadium.

Middle Tennessee threw three interceptions, fumbled once and had seven penalties. The big plays came in the third quarter with the game at 14-10 Trojans, as the home team intercepted a pair of passes and ran them back for touchdowns to break the game open.

The Trojans scored twice in the first quarter on touchdown passes before the Blue Raiders mounted a comeback before halftime.

Redshirt freshman DeMarco McNair scampered 67 yards up the middle on the longest run of the season for Middle Tennessee, cutting the deficit to 14-7. Colby Smith added a 27-yard field goal later in the period for a 14-10 Troy lead at the half.

The Blue Raiders defense made a stand early in the third quarter, forcing a Trojans field goal, but a pair of interceptions for touchdowns gave Troy a 30-10 lead.

Middle Tennessee cut into the lead early in the fourth quarter after Eugene Gross ran 37 yards to the 20. Josh Harris then hit Kerry Wright for a 10-yard TD pass on fourth and goal, making it 30-17 Trojans. The touchdown catch for Wright set a single-season record with 11.

Troy added the final score on a 61-yard run with four minutes to play.

Quarterback Clint Marks was 17-of-32 for 131 yards and three interceptions, while Josh Harris came on in relief to connect on 6-of-7 for 34 yards and one score. McNair finished with 77 yards on five carries. The Blue Raiders offense was held to just 293 yards of total offense.

Middle Tennessee ends the season 5-6 overall, 4-4 in Sun Belt play.

2004 MIDDLE TENNESSEE FOOTBALL
POSTGAME NOTES
MIDDLE TENNESSEE AT TROY
NOV. 20, 2004; TROY, AL

MCNAIR SHINES: Tailback DeMarco McNair entered tonight's game with 41 rushing yards on 16 attempts for the season and nearly doubled his output on one carry during the second quarter. On the first play of the drive, McNair gained 13 yards on his first career reception then took a pitch from Clint Marks on the very next snap and went 67 yards for a touchdown. It went down as the longest of his career and the longest rush by a Blue Raider since Dwone Hicks ran 79 yards for a touchdown against Louisiana Tech in 2000 - a span of 42 games. McNair finished the game with a career-high 71 yards rushing on five carries.

SEASON FINALES: The loss to Troy dropped the Blue Raiders' record to 45-36-6 all-time in regular season finales. Under Andy McCollum, the Blue Raiders lost for the first time in the final game of the year and are now 5-1 in McCollum's six seasons.

MARKS SETS COMPLETIONS RECORD: With 17 completions in the season finale against Troy, Clint Marks ran his season total to 259 to surpass Wes Counts' school record mark of 249. Both Counts and Marks set the single-season record as sophomores. Marks also ended the season with 2,749 yards passing, also a single-season record.

STELLAR CAREER COMES TO END: The brilliant career of Middle Tennessee receiver Kerry Wright came to an end tonight against Troy. The East Point, Ga., native ended his Blue Raider playing days ranked third all-time in receptions with 167, second in receiving yardage with 2,589, and first all-time in touchdown receptions (22). He also had 10 career 100-yard receiving games to rank second on the all-time list.

SMITH ADDS ANOTHER: Colby Smith, a semifinalist for the Lou Groza Award, continued his hot streak by connecting on his fifth straight field goal when he nailed a 27-yarder in the second quarter. Smith has now made 15-of-17 on the season, the second most three-pointers made in a season at Middle Tennessee. Overall, Smith has made 12 of his last 13 field goals. The 15 field goals also ranks tied for 10th on the career list as a Blue Raider.

WRIGHT SETS RECORDS: With three catches against Troy, senior Kerry Wright established a new single-season receptions record at Middle Tennessee, while also establishing the career touchdown reception mark. Wright finished the season with 76 grabs to surpass Kendall Newson's mark of 74 catches set back in 2000. His 10-yard scoring reception in the fourth quarter was the 22nd of his career, which broke him out of a tie with Kendall Newson and Herbert Owenby for the record. Wright's 11 touchdown catches on the season is also a Middle Tennessee record.

BLUE RAIDERS SET SACK MARK: Middle Tennessee set a new single-season sack record with 28 thanks to two tonight against the Trojans. The Blue Raiders broke the previous mark of 27 set by the 2001 squad.

ONE MORE REJECTION: Middle Tennessee recorded its fourth blocked kick of the season when Roy Polite rejected an extra point in the third quarter. It was the first career block for Polite and the

first extra point the Blue Raiders have blocked this year (3 field goals, 1 PAT). Overall, the Blue Raiders have now blocked 16 kicks under Andy McCollum with four being punts, five field goals and seven being extra points.

TIDBITS: Freshman Roy Polite and junior Keon Raymond made their first collegiate starts tonight against Troy ... Tonight's game marked Middle Tennessee's first visit to Troy since the 1953 season when the Blue Raiders took a 6-0 win ... Kerry Wright has now caught at least two passes in 23 straight games ... Colby Smith's 77 points this season ranks as the third most by a kicker in school history ... Chris Henry, who had five receptions in the season finale against Troy, ended the year with 60 grabs which was good for seventh place on the single-season list ... Luke Paschall made his first reception of the season and just the third of his career in the fourth quarter ... Taron Henry had his second career reception in the fourth quarter ... Tonight's game was the final in the career of eight Blue Raider seniors - Alvin Fite, Thomas Johnson, Pedro Holiday, Jerry Vanderpool, Danny Tolbert, Joe Evilsizer, Leon Cesar and Kerry Wright.

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