Quotes from Tuesday's football press luncheon

Blue Raiders face Georgia Tech Saturday

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Middle Tennessee Head Coach Rick Stockstill

Opening Comments: We play Georgia Tech this weekend. They present a lot of challenges offensively and they have great players that make it even more challenging. They start a senior quarterback, who has been in their system for three years now, running the option. He is the leading rusher in the ACC. He is a strong physical runner, who makes good decisions in the option game. I think he is under-rated as a thrower. He is breaking in new receivers this season, who continue to improve each week.

Their A-back, Anthony Allen, is a good runner and the second leading rusher in the ACC. We saw him a few years ago at Louisville. He is a good player.

Their defense is big and physical on the front and back end. They have done a good job this season and keep getting better each week. They won the ACC Championship last year. It is a challenge we will be looking forward to on Saturday.

On defending the triple option versus a spread or pro style offense: When playing the option, it is magnified that each player has to be disciplined in their keys. We have practiced a lot this week on defense without the ball. We will start incorporating the ball the next few days. We showed our defense their plays without a ball.

If a player has the fullback on a play, he cannot say I thought the quarterback had it and try to pick up two players. That is how they gash you. We have to do a good job of being fundamentally sound and try not to do more than we can do on a particular play. You have to be disciplined and go through your keys. You have to be gap sound and fundamentally sound.

On the lack of defensive takeaways: Sometimes you can do things about turnovers. There were a couple of times this season we could have made the play. Fumbles are harder to create, because you have to knock the ball out and then get it, whereas you can sometime create an interception.

It is frustrating and disappointing to me, because we have not done a great job protecting the ball and we have not done a great job creating turnovers. The one thing I know is you can prevent them, getting them is much harder. You have to get some help.

On Middle Tennessee not having a standout receiver: We lost six receivers last year and some of the current guys are getting a lot of reps for the first time in their career. We had a lot of drops at Louisiana, which was part of it. The first game was Logan's (Kilgore) first game. The second game was Jeff's (Murphy) first game. The third was Logan coming off an injury, so we have not had consistent play at quarterback. This will be the first game we have had a quarterback start two games in a row. Last year we did not have one person catch a considerable amount of balls. We have to be consistent at that position. Consistency at the quarterback will help as well.

On what it will take to upset Georgia Tech: We have to protect the ball on offense. They are too good offensively to give them a short field. If we do not protect the ball, we have no chance. You cannot give up big plays in the passing game. They are going to grind it out and get their runs, but what really hurts is when they run the dive then fake it and throw the post for a touchdown. We have to be able to tackle well. Once they get the ball in space, we have to be able to tackle.

On Middle Tennessee's players from Georgia returning to their home state to play: This will be the first time during my career here we have played a game in Georgia. They are looking forward to it. We have several guys on our roster from Georgia. Their families appreciate it more because they do not have to travel as far. I know any time you play a team in the state you are from, it adds a little juice to the game. Some of these guys played against these guys in high school. Dwight Dasher and (Joshua) Nesbitt played against each other in the 2005 state semifinals. The familiarity makes it exciting to go play in Atlanta.

On helping Georgia recruiting: We are only three hours from Atlanta. We recruit Atlanta a lot and it is another chance to play in a state we recruit. Anytime you can put your team in an area you recruit it can only help.

On team confidence and comfort level playing ACC opponents: The Oklahoma and LSU games were the only games we have played where I felt we were outmatched. They were better than us. We are confident no matter who we play, if we play to our capabilities and protect the football, we will have a chance to win the game.

On Coach Stockstill's familiarity with Georgia Tech head coach Paul Johnson: When I was at Bethune-Cookman, we played him at Georgia Southern. Every spring we play in the Jimmy Rayne Foundation Golf Tournament to help underprivileged children go to college. I think he is a class act. He does things the right way. He is an excellent football coach and I am not surprised by the

success they have had at Georgia Tech because he does it the right way. He treats people the way they should be treated.

Offensive Lineman Mark Fisher

On the team moving past last week's game with Troy: We watched film the next day. After you watch the film you see what you did and go practice and work on your mistakes. After that day, we put Troy in the past and moved on to Georgia Tech.

On Fisher's injured knee: I am at 95 percent. I have been rehabbing it quite a bit and working in run and pass blocking. It should be fine by Saturday at Georgia Tech.

On playing an ACC team: They are another team from another conference. They have good players on offense and defense. As long as we do not make mistakes and turn the ball over we can put ourselves in position to win the game, but we have to play error-free football.

Defensive Lineman Dwight Smith

On practicing to defend Georgia Tech's option offense: It is different because we cannot be the attacking defense we want to be. If you get too aggressive with Georgia Tech, you will get beat. We have to slow down and execute the game plan because this week tackling is very important. There will be a lot of one-on-one tackling situations. We must tackle well to stop them.

It is still football. They have 11 guys and we have 11 guys. They are a very fundamental team. If you do not play your assignment you will get beat.

On playing in home state of Georgia: It is exciting. We do not play a lot of teams from Georgia, so you have to take advantage of the opportunity. It will be good for our families because they will not have to drive as far to see us play. It will be exciting for us because we will be playing guys we played against or with in high school.

I know a few guys on Georgia Tech and we communicate. Brad Jefferson grew up about 20 minutes from me and we competed in track. I played against a couple other guys as well.

On the success of Georgia Tech's option: They are a good team. They are going to do what they do and we are going to do what we do. It is just like playing one of the top passing offenses. If you do not execute your assignments, you are not going to be very successful.

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