

August 19, 2009

Raiders fighting through tough practices

Offense progressing, defensive line banged up

Athletic Communications

Stockstill on Wednesday's Practice: "We had a good practice today but not a great practice. The guys are fighting and pushing through a very tough stretch right now with 12 straight practices. The effort is there.

"We are getting leadership but I would like it to be more consistent from the seniors. They need to show the underclassmen everyday what we demand and expect."

Stockstill on the defense: "I like where we are in the secondary because those guys have been consistent and seem to get better every time they step on the field. There's a lot of experience back there and it shows. The linebackers are still a work in progress. Danny (Carmichael) and Cam (Robinson) have been very consistent and showing leadership and I think Antwan (Davis) is close. Right now we really need Gorby (Loreus) to get going and raise his level of play. Up front we are banged up right now and not playing as well as we can. We have to improve along the line."



Danny Carmichael gives chase to D.D. Kyles. ()

Stockstill on the offense: "Getting better every day and you can see the confidence level rising. The guys are working hard, the coaches are doing an excellent job of teaching, and some individuals are really improving. We still have a ways to go but we are headed in the right direction. The tempo is getting better but it is really hard to assess right now because we have such heavy legs."

Highlights during team periods: [Dwight Dasher](#) completed 8 of 11 passes ... [D.D. Kyles](#) had a nice run for 17 yards ... Freshman [Sammy Seamster](#) and junior [Kevin Brown](#) both collected interceptions ... [Garrett Andrews](#), [Chris McClover](#), [Malcolm Beyah](#) (2), [Tavarres Jefferson](#), [Gene Delle Donne](#), [Shane Blissard](#) (2), and [Wes Caldwell](#) all had receptions.

A Q&A with center [Mark Thompson](#)

What is your overall assessment of camp to date? "We are out here in two-a-days covered in sweat, shoes are soggy and knee braces are heavy. We are going strong and not making any excuses about how tough it is. It is amazing."

What is it like being a senior and taking on a leadership role with the offensive line? "I feel like I have had leadership qualities, but they never really have been developed. I have never been, what you would call, a vocal leader. I have always been taught to lead by example. I feel like I have done a pretty decent job with that. The coaches have challenged me to become more vocal in practice and off the field, like during workouts. I am trying to work on that and develop those qualities."

What do you see as far as progress with the offensive line thus far in camp? "We are taking three steps up the ladder everyday. It is amazing the way practices are configured right now. We are set up to get multiple reps during everything we do everyday and we are getting better at it with each practice. There is not one person on the offensive line that you will not see tremendous improvement from one week to the next."

How does the added depth on the line affect practices and leading into the games? "It really changes the whole mentality of it. In spring ball, we had some injuries and had some guys who had conflicts with class, me included. At a given practice, we might have had six or seven offensive linemen to go through the whole practice. That just mentally wears on you and it wears on your body. But now, we have three solid units to go with and that is just incredible. The good thing about that is our third string is as good of a third string I have seen, especially [Jordan Johnson](#) and [Jesse Grisham](#) who are stepping it up. They really seem to know what they are doing and have shown a lot of effort."

How does the up-tempo offense installed by Coach Franklin affect the offensive line? "Basically, everything is the same, just faster. We get up to the line faster. We execute our blocks faster. We get our pass protection faster. And after the play is over, we get back up to the ball again. It is similar to what we have done as far as the plays and schemes, but everything is just faster."

A Q&A with LB [Danny Carmichael](#)

What are your thoughts on being a focus on defense this year, both for opponents and the Blue Raiders? "I feel like for our opponents, they have to prepare for our whole defense. At every position, we have a weapon and are a well-rounded defense. I do not think we have a weak spot on defense. As for this team, I like being the heart of the defense and being that guy that they look up to if they have any questions. I can help them out or go to coach. I like having that responsibility put on me."

The linebackers are fairly young once again this year. How would you assess their progress to date in camp? "They are

progressing a lot each day. If they mess up in one practice, they will come back the next practice and correct that mistake. We are putting in new stuff every practice. The guys are really working hard to get the mental assignments down. The physical ability is not a question. We are out here protecting our teammates because we know we can hit. Just like years past, we are a young group and have new guys stepping in to fill big shoes. It seems like every year the linebackers have filled those shoes. We have always been the rock of our defense."

How would you assess the defense's progress as a whole to date? "I think we are really progressing. We have already put in our base defense, including all our coverages, blitzes and stunts. Now, it is really just about putting in the little things and perfecting those blitzes and coverages. If you are two steps to the right, you are supposed to be two steps to the left and get in the right spots. We are working to get those down pat and be sharp."

NEXT PRACTICE: The Blue Raiders will practice on Thursday at 4:10 PM. The practice is closed to the public.

SEASON TICKETS: 1-888-YES-MTSU OR GoBlueRaiders.com

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