

Turnovers Bedevil Blue Raiders in 14-7 Loss

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - North Texas capitalized on five Middle Tennessee turnovers to defeat the Blue Raiders 14-7 for its 26th straight Sun Belt Conference victory.

- **Video:** [North Texas Gameday Highlights](#) (WMV)

Maurice Holman returned a Clint Marks interception 99 yards

with 8:48 remaining in the third quarter to allow the Mean Green (1-0, 1-0) to tie the game at 7-7.



After a fumble on a handoff, Patrick Cobbs capped a 3-play, 46-yard drive with a 4-yard touchdown run to give North Texas a 14-7 advantage with 1:56 left in the third quarter. Cobbs, the NCAA's leading rusher in 2003, gained 103 yards on 28 carries.

Middle Tennessee held a 7-0 advantage at halftime. Eugene Gross, who rushed for a game-high 129 yards, tallied for the Blue Raiders on a 6-yard run with 7:53 left in the second quarter.

The Blue Raiders' won the time of possession, but shot themselves in the foot with turnovers.

Middle Tennessee quarterback Clint Marks threw three interceptions, including two that were picked inside the Mean Green 10. Marks completed 21-of-27 for 195 yards.

The Blue Raiders will host Akron next Saturday.

POSTGAME NOTES

MIDDLE TENNESSEE VS NORTH TEXAS SEPTEMBER 10, 2005; FLOYD STADIUM

GROSS GETS 100: For the fourth time in his career, junior Eugene Gross topped the 100-yard rushing mark when he scampered 129 yards on a career-high 28 attempts against North Texas. It marked Gross' first 100-yard game since gaining 113 yards against North Texas in 2004. It was just the second 100-yard game for Gross at home. Gross' 28 carries were the most by a Blue Raider back since Dwone Hicks rushed 37 times in a win over Vanderbilt in 2001.

FINALLY ... A SACK: Senior Jeff Littlejohn recorded his first sack of the season at the beginning of the third quarter to mark Middle Tennessee's first quarterback sack in the North Texas series. Littlejohn now has two career sacks and the one tonight was his first since the 2003 season.

GROSS ON THE BOARD: RB Eugene Gross scored his first rushing touchdown of the season when he ran one in from six yards out in the second quarter against North Texas. It was the 18th rushing touchdown of Gross' career, which places him just two behind Kelverrick Green for 10th spot on the all-time list.

MARKS MOVE TO NO. 7: With 195 yards passing tonight, QB Clint Marks moved all the way to sixth place on the all-time passing yards list at Middle Tennessee. Marks jumped past Andrico Hines, Phil Ironside, and Billy Walker tonight. Marks now has 3,654 career passing yards.

LITTLEJOHN GETS BLOCK: Senior Jeff Littlejohn recorded his first career blocked kick when he rejected a field goal by North Texas' Nick Bazaldua in the third quarter. The block was the 16th blocked kick (four have come against North Texas) of any kind under Head Coach Andy McCollum and the sixth field goal rejected under McCollum.

SAINTIL GETS CAREER-HIGH: Senior wide receiver Cleannord Saintil had five receptions for a career-best 94 yards against North Texas tonight. Saintil's previous yardage high was 75 yards against Florida Atlantic in 2004. The wide receiver has five catches in both contests this season to lead the club in receptions.

QUICK HITTERS: PK Colby Smith missed his first field goal attempt of the season in the first quarter against North Texas to break a string of five straight made field goals ... Offensive lineman Germayle Franklin made his 19th straight start in today's game against North Texas ... A record five NFL scouts attended tonight's game (Seahawks, Colts, Titans, Chiefs, and Jaguars) ... Redshirt freshman Franklin Dunbar started at left guard in the second half ... The 99-yard interception return by North Texas tonight was the longest against MT in school history ... RB Ralph King made his first appearance as a Blue Raider tonight when he came in during the third quarter (first ever carry went for five yards) ... WR Chris Henry ran his streak to 19 consecutive games with at least one reception ... The Blue Raiders fell to 0-5 against North Texas, with the five contests decided by a total of 34 points ... Middle Tennessee fell to 19-8 in home openers in the last 27 years and 3-4 under Andy McCollum in lidlifters at Floyd Stadium ... The Blue Raiders suffered just the fourth Sun Belt loss at home under McCollum, falling to 11-4 in SBC play and 22-10 overall at home under the seventh-year head coach.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE POSTGAME QUOTES

HEAD COACH ANDY MCCOLLUM

Opening comments: "I really hurt for our football team tonight. These players laid it out there and played tremendously hard. I thought it was a very good defensive performance with that unit allowing just the one touchdown. Offensively, we moved the ball up and down the field but we killed ourselves with turnovers. We stress not turning the ball over and ball security but you can't have that many miscues and beat a quality football team like North Texas."

On the five turnovers: "We had every chance to put ourselves in a great position because I really believe that if we could have got up 10-0 or 14-0, I don't think they could have scored twice on our defense, but give North Texas the credit. They forced turnovers and made some big plays. On the interception they returned for a touchdown, Clint (Marks) was trying to go over the top to Chris Henry and he just didn't see the guy. It's tough when you have controlled the game and they return one interception and it is tied but that's what happens when you don't capitalize on field position and make plays. We talk about it all the time. No one is hurting more than (Marks, who had three interceptions), but he is a quality player and person and will bounce back. We tried to overcome the turnovers and still had a chance late in the fourth quarter despite turning it over five times and missing two field goals so that kind of tells you how hard our team played."

On the defense: "Our defense really got better tonight and showed improvement from last week's game (at Alabama). Our defense allows one touchdown and was able to get off the field at key times and give us a chance. I thought it was a great defensive effort. We had a lot of plays for lost yardage and put them in some tough down-and-distance situations but it wasn't enough. All-around, this one was one of the better defensive performances we've had against a team with a very talented ground game and an efficient passing attack."

On the crowd: "The crowd tonight was great. They gave us an edge and we didn't take advantage. This team appreciates the support and it meant a lot to run out of the tunnel and see all the people in the stands early. It was a great atmosphere and I'm sorry we didn't get it done. I hope the fans will come back and support this team next week when we play Akron."

Thoughts from North Texas Head Coach Darrell Dickey: "Our kids have great character and great heart, that's kind of our style of play. Our style is to hang in there, hang in there, and hang in there. Fortunately we made a play that changed the momentum in our favor. Middle Tennessee gave us the toughest game we have ever had against them. They got a good football team and we were very fortunate to come out with a win tonight."

Thoughts from North Texas linebacker Maurice Holman (#41): Holman's thoughts on his interception in the first half: "I was at the right place at the right time and I was able to do something with it. I really didn't think I was going to make it to the end zone but I made sure I kept two hands on the ball and the next thing you know I scored."

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