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Blue Raiders pull out comeback win on Halloween at Florida Atlantic

Dasher sprint for 74 yards lifts MT to victory

Athletic Communications

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FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. - Quarterback [Dwight Dasher](#) sprinted for a career-long 74-yard touchdown run late in the fourth quarter to provide the winning difference in a come-from-behind 27-20 Middle Tennessee victory at Florida Atlantic Saturday afternoon in Sun Belt action. The Owls had one last chance, but a fourth-down pass was ruled out-of-bounds, ending the thriller on Halloween in front of 15,568 fans at Lockhart Stadium in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Dasher's career-best dash with 5:31 remaining gave the Blue Raiders a pair of players over the 100-yard barrier, as he finished with 108, trailing only the 140 accumulated by teammate [D.D. Kyles](#), who made his second career start.

Neither offense was able to mount much on either of their opening two possessions, but Florida Atlantic scored first on a 38-yard field goal by Ross Gornall at 8:32 in the first quarter. The Blue Raider defense was able to keep the Owls from marching further down the field despite starting the drive on the FAU 44.

On the next MT drive, Dasher fumbled a pass attempt and Florida Atlantic defensive tackle Josh Savidge scooped up the loose ball and returned it 28 yards down to the 12-yard line.

However, a celebration penalty pushed the start of the drive back 15 yards. A short time later, on a fourth down play from the two-yard line, Rusty Smith located a wide-open Avery Holley for the game's first touchdown at 3:30 of the first quarter and a 10-0 Owl lead.

The Blue Raiders' capitalized on a blocked punt by [SaCoby Carter](#) for their first score, with only 43 seconds remaining in the first quarter. [Sherman Neal](#) grabbed the loose ball behind punter Mickey Groody and returned it 29 yards to bring Middle Tennessee (5-3, 3-1 Sun Belt) within three, 10-7.

The next punt did not fare much better for the Owls. The snap went high, forcing Groody to roll to his left, and Neal was in the backfield to record the tackle. It gave the Blue Raiders the ball on the Owl 37. The drive was halted after three plays, but a 46-yard field goal into the wind by [Alan Gendreau](#) at 12:15 of the second quarter knotted the scoring at 10-10.

Florida Atlantic took its next drive right down the field to reclaim the lead with 8:53 remaining in the half. Smith capped the drive by connecting on an 18-yard strike to Cortez Gent in the back left corner for the touchdown, giving FAU a 17-10 advantage.

The margin nearly grew to 10 on the next Owl possession, but as Gornall lined up for a 34-yard field goal, [Marcus Udell](#) broke through the line and blocked the kick to keep the Blue Raiders within seven with under three minutes left in the half.

On Middle Tennessee's second play after the turnover on downs, Kyles sprinted 43 yards down the left sideline on his only rush of the first half. The Blue Raiders were not able to advance any further.

Udell then intercepted Smith with 31 seconds to go, giving MT one last shot at a score before the intermission. The pickoff was Smith's first in 187 attempts. Gendreau drained a 23-yard field goal as time expired to pull Middle Tennessee within four, 17-13, at the break.

The Blue Raider ground attack was the focus of the second half's opening possession. The Florida Atlantic (2-5, 2-2 Sun Belt) defense held firm after a pair of Kyles carries brought Middle Tennessee into Owl territory. The defense forced Gendreau to line up for a 47-yard field goal and the kick went wide left, snapping his streak of 12 straight to start the season.

Once again, neither team could manage much of an offensive threat as the clock ticked in the third quarter. [Jeremy Kellem](#) was able to get a hand on a Groody punt halfway through the period to raise the blocked kick total to three, the highest by a Middle



Junior quarterback Dwight Dasher led the Blue Raiders to a come-from-behind victory Saturday with a career-long 74-yard touchdown run with 5:31 remaining to cap a 27-20 triumph at Florida Atlantic. (Bradley Lambert)

Tennessee team since the Blue Raiders matched the effort in 2002 against North Texas.

As the fourth quarter started, a 42-yard field goal from Gornell went through the uprights to increase the lead back to seven, 20-13, with 14:55 left. Middle Tennessee wasted no time in evening the score at 20, covering 80 yards in 1:02, as Kyles capped the drive by finding pay dirt from eight yards out to become the first Blue Raider running back to pass the century mark since [Phillip Tanner](#) against North Texas last fall.

