Offense Explodes in 45-7 Victory

November 5, 2005 · MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee rolled out a season-high 412 yards and defeated Arkansas State 45-7 to remain in the race for the Sun Belt Conference championship.

- **Video:** Football Game Highlights

Quarterback Clint Marks threw for three touchdowns and Eugene Gross rushed for two for the Blue Raiders (3-4, 2-2).

Middle Tennessee trails Louisiana-Monroe, the conference leader, by one game in the loss column. ULM visits Floyd Stadium next Saturday for a 2 p.m. game.

The Blue Raiders scored a season-high 31 points in the first quarter to take command of the game.

Gross scored the first of his touchdowns to cap a 14-play, 80-yard drive on the game's opening possession with a 1-yard run with 9:14 remaining.

MTSU tallied 24 points in the second quarter.

Colby Smith kicked a 26-yard field goal with 11:51 remaining in the period.

Middle Tennessee's defense stopped Arkansas State on fourth-and-short near midfield. The Blue Raider defense did not allow a first down until the 8:42 mark of the second quarter.

On the second play after the defensive stop, Marks connected with Bobby Williamson for a 49-yard touchdown strike, the freshman's first collegiate touchdown.

Keon Raymond set up the next Middle Tennessee touchdown with a 44-yard interception return to the Arkansas State 14 of a Nick Noce pass. Marks connected with Nick McAfee on the first play for the 14-yard scoring strike.

Middle Tennessee's special teams set up the final touchdown of the first half.

Shawn Mosley was able to come through the middle and blocked Eric Niehouse's punt. Deverick Scandrett returned the blocked punt 17 yards to the Arkansas State 7. Scandrett pitched the ball to J.K. Sabb at the 7. Sabb scored an apparent touchdown, but the lateral was ruled forward and the Blue Raiders took possession at the 12. Gross scored from the 2-yard line three plays later.

The Blue Raiders scored on their first possession of the second half. Marks connected with Cleannord Saintil with a 30-yard scored strike.

In the fourth quarter, Ronald Steed scored his first career touchdown on a 1-yard run, capping a 10-play, 86 yard drive with 10:28 left.

Arkansas State was able to get on the scoreboard with 8:48 left in the game. Noce connected with Gary Vincent with a 13-yard scoring strike.

MTSU passed for 266 yards with Marks completing 14-of-23 passes for 208 yards. Backup Josh Harris completed 3-of-4 passes for 50 yards.

Gross led the Blue Raider ground attack with 75 yards. Steed added 67 yards.

Arkansas State gained 265 total yards. Antonio Warren led the Indians on the ground with 113 yards. Noce completed 15 of 24 passes for 107 yards.

POSTGAME NOTES
MIDDLE TENNESSEE VS ARKANSAS STAT
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DEFENSE SHINES ... AGAIN: The Blue Raider defense continue to shine brightest for Middle Tennessee, forcing four three-and-outs in the first half on seven Arkansas State possessions, including the first three to start the game. ASU did not pick up its initial first down of the game until midway through the second quarter. The unit held the Sun Belt's top rushing attack to just 48 yards in the first half and 85 total yards of offense. For the game the Blue Raider defense allowed just 265 total yards, more than 60 yards below its season average. It marks the third time this season the squad has allowed less than 300 yards by the opposition and the fourth time in seven contests the defense has given up less than 308 yards of total offense.

RAYMOND GETS ANOTHER PICK: Senior Keon Raymond recorded his second interception of the season when he picked off ASU signal-caller Nick Noce in the second quarter. Raymond, who also had an interception against FAU, returned the interception 44 yards to set up a Blue Raider touchdown. The interception was the third of Raymond's career and the ninth for the Blue Raiders this season.

MCAFEE MAKES IT COUNT: Senior fullback Nick McAfee has a history of making the most of his receptions. Over his career, McAfee has 15 catches with five going for touchdowns. In 2005, McAfee has five receptions with two for scores.

MARKS GETS 200 AGAIN: After going the first five games of the year without a 200-yard

passing game, junior Clint Marks recorded his second in a row in the win over Arkansas State. Marks completed 14-of-23 passes and had a season-high three touchdowns en route to a 208-yard outing. The Fort Myers, Fla., native now has 11 200-yard passing games for his career and stands one behind Jonathan Quinn and Kelly Holcomb, who are tied for second all-time with 12.

WILLIAMS GETS ON THE BOARD: Freshman sensation Bobby Williams, who entered today's game with 14 catches on the year, reached the endzone for the first time in his young career against Arkansas State. In the second quarter, Williams brought in a beautiful 49-yard strike from Clint Marks to score his first touchdown. The pass was the longest reception for Williams this year and the longest play from scrimmage this season for the Blue Raiders.

OFFENSE GETS ON TRACK: The Middle Tennessee offense has struggled all season to move the ball and score points, but found a rhythm in Saturday's outing. The offense posted a season-high 412 yards and scored six touchdowns, three both on the ground and through the air. The last time the offense scored six TD's in a game was also against Arkansas State in a 45-17 Blue Raider victory last season.

MOSLEY GETS BLOCK: Sophomore Sean Mosley blocked the second kick of his career when he rejected an Arkansas State punt late in the second quarter. It marked the third block of the season for the Blue Raiders and the 18th all-time under Andy McCollum. Mosley's rejection was the first blocked punt by the Blue Raiders since Thomas Johnson did it on November 23, 2002, against North Texas. Earlier this year, the Blue Raiders blocked field goals against North Texas and Vanderbilt.

GROSS PASSES MOORE: Eugene Gross scored his seventh and eighth rushing touchdowns of the year in the win over Arkansas State to run his career total to 25. With the two scores, Gross surpassed Mike Moore for eighth place on the all-time rushing touchdown list. The junior needs just one more to tie Dwight Stone and Brigham Lyons for sixth place and two more to tie Walter Dunson and Gerald Anderson for fourth place all-time.

TWO-WAY: Sophomore Bradley Robinson, the Blue Raiders' top player in the secondary at left corner, saw action on offense today against ASU for the first time in his career. Robinson, a standout receiver at James F. Byrnes HS in Duncan, S.C., caught a pass on his first offensive snap and took it eight yards.

QUICK HITTERS: Middle Tennessee's 31-point halftime lead was its largest lead at the break since getting ahead of Idaho on Oct. 6, 2001, by a score of 42-10 ... The Blue Raiders' 31 first half points were seven more than what MT scored in its previous three home games combined ... DB Bradley Robinson made his first career reception in the first quarter from RB Eugene Gross ... Center Kyle Ringley made his first start of the season and the fourth of his career ... OL Franklin Dunbar made his first career start today at left guard ... OT Germayle Franklin made his team-leading 24th straight start today against ASU ... WR Cleannord Saintil has now caught at least one pass in 18 straight games ... Middle Tennessee's game-opening touchdown drive of 14 plays was the longest scoring drive of the season ... Linebacker Tavares Jones made his first career start at linebacker today in place of the injured Dennis Burke ... For the second straight game, Middle Tennessee scored a touchdown on its opening drive ... DL Sean Mosley recorded his second sack of the season and the fifth of his career when he dropped ASU's Nick Noce in the second quarter ... J.K. Sabb recorded the first sack

of his Blue Raider career late in the third quarter against ASU ... Walk-on Jonathan Grigsby played in his first collegiate football game today and came away with a 20-yard reception, then added another 25-yard grab ... Ronald Steed went 29 yards in the fourth quarter on his first career rushing attempt. Steed finished with 67 yards on 12 carries and a touchdown.

Printed on May 24, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/4559