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Middle Tennessee wins fourth straight behind strong second-half effort

Blue Raiders hold Ragin' Cajuns to 75 second-half yards

Athletic Communications

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Defense and quarterback [Dwight Dasher](#) turned up the intensity in the second half as Middle Tennessee won its fourth straight with a 34-17 victory Saturday against Louisiana in front of 16,411 at Floyd Stadium in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The Blue Raider defense sacked Ragin' Cajun quarterback Chris Masson five times, one more instance than the Louisiana offense had allowed all season, tying for the fewest in the nation entering the contest. The Ragin' Cajuns were held to only 75 yards in the second half.

Dasher finished 16-of-25 for 219 yards and two touchdowns, leading Middle Tennessee to four scores on seven drives in the final 30 minutes after trailing by three at halftime.

Louisiana took the opening kickoff and drove 79 yards for the game's first score at 9:19 when Masson darted up the middle for a three-yard rush to put the Ragin' Cajuns ahead, 7-0. Louisiana was able to maintain the 14-play drive by converting all three of its third-down conversions, including the touchdown.

The Blue Raiders, however, quickly responded led by a 41-yard kickoff return by [Desmond Gee](#) to the midfield stripe. Six plays later, Dasher found a wide-open [Patrick Honeycutt](#) on an 18-yard completion along the left hash marks to tie the game at 7-7 with 7:30 remaining in the opening period.

On the next Louisiana (5-5, 3-3 Sun Belt) drive, [Jeremy Kellem](#) forced a Masson fumble on a third down as the Ragin' Cajuns were driving inside the MT 35. As Masson dropped back to pass, Kellem's rush knocked the ball loose and [Jamari Lattimore](#) recovered it after it bounced around among a scrum to give the Blue Raiders possession at their own 34. Middle Tennessee was unable to convert the turnover into any significant yardage after Hall Davis sacked Dasher on second down.

The Ragin' Cajuns benefited on their next scoring drive when the Blue Raiders were called for a pair of 15-yard penalties, keeping the possession alive. On the third play of the drive, Masson tossed a 29-yard strike to tight end Luke Aubrey across the middle moving the ball to midfield. Despite the penalties, the Middle Tennessee (7-3, 5-1 Sun Belt) defense held Louisiana to a field goal from 24 yards away by Tyler Albrecht at 9:56 of the second quarter for a 10-7 visitor edge.

As the Blue Raiders lined up for a game-tying 35-yard field goal with 6:33 to play in the half, LaQuincy Williams slipped through the line and blocked [Alan Gendreau](#)'s attempt. Lattimore then intercepted Masson on the Ragin' Cajuns' first play from 20 yards and sprinted nearly untouched to the front right pylon for a 14-10 MT edge at 6:24.

Louisiana scored one more time before the half, with just nine seconds to play, when Masson hit Vernon Wolfe on a seven-yard pass in the back of the endzone for a 17-14 Ragin' Cajuns halftime advantage. The visitors drove 72 yards on nine plays covering just 1:03 for the go-ahead touchdown before intermission.

Middle Tennessee bounced back within a minute of the start of third quarter, as Dasher spearheaded a two-play touchdown drive. He rushed for 46 yards on the first play before connecting with [Garrett Andrews](#) from 19 yards out at 14:05 to push the Blue Raiders ahead, 21-17.

Dasher continued his strong second half a couple drives later. He threw across the field for a 40-yard completion to [Shane Blissard](#), who was pushed out of bounds at the Louisiana 16. The Ragin' Cajun defense stopped the possession there. Gendreau then converted a 30-yard field goal at 1:29 of the third quarter for a 24-17 lead.

Middle Tennessee continued the momentum on its first possession of the fourth quarter. [D.D. Kyles](#) set up a seven-yard scoring dash by Gee at 13:16 with a 53-yard carry of his own on the previous play. Gee's handoff increased the margin to 14, 31-17.

On the next Blue Raider drive, with MT backed up on a third-and-26, Dasher hit Andrews, who grabbed the ball off the defender's



D.D. Kyles led the Blue Raiders with 177 rushing yards, over 100 more than the entire Louisiana offense, in Saturday's 34-17 win. (Bradley Lambert)

helmet for a 46-yard completion, keeping the possession alive and moving the ball down to the 14-yard line. Despite the field position, Gendreau was called upon for another field goal try, his second 30-yarder of the afternoon, providing Middle Tennessee a 34-17 lead with 9:16 to play. Neither team was able to find pay dirt again the remainder of the game.