Udell garnered his second interception of the game on the next FAU drive, intercepting Smith at the Owl 48 yardline. Middle Tennessee threatened to take the lead on its next possession, but a bad snap on the field goal try kept the score deadlocked with just over 10 minutes remaining.

[Danny Carmichael](#) led the Blue Raider defense with a career-high 15 tackles, while [Cam Robinson](#) added a career-best 14 stops. [Kevin Brown](#) and Kellem each registered 10 tackles for Middle Tennessee.

The Blue Raiders will return to the friendly confines of Floyd Stadium for their next three games. The homestand begins at 3:30 p.m. next week against FIU.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE POSTGAME NOTES:

KYLES GETS 100: Sophomore [D.D. Kyles](#), who made his second career start today, registered the first 100-yard rushing game of his career and the first by a Blue Raider since [Phillip Tanner](#) had 159 yards against North Texas last year. Kyles rushed 13 times for a career-best 140 yards and a touchdown with 97 of his yards coming in the second half. It went down as just the sixth 100-yard rushing game under Rick Stockstill and two of those have come against FAU.

DASHER TOPS 100 TOO: QB [Dwight Dasher](#) recorded his second career 100-yard rushing game against FAU. The junior rushed 14 times for 108 yards, including the go-ahead fourth quarter touchdown. Dasher's 74-yard TD run was the longest of his career and the longest by a Blue Raider since [Phillip Tanner](#) went 79 yards in 2007 against Louisville for a score.

REPLAY: [SaCoby Carter](#) raced in to block an FAU punt in the first quarter that walk-on [Sherman Neal](#) picked up and sprinted 29 yards to the endzone for a touchdown. In the Blue Raiders' last visit to FAU, [Jeremy Kellem](#) blocked a punt that was returned for a score by [Michael Cannon](#). The block was the first of Carter's career and the 29th for the Blue Raiders in the FBS era. The team added its 30th later in the quarter.

GENDREAU STREAK ENDS: Sophomore [Alan Gendreau](#) extended his consecutive made field goal streak to 12 in a row before seeing it come to an end with a missed 46 yarder in the second half. After a failed MT drive in the first quarter, Gendreau lined up from 46 yards out against the wind. The Apopka, Fla., native split the uprights on a kick that would have easily been good from 50 yards. Gendreau, who later added a 23 yarder at the end of the half, is now 22-for-27 for his career. The 22 field goals ties Archie Arrington for seventh place on the all-time list.

BLOCK PARTY: Middle Tennessee blocked two punts ([SaCoby Carter](#) and [Jeremy Kellem](#)) and a field goal ([Marcus Udell](#)) against FAU for its first multiple block game since 2002. That year the Blue Raiders blocked three kicks against North Texas. The three blocks today give the Blue Raiders 11 blocked kicks under Rick Stockstill and five for the season. Overall in 124 FBS games, the Blue Raiders have blocked 12 FGs, 11 punts and 8 PATs. The five blocked kicks this season is the most since the Blue Raiders had five in 2002.

UDELL COMES UP BIG: Senior [Marcus Udell](#) turned in one of the best games of his career against FAU. Udell blocked an FAU field goal in the second quarter for his first career block, then on the next FAU possession, he intercepted a Rusty Smith pass to break Smith's streak of 187 attempts without a pick. Udell later added an interception in the fourth quarter to give him a team-best four for the year.

GEE PASSES LYONS: Senior [Desmond Gee](#) recorded 123 all-purpose yards against FAU to move up further on the all-time list at Middle Tennessee. Gee passed Vince Hall for seventh and Brigham Lyons for sixth as he ran his career total to 3,903 yards. He needs only 13 more yards to catch Mike Moore for fifth place.

QUICK HITTERS: [Jeremy Kellem](#)'s blocked punt was the third of his career and the second against FAU ... Middle Tennessee had two players rush for over 100 yards in a game for the first time since ReShard Lee and Dwone Hicks accomplished the feat against New Mexico State in 2002 ... Senior [Mark Thompson](#) played in his 45th career game today against FAU and the Blue Raider FBS record is 47 set by Trevor Jenkins ... Middle Tennessee last played on Halloween in 1998 when it defeated Southeast Missouri on the road ... [D.D. Kyles](#) had a career long run of 43 yards in the second quarter, his only carry of the first half ... [Jamal Lewis](#) started the second half at left guard and [Harold Turner](#) started the second half at receiver ... MT had not won in the state of Florida since 2005 until this afternoon ... MT only had 73 yards of total offense in the first half before accumulating 259 in the second half

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