

March 16, 2009

## Blue Raiders open spring drills

### Coaches pleased with first practice

*Athletic Communications*

**MURFREESBORO, Tenn.** - With 45 lettermen and 17 returning starters, Middle Tennessee's opening day of spring practice was filled with optimism. The Blue Raiders also welcomed offensive coordinator Tony Franklin and cornerbacks coach Steve Ellis as both hit the field for the first time.

The Blue Raiders went through 24 periods inside Floyd Stadium in shorts and helmets under ideal weather conditions.

"I was really pleased with the first day," said Head Coach Rick Stockstill. "The effort, enthusiasm, and intensity were there and I think that goes back to the experience. They understand practice and what we expect from them and it showed today."

Franklin's offense, which returns 10 starters, involves a quicker tempo but is very similar to what the Blue Raiders have run in the past. Junior quarterback [Dwight Dasher](#), who shined as a freshman and played behind [Joe Craddock](#) last year, is poised to lead the unit in 2009.

"I thought we had a pretty good first day," said Dasher. "I like the offense because it is a little quicker and has me throwing it more. The biggest thing is just getting comfortable with picking up the signals from the sideline."

Early in practice, the Blue Raiders went through pass skeleton and Dasher and [Brent Burnette](#) took all the snaps. Dasher completed 13 of 20 passes and four touchdowns while Burnette made good on eight of 17 attempts. Tight end [Byron McLeod](#) led all receivers during the drill with four receptions, while [Wes Caldwell](#), [Desmond Gee](#), [Michael Cannon](#), and [Shane Blissard](#) added three catches each.

Defensively, [Hakeem Johnson](#), [Rod Issac](#), [Josh Gregory](#), and [Stuart Taylor](#) all recorded interceptions.

"Defensively, the secondary did a good job of forcing turnovers and I thought [Alex Suber](#), [Kevin Brown](#), and [Rod Issac](#) all made plays, and [Danny Carmichael](#) did a good job in terms of leadership," said Stockstill.

"Offensively, Dwight (Dasher) and Brent (Burnette) made some nice throws and our receivers made some good catches but we also made some mistakes. We just have to keep improving our fundamentals on both sides of the ball."

The Blue Raiders will return to the practice field on Friday before donning full pads for the first time on Saturday.



Dwight Dasher and the Blue Raiders hit the field for the first time in 2009 with the start of spring drills. ()

---

Printed on May 23, 2012

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/37751>