Middle Tennessee will close its home schedule next week when it plays host to Arkansas State at 3:30 p.m.

Middle Tennessee Postgame Notes:

KELLEM JUST BEING JEREMY: Known for always being around the football, [Jeremy Kellem](#) has played 34 career games and has forced 22 turnovers. He has collected seven interceptions, four fumble recoveries, seven forced fumbles and four blocked punts. In his last four games, Kellem has come up with five turnovers (two blocked punts, two forced fumbles, one interception).

DASHER SETS JUNIOR RECORD: With 219 passing yards today against Louisiana, [Dwight Dasher](#) ran his season total to 2,248 to set a new junior passing record at Middle Tennessee. Dasher broke the previous record of 2,083 yards set by Clint Marks in 2005.

LATTIMORE COMES UP BIG: Defensive end [Jamari Lattimore](#) recorded his first career interception in the second quarter and returned it 20 yards for a touchdown. It was Lattimore's first career score and the third score by the defense this season. The last time Middle Tennessee returned an interception for a touchdown was last year at Louisville when [Jeremy Kellem](#) picked one off and went 14 yards for the score. It was also the seventh touchdown by the defense under Rick Stockstill.

THREE IN A ROW FOR KYLES: For the first time since 2002, a Middle Tennessee player went over the 100-yard rushing mark in three consecutive games when [D.D. Kyles](#) accomplished the feat Saturday. The last Blue Raider to record three straight 100 yard games was Dwone Hicks and he did it in five straight outings. Kyles rushed for 177 yards on 20 carries against UL and now has 427 yards the past three games.

DASHER MOVES UP TD LIST: With two touchdown passes against UL, [Dwight Dasher](#) moved up the single-season touchdown passes list. Dasher now has 15 scoring throws this season to stand tied for fifth on the single-season list. The single-season record is 21 TD passes by Mickey Corwin in 1984.

SACK ATTACK: Louisiana-Lafayette's offensive line entered today's game having allowed a national-best tying four sacks all season and the Blue Raider defense recorded five against the Ragin' Cajuns, including on back-to-back plays in the third quarter. The Blue Raiders now have 30 sacks on the season and are closing in on the school record of 36 set by the 2006 team.

GENDREAU APPROACHING RECORD: With two field goals against UL, [Alan Gendreau](#) has now made 16 three-pointers on the season. The 16 field goals are now the second most in a single season at Middle Tennessee as Gendreau passed Colby Smith for second place. The single-season record is 17 set by Matt Crews in 1990. Gendreau is now 16-for-18 on the season.

DASHER OVER 200: Junior [Dwight Dasher](#) went over the 200-yard passing mark for the seventh time this season and the first since throwing for 355 yards against WKU October 24. Dasher has now gone over the 200-yard barrier nine times in his career to rank sixth all-time. The record of 18 games is held by Wes Counts and Clint Marks.

DASHER SETS TOTAL OFFENSE RECORD: [Dwight Dasher](#) registered 308 yards of total offense against UL he broke the single-season record for total offense. Dasher ran his season total to 3,040 yards to break the previous mark of 2,862 by Clint Marks in 2004.

COMEBACK KIDS: Tonight's win was the sixth time Middle Tennessee has come-from-behind for a victory under head coach Rick Stockstill. It is the third instance it happened this year with the Blue Raiders pulling out triumphs on the road at Maryland (September 19) and at FAU (October 31).

QUICK HITTERS: The Blue Raiders' 7-3 record is their best start to a season since they went 7-3 in 2006 ... Middle Tennessee has now won five straight games in the month of November ... MT has now won six straight conference games at home ... Senior [Mark Thompson](#) played in his 47th career game today against UL to tie Trevor Jenkins' FBS record of games played ... [Dwight Dasher](#) is now 11-4 all-time as the starter at quarterback ... [Patrick Honeycutt](#) recorded his third touchdown reception of the season and the seventh of his career ... MT opened the second half by scoring a touchdown for just the second time this season (Clemson) ... [Garrett Andrews](#) recorded his second touchdown reception of the season in the third quarter ... [Desmond Gee](#)'s fourth quarter touchdown run was the second of the season for the senior (first since Maryland) and the seventh of his career ... The Blue Raiders broke a three-game home losing streak to the Ragin' Cajuns with the win today ... MT is now 132-48-1 all-time when a player rushes for more than 100 yards in a game ... The victory over UL is the Blue Raiders' 36th all-time SBC win which is tops in the league.