

# First Half Carries Raiders to 17-7 Victory

November 26, 2005 · MT Media Relations

**TROY, Ala.** - Middle

Tennessee scored 17 first-half points, including a pair of one-yard runs by Eugene Gross, and used a goal-line stand in the final minutes to hold off Troy, 17-7, Saturday night at Movie Gallery Veterans Stadium.

Gross scored in the first and second quarters and Colby Smith kicked a career-long 45-yard field goal just before intermission for a 17-0 halftime lead for the Blue Raiders. But the Trojans scored on their opening possession of the second half and played much better in the second half offensively.



Troy had the ball inside the five yard line with less than five minutes to play, only to watch the Blue Raider defense hold on four straight plays inside the two, sealing the victory.

Bradley Robinson's pass breakup was intercepted by Roy Polite midway through the first period, and the Blue Raiders scored four plays later on a one-yard run from Gross.

Early in the second period Middle Tennessee lined up for a short field goal only to run a fake, with Gross taking a short shot-gun snap and diving over from a yard out for a 14-0 Blue Raider lead.

Smith's career-long 45-yarder with four seconds remaining in the half gave the Blue Raiders a 17-0 advantage at the break. The defense held Troy to 12 yards rushing on nine carries in the first half while the offense ran 49 plays in the first 30 minutes, controlling the ball for more than 21 minutes.

The Trojans put together their most sustained drive of the game to start the second half, driving 66 yards on nine plays, capped by a nine-yard TD pass from Carl Meadows to Gary Banks.

Troy had first and goal from the two with five minutes to play in the game, but the Blue Raider defense held on four straight runs up the middle, including a fourth-down hit at the one-foot line from J.K. Sabb, who ended the game with a career-high 10 tackles.

Gross finished with 54 yards on 12 carries before leaving in the second quarter with an injury.

Ronald Steed filled in admirably, rushing 20 times for 72 yards. Clint Marks was 18-of-27 for 146 yards, while the Blue Raiders did not have a turnover in the game and forced two by the Trojans.

Middle Tennessee ends its season next Saturday with a 6 p.m. CT contest at Florida International.

## POSTGAME NOTES

### MIDDLE TENNESSEE VS TROY

#### NOVEMBER 26, 2005; MOVIE GALLERY STADIUM

**GROSS IN TOP 10:** With Eugene Gross' two touchdowns, the junior jumped into the top 10 on Middle Tennessee's all-time scoring list. Gross, who leads the Sun Belt Conference in scoring, surpassed Joe Lisle for the 10<sup>th</sup> spot and Gerald Anderson for ninth. Gross has 84 points on the season, a new single-season high and moves his career total to 186 points. The 84 points this season is the most by a Blue Raider since Dwone Hicks scored 148 in 2001.

**ANOTHER BLOCK FOR MT:** Middle Tennessee came up with its fourth blocked kick of the year when Sean Mosley blocked a Troy punt in the first quarter. It was Mosley's third block of his career and the second punt he has rejected this season. The Blue Raiders have now blocked two punts and two field goals in 2005. Under McCollum, the Blue Raiders have now rejected 19 kicks - six punts, six extra points and seven field goals.

**CHICOLA HAS CAREER DAY:** Sophomore tight end Stephen Chicola enjoyed a career night against Troy. The Jacksonville, Fla., native hauled in a personal-best nine receptions for a career-high 86 yards. Three of his catches came on the Blue Raiders' first possession of the game. Chicola now has a personal-best 24 catches on the season.

**SMITH PASSES CREWS:** Junior Colby Smith surpassed Matt Crews for seventh place on the all-time field goals made list when he hit a three-pointer just before the half. Smith's 45-yarder was the longest of his career and gave him 20 total made three-pointers for his career. Smith now needs two more field goals to tie Archie Arrington for sixth place.

**STEED HAS CAREER NIGHT:** Junior running back Ronald Steed saw increased playing time against Troy and it turned into a career game for the former defensive safety. With Ralph King not making the trip and Eugene Gross going down with an injury in the second quarter, Steed was the primary back the second half. Steed went on to set personal-highs in carries and yards with 20 attempts for 72 yards. The Kennesaw, Ga., native's previous best outing was a 12 carry, 67-yard game against Arkansas State.

**TURNOVER BATTLE A FACTOR:** Middle Tennessee's defense forced a pair turnovers in the contest while the Blue Raiders committed no turnovers, only the second time this season the offense did not turn the ball over. It was the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> interceptions of the season for the Middle Tennessee defense. The Blue Raiders improved to plus-four in turnover ratio for the season with the two thefts.

**QUICK HITTERS:** WR Cleannord Saintil has now caught at least one pass in 21 straight games ... Roy Polite came up with the second interception of his career when he ran under a tipped ball by Bradley Robinson on Troy's first possession of the game ... Colby Smith's 45-yard field goal at the end of the first half was a career long for the junior out of Franklin, Tenn. ... OL Gernayle Franklin made his team-leading 27<sup>th</sup> straight start tonight ... Junior linebacker J.K. Sabb tallied a career-best 10 tackles in the contest to go along with two pass deflections. Sabb deflected a fourth-down pass in the final period and then made the tackle on a fourth-down, goal-line stand with less than four minutes to play ... The Blue Raiders improved to 2-27 under Andy McCollum when scoring less than 20 points, with both wins coming this season (Vanderbilt, 17-15) ... Middle Tennessee also upped its mark to 6-9 all-time in road Sun Belt outings, including a pair of victories this season (Florida Atlantic).

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