Blue Raiders earn Homecoming win over Warhawks

Defense holds ULM to minus-four rushing yards

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee played well on both sides of the ball, keying a 38-10 victory over ULM Saturday afternoon in front of a Homecoming crowd of 19,052 at Floyd Stadium in Murfreesboro, Tenn. The Blue Raiders improve to 4-1 in Homecoming games under head coach Rick Stockstill.

Middle Tennessee used a balanced attack to pick up the win, registering 244 on the ground and 219 through the air, to outgain ULM 463-269 on the day. Dwight Dasher was 11-of-19 for 219 yards and a pair of touchdowns, while finishing with 66 rushing yards. Phillip Tanner paced the ground attack with 73 yards on 15 tries.

The Warhawks' signal-caller, redshirt freshman Kolton Browning, completed 25-of-43 for 232 yards, his sixth consecutive game with at least 200 yards.

His exploits countered a negative outing on the ground for the visitors, as they gained minus-four yards on 28 rushes, only the second time in school history a Blue Raider defense held a team to negative yards on the ground behind the minus-58 Austin Peay amassed exactly 39 yards ago in 1971.

Middle Tennessee started strong on its opening possession, using a 39-yard gain by Dasher on its

second play to move into Warhawk territory. ULM appeared to intercept a Dasher pass four plays later, but the defensive back stepped out-of-bounds in the endzone, keeping the drive alive. Alan Gendreau then lined up for a 47-yard field goal attempt, but he pushed the kick wide and the Warhawks took over for the first time.

As ULM (3-4, 2-2 Sun Belt) moved onto the Blue Raider side of the field, Rod Issac intercepted a Browning pass at the MT 30 and raced untouched down the visitor sideline for a 70-yard return, putting Middle Tennessee on top, 7-0, at 11:26 of the first quarter.

Two plays into the next Warhawk drive, wide receiver Luke Russell connected on a 34-yard strike to position mate Anthony McCall. The Blue Raider defense then stepped up, accounting for a pair of sacks on the next three plays to keep ULM from advancing further down the field. Corey Carmichael and Derrick Crumpton shared the first one, while Marquise Dixon was credited with the second stop forcing a Warhawk punt.

Middle Tennessee (3-4, 2-1 Sun Belt), however, could not turn the solid defense into another score. The Blue Raiders crossed the midfield stripe, then following a measurement for a third-and-short, Dasher fumbled the snap and ULM's Jason Edwards recovered at the ULM 45.

The Warhawks were able to put their first dent on the board at 1:46 of the opening period after Radi Jabour connected on a 20-yard field goal to make the score, 7-3. ULM capitalized on the turnover and went 52 yards in 13 plays, taking 4:35 off the clock, during the drive during which Browning found Frank Goodin for the longest gain, a 28-yard pass.

Middle Tennessee responded on its next possession, using all 80 yards to its advantage to widen the margin to 11, 14-3. Dasher had his hand in every play, including two long tosses to Garrett Andrews with the second covering 18 yards for the touchdown at 13:22 of the second frame. The pair first connected on a 21-yard pass on the second play of the possession.

The Blue Raider defense continued to play well, stopping the Warhawks the next time they had the ball to return the ball back to the MT offense. After D.D. Kyles gained just a yard on two carries, Dasher located Tyler Mason for a 53-yard scoring toss at 10:59 of the second quarter, increasing the lead to 21-3.

The points kept pouring in for Middle Tennessee. After the Blue Raider defense stepped up again and the offense took over. Dasher hit Shane Blissard for a nine-yard pass to open the drive, then Tanner did the rest, gaining 38 yards on three carries, including a 25-yard scoring run which saw him high-step through ULM defenders and break tackles, to put Middle Tennessee ahead 28-3 with 8:22 remaining in the stanza.

Browning then started the next Warhawk drive by completing one of his first two passes; however, his third attempt was intercepted by Jeremy Kellem at the ULM 44, giving the Blue Raiders another short field with which to work.

The short field did not allow Middle Tennessee to further increase its lead, as Dasher was picked off by Keavon Milton three plays later. The drive lasted six plays and covered 13 yards before ULM was forced to punt again. Neither team scored again before the half ended with the Blue Raiders owning the 21-point edge.

Neither team was able to mount much offense until late in the third quarter. Middle Tennessee was backed up to its own 13 to begin its third possession of the half. On the first play, Dasher dumped a soft toss to Tanner and the running back sprinted 75 yards down the far sidelines before being pushed out of bounds at the ULM 12-yardline. The Blue Raiders could not find the endzone, but Alan Gendreau's 24-yard field goal at 3:18 increased the gap to 28, 31-3.

