

Blue Raiders fall on the road at Troy

Jefferson scores team's only touchdown

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TROY, Ala. - Middle

Tennessee could only score once, a third quarter touchdown, and host Troy rolled to a 31-7 win in front of a crowd of 17,108 at Movie Gallery Stadium in Troy, Ala., plus countless others watching live nationally on ESPN2 Tuesday night.

The host Trojans went ahead, 7-0, when Shawn Southward went around the left end for an 8-yard sprint at 5:58 of the first quarter to cap a five-play, 33-yard drive. A personal foul call against the Blue Raiders' Kevin Brown assisted the drive, which moved the ball inside the 10-yard line.

Desmond Gee returned the ensuing kickoff 46 yards, setting up Middle Tennessee with its best field position of the first quarter at its own 49. The Blue Raider offense, however, continued to struggle early as it managed just 26 yards on 18 plays during the opening 15 minutes.

In the second quarter, Middle Tennessee was able to move it with more efficiency but still held out of the endzone. The Blue Raider defense stepped up and kept the Trojans from advancing the ball as well. Linebacker Danny Carmichael forced his fourth fumble of the season, tying the single-season school standard, while three different players registered sacks.

Troy (3-2, 2-0 Sun Belt) managed to score right before the half, with 20 seconds to play before intermission, when Levi Brown connected on a 52-yard in-stride strike to Chip Reeves to put the Trojans up, 14-0. Reeves caught the ball just inside the 10-yard line and sped past the Middle



Tennessee defensive backfield for the remaining yardage. The Blue Raiders attempted to score before the half, moving inside the Trojan 20, but the clock expired after a 16-yard completion to Patrick Honeycutt, who turned and tossed it back to Gee for an additional 10 yards.

The second half opened with Dantavious Parker breaking free for a 46-yard carry before being pushed out by Rod Isaac inside the 5-yard line. Three plays later, Parker punched the ball over the goal line from two yards out at 12:14 to increase the Troy advantage to 21-0.

The Trojans forced a three-and-out on the opening drive of the half for Middle Tennessee (3-2, 1-1 Sun Belt). Troy then capitalized by converting a 26-yard field goal by Michael Taylor with 8:42 remaining to pull ahead, 24-0.

The Blue Raiders went 86 yards on 13 plays on their next possession, only to come up two yards short when Dwight Dasher's fourth-down effort was stopped, turning the ball back over to the Trojans. MT's defense came up with a stop to give its offense another shot, starting at the Troy 41.

Dasher completed a 35-yard pass across the middle to Tavarres Jefferson with 51 seconds left in the third quarter to cut the deficit to 17, 24-7, on the team's third play from scrimmage. Jefferson sprinted towards the right pylon as Middle Tennessee avoided the shutout.

Troy answered on the first play of the fourth quarter, at the 14:53 mark, when Parker took the handoff and went 28 yards right up the middle for the final margin.

Dasher finished 24-of-44 for 245 yards and the touchdown to Jefferson. He has surpassed the 200-yard mark in all five games this season. Jefferson was the team's leading receiver with seven catches for 79 yards, while Patrick Honeycutt added 66 yards on five receptions.

Dasher and D.D. Kyles tied for the team lead with 53 yards on the ground, accumulating 106 of the team's 109 yards.

Cam Robinson paced the Blue Raider defense with a career-high 12 tackles, while Carmichael had eight stops, including a sack, with the one forced fumble.

Brown was 18-of-30 through the air for 191 yards and a score for the Trojans. He connected the most with Jerrel Jernigan, finding him six times for 32 yards. Parker led all players with 83 rushing yards, while Maurice Greer added 80 to the ground attack.

Bear Woods collected nine tackles for the Troy defense, while Boris Lee and Courtland Fuller each tallied seven stops.

Middle Tennessee will return to action in 11 days, Oct. 17, when it plays host to Mississippi State in another nationally-televised contest, live at 11:30 a.m., on ESPNU at Floyd Stadium.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE POSTGAME NOTES:

DASHER AGAIN LEADS OFFENSE: Dwight Dasher entered play tonight ranked sixth nationally in total offense and first in touches per game. After a slow start, Dasher rebounded to account for 298 yards of Middle Tennessee total yardage of 354. Dasher, who went over the 200-yard passing mark for the fifth straight game, finished with 56 total touches, just shy of his national-leading 56.75 average coming into the game.

DASHER REACHES 1,000: Junior quarterback Dwight Dasher became the first Blue Raider signal-caller to top the 1,000-yard rushing mark since Marvin Collier (1985-88). Dasher rushed for 53 yards to bring his career total to 1,026. Collier is the Blue Raiders' all-time leading rusher from the quarterback spot with 1,652 yards.

CARMICHAEL GETS 200TH: With eight tackles against Troy, Danny Carmichael topped the 200-tackle mark for his career. Carmichael entered the game with 195 stops and now has 203 tackles for his career to become the first Blue Raider to top the 200-tackle mark since Keith Pauldo in 2000. Pauldo ended his career with 205 stops.

CARMICHAEL EQUALS SCHOOL MARK: Senior linebacker Danny Carmichael forced his fourth fumble of the season to equal the single-season school record set by Sean Mosley in 2006. Carmichael, who leads the SBC in that category, now has seven for his career which equals the career mark set by Mike Caldwell from 1989 to 1992.

HONEYCUTT IN TOP 10: With five catches tonight against Troy, senior Patrick Honeycutt moved into the top 10 all-time at Middle Tennessee in career receptions. Honeycutt now has 99 catches and is tied with Matt Lowe for 10th place on the career list.

ROBINSON HAS CAREER-BEST: Senior linebacker Cam Robinson set a new personal-best with 12 stops against Troy. Robinson's previous high was 10 tackles earlier this year at Maryland.

JEFFERSON HAS CAREER NIGHT: True freshman wide receiver Tavarres Jefferson enjoyed a career game against Troy on national television. Jefferson hauled in a personal-best seven receptions for 79 yards and his first career touchdown. Jefferson's first collegiate score came on a 35-yard catch from Dwight Dasher near the end of the third quarter.

QUICK HITTERS: Marcus Udell (DB), Marquise Branton (RB), and Darin Davis (LB) all made their first career starts tonight against Troy ... Center Mark Thompson made his team-leading 29th straight start ... Desmond Gee's first quarter kickoff return of 46 yards was a career long for the senior ... MT's first first down of the game came on its fifth possession ... Alex Suber recorded his first sack of the season in the second quarter and now has 2.5 for his career ... DL SaCoby Carter registered the first sack of his career tonight against Troy ... P David DeFatta set a career best with 11 punts, one more than he had at Maryland earlier this season. The 11 punts are one shy of the Sun Belt record, set by five players, and are the most in the league since North Texas' Truman Spencer also had 11 at Kansas State last fall.

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