

September 29, 2009

## Raiders turn attention to Troy

### Team holds weekly press luncheon

*Athletic Communications*

#### Head Coach Rick Stockstill

##### **Opening Comments**

We are excited about this week. We are excited where we are. We are 1-0 in the conference and set to play our next opponent, Troy. We did not practice yesterday. Instead, we watched the film from the North Texas game. We will practice today and the rest of the week and Sunday and then travel on Monday. We are excited about this game.

##### **On the team forcing turnovers**

We have not emphasized it more than any other year. To me that is one of the key ingredients of how you win the game, to protect the ball. We emphasize it on a daily basis offensively, that you protect the ball and do not put it in harms way. And then conversely, on defense, you want to be a ball hawk and do everything you can to knock it loose or pick off a pass and get turnovers. That takes plays away from their offense and gives your offense pretty decent field position most of the time. To me, that is a key factor in winning football games.

##### **On the importance of this week's game in regards to future conference implications**

It is the next game, it is no more important than the North Texas game was last week. We understand who we are playing and they are a good football team. We understand we have not beaten them the last three years. We understand how good they are and they won the conference three years in a row. They are a very good football team. We are not going to put all our eggs in this game. It is an important game, but it is no more important than the game we just played against North Texas or the next time we play a conference game.

##### **On Troy being the only team MT has not beaten under Rick Stockstill**

They have been better. That first year when they came back and won at the end we were two pretty evenly matched teams. And the last two years they have probably been better. I do not believe we played our best in either one of those games. I think we had chances in both of them, but we did not play as well. The game last year was a seven point game with five minutes left in the game and we could not close it out. They have been a better team in my opinion the last couple years.

##### **On the teams playing better or worse on national television**

I do not think a team plays better or worse because they are on television. I know our guys get excited to play on television and I am sure theirs do also. The teams I have been apart of have won on national television and lost on national television. After the first couple of plays you have got to play. Whoever plays the best wins the game. I do not think it has anything to do with being on national television.

##### **On Troy quarterback Levi Brown**

He is a good quarterback with a live arm. He can make all the throws for them. He understands their offense and has been doing a good job of protecting the football the last couple of games. He is deserving of the reputation he has gotten the last couple of weeks.

##### **On Troy's defense**

That is the misconception about Troy. Yes, they have been good offensively, but the difference is how they have been on defense. Their front seven guys are as good as anyone in the country. They have always had good defensive end guys and good linebackers that make a lot of plays for them.

##### **On Middle Tennessee looking forward to this game**

The only circle on this was to remind the guys that we play on Tuesday not Saturday and change the practice routine. We are not good enough at any point of the season to say this is a game we have got to win. If we did not win against North Texas this game would not mean as much. This is an important game. I am not going to down play it or not emphasize it any, it is an important game. Our players know it is an important game. Our coaches know it is an important game. But when it is over, we still have to play seven more games. We understand the significance of it, but it is no different than any other game we will play.

##### **On Middle Tennessee's attitude of play each game on at a time**

You should not dictate the emotion you play with to how you play. It should not dictate how you prepare. It should not dictate how much passion you play with. Because you are playing Troy, you should not get more fired up to play Troy then if you are to play Siegal High School. You have got to play the same way. That is how you get better. That is how you avoid the highs and lows of a



Head Coach Rick Stockstill addressed the media on Tuesday. ()

season. You have to play and approach every game the same.

***On Middle Tennessee becoming one of the more prominent teams in the Sun Belt Conference***

We have played three very emotional games against Clemson, Memphis and Maryland. Then we go out to North Texas and I thought our mental approach was fantastic. We dominated them early, we stopped them on the run, we got turnovers, and played really well. Then we had a lull in the third quarter before we finished it out in the fourth quarter. I was really proud of our team's approach to the game coming off those three games. To see them come out and play the way they did, I hope people think we have a chance. We think we have a chance. You have got to believe in what you are doing. I truly believe our players believe in each other. There is a unity there amongst themselves that this can be something special. We did not start talking about this after the Memphis game. This is something that started back in the summer and has carried over. I know we believe and I do not care what other people believe. If we keep practicing and getting the work done then we think we have a chance.

***On trying to beat Troy for the first time***

I do not have a notch on my belt for each team we have beat. I want to beat them because they are the next team on our schedule. I want to win this game because they are the next opponent. There is no personal vindication about beating Troy.

***On Middle Tennessee's running back situation***

D.D. (Kyles) and Benny (Cunningham) will get the majority of the work. Marquise (Branton) and Dez ([Desmond Gee](#)) will be in the mix as well. That was really the first time Benny had really played. He got a couple of snaps early and I thought he danced a little too much. He has got to put his foot in the ground and go. You can get away with that a little bit in high school but the game is too fast at this level. The same with D.D., who I think is getting better each game, is still too hesitant at times. But when he puts his foot in the ground he has been successful. They have to get better.

***On Tony Franklin coaching at Troy previous to Middle Tennessee***

It is college football. You have no idea who you are going to coach for and who you are going to coach against. At the time you do not think who you are coaching against and think someday we will be coaching together.

***On Dwight Dasher potentially being overused***

There is a little bit of concern, but you just want to do what you can to win the game. There is a little bit of concern, but you want to win. We will worry about that when we can. We have gotten him out of the game late against Memphis and North Texas. You have to be cognizant, but you have to win the game. Right now we are going to do whatever we can to win the game.

**Senior Defensive Tackle [Brandon Perry](#)**

***On the match up against Troy***

We did not play as well as we wanted the last couple years. We are a better team and they are a good team. Going into it, it should be a great game.

***On playing on national television***

It is a great opportunity playing on television, but you do not want to get too hyped up.

***On forcing turnovers***

Turnovers win the battle. Everyone has to be hustling to the ball and it will happen. The coaches stress to us to pursue the football, and they mean everybody so that is what we try to do.

***On changing practice schedule***

In your mind it is a little difficult. However, when you get out there it all makes sense and Tuesday will seem like a Saturday game.

***On Troy's offense being similar to Middle Tennessee***

Pass rush will be the big key for the defense this game.

***On determining a dominant team in the Sun Belt***

It is just the next game. We are not looking at it as any other game. I see them as any other game because they are a different team than last year.

**Senior Wide Receiver [Gene Delle Donne](#)**

***On playing on national television***

It is fun to be the only game on Tuesday night. We know about that, but for us it is like any other Saturday game. My family knows I am going to be on ESPN. Hopefully a lot of people back home will be watching, but I am not approaching it any differently.

***On the game having future Sun Belt Championship implications***

We do not really read into that too much. We have a very tough league and every game is important. Of course we want to be 2-0 and we have to beat Troy to do that.

***On the biggest offensive challenges against Troy***

Their front seven is probably some of the best in the country. Their defensive line is big and aggressive. The two linebackers they have are very good with a fast secondary behind them. Hopefully, we can play our best this week.

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