

October 23, 2009

## Raiders, Toppers hope to get on right track

### Rivals set to meet for 60th time

*Athletic Communications*

**MURFREESBORO, Tenn.** - Somebody's gonna get well on Saturday.

Middle Tennessee and Western Kentucky will meet for the 60th time in football on Saturday afternoon at 2:30 in Middle Tennessee's Floyd Stadium, and the winner will take a major step in righting its ship. The game will be televised on the Sun Belt Network and can be seen locally on CSS.

The Blue Raiders, who were 3-1 in September, have not yet won in October, dropping their Sun Belt Conference opener at Troy, 31-7, and losing to Mississippi State 27-6 last weekend at home. A win against the rival Hilltoppers would give Middle Tennessee a boost in confidence and set the stage for a run at the conference title in the second half of the season.

Western has not won since September of 2008, when they defeated Murray State, 50-9. The Hilltoppers will be trying not only to break a 13-game losing streak, but to gain their first win in Sun Belt Conference play since becoming a football member last year. They would like nothing better than to accomplish that against Middle Tennessee.

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Rick Stockstill acknowledges that his team did not play very well in the last two games.

"We need to get more consistent at the quarterback position. I thought that both Dwight (Dasher) and Brent (Burnett) did some good things and they both did some bad things. Against Mississippi State, we had a couple of nice drives in the second quarter. We got down there and could not finish them off and get touchdowns. We had to settle for field goals." noted Stockstill.

The receiving corp, still somewhat thin, will again count on walk-ons [Shane Blissard](#), [Andrew Banks](#) and [Harold Turner](#), who caught six passes between them against Mississippi State. Leading receiver [Patrick Honeycutt](#), with 20 catches in five games, rejoins the team this week, but [Malcolm Beyah](#) is still recovering from an injury. Wide receiver Chris McGlover has 18 receptions for 263 yards.

Senior [Desmond Gee](#) will start at running back for the second consecutive game, backed by freshman Ben Cunningham. Sophomore D. D. Kyles will also be available after sitting out the Mississippi State game.

The offensive line is still young, with only one senior, center [Mark Thompson](#), but is very experienced with most of them having started at least a few games as freshmen.

"We've seen everything by now (regarding defensive fronts)." said tackle [Mark Fisher](#). "At practice, we work on details, and playing with each other. We are trying to get sound on our technique."

Defensively, Stockstill felt the defense played well enough to win last week, with the exception of two big touchdown plays.

"Our defense plays with a tremendous amount of effort, passion, and tenacity. We are very proud of our defense. They play hard and they will strike you." said Stockstill. "But the bottom line on defense is that you have to keep the other team out of the end zone, and we gave up two big plays that hurt us."

Stockstill noted that was due to missed assignments and players out of place. "That kind of stuff is going to happen, but we work on it every day to eliminate as much of it as we can." he said.

Western's offense will present a strong challenge for the Blue Raider defenders. Running back Bobby Rainey is fifth in the Sun Belt Conference in rushing, and is one of the top kick returners in the conference. Freshman QB Kawaun Jakes has taken control of the offense in the last four games, and receivers Jake Gaebler and Jack Doyle figure prominently in the Western offensive scheme.

For Middle Tennessee, linebackers [Danny Carmichael](#), [Antwan Davis](#), [Cam Robinson](#), a quick and active defensive line, and a veteran group of defensive backs will try to keep the Hilltoppers at bay. Middle Tennessee, at the halfway point in the season, has forced 14 turnovers, has sacked opposing quarterbacks 12 times, and has tackled opposing ball carriers 45 times behind the line of scrimmage. Senior [Chris McCoy](#) is ranked ninth nationally with 10.5 tackles for loss and figures to be a presence on Saturday.

Carmichael, who will be starting for the 28th time in his career, owns 210 career stops, and has forced four fumbles, ranking him



Senior Chris McCoy is ranked 9th nationally in tackles for loss. ()

second nationally in that category.

The veteran defensive backs, led by senior [Alex Suber](#), have 125 tackles between them, to go along with three interceptions and six tackles for loss. Robinson leads the team in tackles with a career-best 49 stops.

Place kicker [Alan Gendreau](#) has hit on all eight of his field goal attempts this season, tying his own record set last year. He enters this game with 99 career points.

Saturday's game will be broadcast live over the Blue Raider Network, featuring Chip Walters and Kelly Holcomb. Affiliates are WGNS 1450 AM, 11.9 FM and WMOT-FM 89.5 in Murfreesboro, WNSR 560AM in Nashville, and 103.9 FM in Bowling Green, KY.

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