The Warhawks would not find the endzone until in the fourth quarter. On ULM's second drive of the period, Browning completed 2-of-3 attempts for 39 yards, the last eight of which was a scoring toss to Luther Ambrose at 9:01 to pull the visitors within three scores, 31-10. Browning also accounted for seven yards on a pair of rushes during the possession.

Middle Tennessee tacked on its final points of the contest with 4:15 left, as William Pratcher darted one yard for his first career touchdown for a 38-10 Blue Raider lead. The redshirt freshman capped the drive with the final three carries, covering 17 yards. Each play of the drive was a rush, as Middle Tennessee gained all 69 yards on 12 carries.

The Blue Raiders will return to action at 6 p.m. Tuesday, November 2 at Arkansas State in Jonesboro, Ark., in a game broadcast nationally on ESPN2.

Middle Tennessee Postgame Notes:

ISSAC HAS BIG RETURN:
Senior Rod Issac recorded his second career touchdown when he returned an interception in the first quarter 70 yards. It was Issac's first score since picking up a fumble and going 42 yards against Arkansas State in 2007. The 70-yard return went down as the seventh longest in school history.

DASHER JOINS 4,000-2,000 CLUB:
With 66 rushing yards against ULM today, senior Dwight Dasher joined the 4,000-yard passing and 2,000-yard rushing group. Dasher is just the 19th player in FBS history to be in the prestigious club. Dasher entered the game today with 4,438 career passing yards and 1,938 rushing yards. He raised the totals to 4,657 passing and 2,004 rushing after today's outing.

DIXON SHINES:
Defensive back Marquise Dixon enjoyed a career day for the Blue Raiders against ULM. The redshirt freshman registered two sacks for a loss of 11 yards after entering the contest with just two total tackles on the season.

DASHER CLIMBS TD PASS LIST:
With two touchdown passes today against ULM, Dwight Dasher ran his career total to 36. Dasher is now tied for fourth on the all-time list with former star Kelly Holcomb. Dasher needs one more throwing score to tie Clint Marks for third place.

FINALLY:
Known for always being around the football, senior Jeremy Kellem had been shutout of creating turnovers until today against ULM. Kellem collected his ninth career interception when he grabbed a ball that bounced off of teammate Arness Ikner in the second quarter. Kellem has now been responsible for 24 turnovers in 43 career games played.

LATTIMORE PASSES MCCORD:
Senior Jamari Lattimore recorded three sacks against ULM to give him 17.0 for his career and 8.5

for the season. Lattimore surpassed Anthony McCord for second place on the all-time list at MT. The 8.5 for the season ranks as the second most for a single-season at Middle Tennessee, behind the 11.5 set by Erik Walden in 2006.

DEFENSE HOLDS ULM TO NEGATIVE YARDAGE:
For only the second time in school history, the Middle Tennessee defense forced a team into negative yards on the ground, as ULM accumulated -4 yards on 28 carries. Only once previously had the Blue Raiders accomplished the feat, limiting Austin Peay to -58 yards exactly 39 years ago, Oct. 23, 1971.

NO. 40:
Middle Tennessee's win over ULM Saturday marked the 40th Sun Belt Conference win for the Blue Raiders in its 10th year in the league. The Blue Raiders are now 40-26 all-time in SBC games and the 40 wins are more than any team in league history.

QUICK HITTERS:
The win over ULM was the 30th for Head Coach Rick Stockstill which ties him with Johnny "Red" Floyd for sixth all-time ... MT is now 12-4 at home under Stockstill in Sun Belt games ... The Blue Raiders are now 4-1 under Stockstill during Homecoming games ... Phillip Tanner recorded his 28th career touchdown and 26th rushing score when he scampered in from 25 yards out in the first half. Tanner's 26 rushing scores ties him for 7th on the all-time list ... S Jeremy Kellem played in his team-high 44th career game today ... OT Mark Fisher started his 41st career game today against ULM ... Kevin Brown, Rod Issac, and Jeremy Kellem started together in the secondary against ULM for the 25th straight game ... The 75-yard pass from Dwight Dasher to Phillip Tanner was the longest pass play of the season for the Blue Raiders ... LB Darin Davis had a career-high 10 tackles ... MT moved to 9-1 under Rick Stockstill in its blue jersey-white pant combination ... The Blue Raiders are now 22-1 under Stockstill when the Blue Raiders score 30 or more points ... Jeremy Kellem recorded his second straight double digit tackle game with 11 stops, including 10 solo, against ULM (had 13 last week at Georgia Tech) ... Dwight Dasher registered the 11th 200-yard passing game of his career which ranks sixth all-time.

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