Quotes from today's football press conference

Saturday is Senior Day as Blue Raiders host FAU at 2:30 PM in Floyd Stadium

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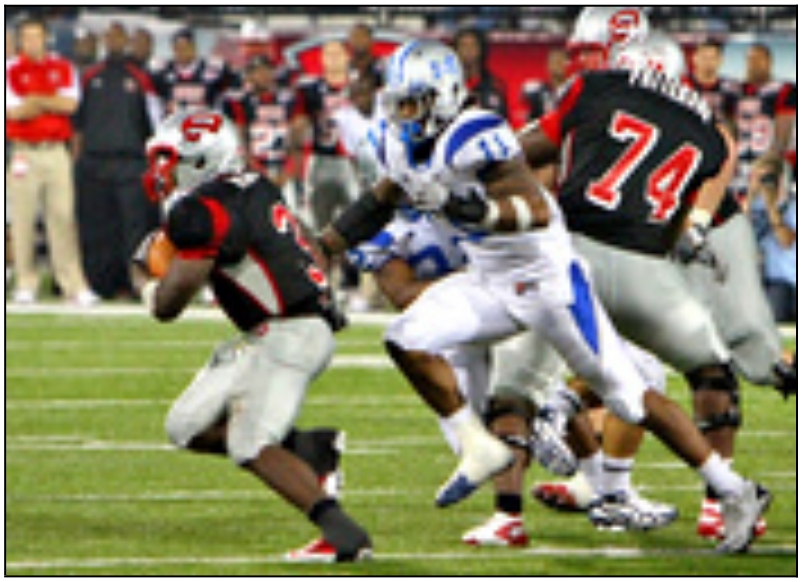

Head Coach Rick Stockstill

Opening Comments: I'm looking forward to our game this week against Florida Atlantic. Our games here in the past have always been very physical, close games. I do not expect anything different this week.

FAU is very big defensively in their front seven. They have an experienced secondary, with three of the four starters being seniors. They are at the top in just about every conference defensive category, so we have to do a good job on offense.

Offensively, they are about the same as they have always been. They are a balanced team that runs predominately two running back sets. However, they will be in the shotgun and go four-wide and throw the ball around. Their quarterback (Jeff Van Camp) played a little against us last year when Rusty Smith got hurt. I think he is an excellent quarterback and fits the mold they usually have in that he is a tall drop back type guy that is not going to beat you with his feet, but can stand back in the pocket and make throws. Their offensive line is big and physical, so it will be a good challenge for our defense.

On special teams, they have a new special team's coordinator this year. We have to continue to shore up things on our end and make the plays in the kicking game. It has the makings of a fourth quarter game which is the way we will approach it. We have to play better than we have in the past few weeks.

On the program's success blocking kicks against diverse defenses: We spend a lot of time on the kicking game, year round. In the spring, August and throughout the season, we continue to work on it. Our coaches do a great job, but all the credit goes to the players. The players are the ones who have the mentality, toughness and athletic ability to make a play. A lot of times when you block a kick, you have to have proper technique, you have to execute the block, but you have to be physical and tough enough to get the push and make the play. It is not just one guy, it is everyone involved in the kicking game.

Steve Ellis is our special team's coordinator. He is in charge of kickoff, kick-off return, onside team, onside hands team and field goal/PAT block. Coach Bibee is in charge of the punt team and Randal McCray is in charge of punt block.

As coaches, we watch film and try to find weaknesses in the protection whether it is a field goal, PAT, or punt. Then during the week, that is what we practice. We study it as much as we can in order to give us an opportunity to make the plays on Saturday.

On running the ball during the two-minute drill situation: We had so many drops in the first half and we were having success running the ball. Our offensive line was getting a good push, Phillip (Tanner) and Benny (Cunningham) were running, and we were getting great blocks on the perimeter by our wide receivers. I am comfortable with moving the ball. Whether you run it every down or throw it every down, all I want is the win. They were not getting set because of the tempo so we were running and we getting big chunks of yardage.

On a pre-designed game plan to divide the number of running back carries: You go in with a play offensively with what you think gives you the best chance to move the ball and win. I said it last week, I thought Phillip did not carry the ball enough. Right now Phillip and Benny are running really well and really physical, so they are going to get the majority of the carries from the tailback position. It can vary from game to game for Dwight (Dasher) as to how many carries he gets from the quarterback position. They are starting to play him a little bit different than they did last year, by keeping a guy in there in a spy technique.

On the senior class, especially Rod Issac, Jeremy Kellem and Kevin Brown: All three of those guys are excellent players who make plays, especially Jeremy (Kellem) and Rod (Issac). Kevin Brown probably played his best game last week. I do not know if you get a comfort level as a coach but they have played a lot of snaps. They have all made plays and are all good players. It just gives you a comfort level because you know they are good players and you can focus on improving other players.

Offensive lineman Mark Fisher

On the physical running style of Phillip Tanner: As offensive linemen, you do not get a lot of credit. Most of the credit you do get is from the coaches. When you see a back have a 100 or 200 yard game you feel a part of that. Late in a game when you are getting eight and nine yard runs and you are chewing up some good blocks it feels good. PT (Phillip Tanner) is a great back and he can make some plays for us.

On both Middle Tennessee and Florida Atlantic having to win in order to qualify for a post-season bowl game: We have to concentrate on us. We had a lot of mistakes at WKU. There were a lot of dropped balls and you will not beat anyone if you are dropping balls. The big picture is a bowl game, but if we lose we are out.

On importance of focusing on just the next game: It is important. A lot of teams will focus on the different scenarios if they win certain games and they get caught looking past the game in front of them. When you do not focus on the details, that is how you get beat. We just have to concentrate on us and FAU.

On having the senior day game mean something in terms of bowl contention: We just have to

go out there and play. It is hard because you want to go out their and look at the big picture as a player, but you have to do what Coach Stockstill says and look at the little picture. We have to focus on FAU not FAU and FIU. We just have to go out there and get better.

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