

September 22, 2009

Blue Raiders focusing on conference opener

Quotes from Tuesday's press conference

Athletic Communications

Head coach Rick Stockstill

Opening Comments

We are coming off a nice win over Maryland and we start our conference play this week. North Texas is a much improved team from the last couple of years. They have really improved their athleticism and speed and look like a much faster team on both sides of the ball. They have got a couple of junior college linemen that look like good players and a junior college wide receiver that will give them some good outside speed. They have moved some safety type guys to linebacker and defensive end that has really improved their speed on defense. They are running the ball better on offense which has helped them tremendously. I have told our guys that we have to get better this week than what we played last week to win this game.

On the emergence of depth at the wide receiver position

Malcolm (Beyah) got hurt the second week of August which hurt him a little bit. He has not performed at the level he needs to. He had a couple good days last week and a good day yesterday, but we will see what happens. There is a consistency he has to play with in order to play at this level. Sancho (McDonald) is really still learning this position. They really both are still learning. They have to play with more consistency and practice with more consistency. We are a better football team when they play at the level they are capable of playing.

On high scoring potential of this Saturday's game

We have played other teams that spread the field and throw a lot and it has been a close game. A lot depends on the defenses and how they are playing and the pressure they apply to the quarterback. You hope it is not a shoot out. You hope our defense plays well and we score a lot of points, but we are prepared for that. If you look at the Maryland game it was not them throwing the ball a bunch and us throwing the ball a bunch, but that was a back and fourth game that had a shoot out atmosphere to it. It came down to the fourth quarter and who had the best when they had the ball. We have got to stop their run and that has to be our mentality defensively. We have to stop the run and make them one dimensional.

On coaching and playing a young quarterback

He (Riley Dodge) is a first time starter, but it is his second season playing for them. He has been in their offensive system since he was a ninth-grader and the learning curve is not as steep as if he was a true freshman coming in. He is a good player and knows where to go with their offense. I do not look at him as a first-year starter. When Dwight (Dasher) started as a freshman, he was here a month before he was thrown into the mix.

On the team handling prosperity

We talked to our team about not being complacent. We are not good enough to be complacent. We made enough mistakes against Maryland to last for a long time. We have to get those mistakes corrected. I like the attitude from our team and the attitude from our upperclassmen. I do not see them cake walking through this week or practice and expecting to win.

On playing North Texas the week after they played Alabama

We did the same thing. Both teams are coming off tough, physical games. The Maryland game was a physical game especially for our defense because they ran the ball some much early in the game. It does not matter who you are that wears on your body whether you are a lineman, linebacker or a defensive back. We are coming off a physical game just like they are.

On [Chris McClover's performance](#) verse Maryland

He played a good game because he had a good week of practice. Coach Herrin did a great job with him. Chris has been very motivated and had a good spring, a good summer and a good fall camp. He is playing with a lot of confidence and playing hard every snap. That is how you play defense, with great passion. To me it was nothing Maryland did, but how he prepared.

On team's goals after early season success

We are one game at a time. Last week you asked if we were looking past Maryland to North Texas. This week you asked about Maryland when we have North Texas. We are a one game at a time team. That is our goal, to win conference games. This is the first one. The Maryland game is in the past. Once we watched film that was it. We have not talked about that game since. We are focused on North Texas and will be ready for those guys. That is the most important game on our schedule right now.



Alex Suber and the Blue Raiders will open Sun Belt play this Saturday on the road. ()

On Philip Tanner's injury

He will not play this week. I would be shocked if he got back anytime soon.

On basing offensive play calling in the number of times [Dwight Dasher](#) is allowed to be hit

We do not go in with a preconceived number of touches we want him to have. It is more the flow of the game. We go in with few designed running plays for him, but he is our best running back right now. He is going to get some yards naturally off of scrambles and pass protection breakdowns. We just have to be cognizant of it and do what it takes to win the game first and worry about someone protecting somebody later.

On last season's rushing success against North Texas and implications for Saturday's contest

D.D. has not done it. Benny has not done it. Dwight did it but he was hurt. That was last year's team and North Texas is a different team. Last year will have no affect on what we can and cannot do this year.

THE PLAYERS

r-Senior Defensive back [Alex Suber](#)

On staying focused after a win against Maryland

Those first two wins in the first three games were just an opportunity for us to get better. Conference play is something completely different. We are going into this game zero and zero.

On the importance of conference play after playing well verses out of conference schools

It is easier to focus on conference opponents now that those non-conference games are out of the way. We just want to work hard and see what we can do Saturday.

On North Texas' offense

They run the ball really well. They have a couple of good running backs. Their quarterback also does a good job using his feet and has the ability to run and get guys open with his feet.

On the mentality playing a non-conference team one week and then playing a conference team the next week

We just want to be focused on one game at a time. In college football you better be ready every week no matter who you are playing. Anybody can beat anybody.

On playing against a team that throws the football more often

It is exciting for the whole defense. Some guys feel like they can get sacks and some guys feel like they can make plays. It is going to be a challenge and we have to be up to it.

On the play of Middle Tennessee's defensive ends helping out the secondary

It is huge when you have guys pressuring the quarterback and you do not have to cover so long. That is the thing about our defense, we depend on each other to do our job and make plays.

r-Senior Wide Receiver [Gene Delle Donne](#)

On the offense spreading the football around to different receivers

Coach Franklin preached finding 10 to 12 guys who can play in order to stay fresh. Having that depth at receiver has helped us over the course of a game.

On separating conference and non-conference

We treat every game like it is the same. Week by week, game by game, that is our mentality no matter who we are playing. Obviously playing in conference is fun. Every game is important. We just treat it like we do every other game.

On the offensive mindset on the final drive at Maryland

Coach Franklin says our offense is based to come from behind. We do not practice our two-minute offense a lot, but we do practice a lot of up tempo and hurry up. That helped us. By playing fast throughout practice, it helped us in that game. That's a great benefit for our offense

On staying motivated after turning over the football

I turned the ball over in the first half which is disheartening. That is something we have to limit. As an offense it is our job to score when the defense does create a turnover.

On the growth of [Dwight Dasher](#)

He has matured so much over the last three years. When he first stepped in he was not vocal enough, but this year throughout the summer, he turned into a tremendous leader for us. He has really taken the offense by the hand and made it his very own. He showed what kind of quarterback he was on the last drive at Maryland with the game on the line and he goes four for four in passing.

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