Issac, Lattimore, Tanner make NFL rosters

Trio, and Walden, open season Sunday

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - With the National Football League set to open the 2011 season this weekend; three Blue Raiders on last year's squad will be on NFL team rosters. Cornerback Rod Issac was taken in the fifth round by the Jacksonville Jaguars, while running back Phillip Tanner and defensive end Jamari Lattimore were drafted as free agents by Dallas and Green Bay, respectively. Coach Rick Stockstill took time out from his weekly media conference on Tuesday to address how proud he was of the threesome. "It is a tremendous compliment to those three guys to go in there and make a team," said Stockstill. "I think it shows the NFL people that a player coming out of Middle Tennessee is prepared for the NFL. He knows how to practice, how to pay attention in meetings, how to represent himself, he knows how to practice hard and how to play hard. "It gives our program credibility that the NFL knows they are getting guys that are well-coached, and prepared from both a mental and discipline standpoint." All three made the rosters to open the season with the teams that selected them. This should come as no surprise to Blue Raider fans who watched them play at Middle Tennessee for the last four or five years. Issac, a four-year starter at corner, earned All-Sun Belt Conference honors last season. He had three interceptions, returning one 70 yards for a score against Louisiana-Monroe, and ran a fumble back 100 yards for a TD against Western Kentucky. He had 54 tackles, 37 of them solo tackles, and was credited for 4.5 tackles for loss of 19 yards. He also forced two fumbles. Lattimore was a beast at defensive end. He had 68 tackles, 15 tackles for loss and sacked opposing QBs 11.5 times for 66 yards. He had ten quarterback hurries, recovered two fumbles, forced two more, and blocked two kicks. For his efforts, Lattimore was named the Sun Belt Conference 2010 Defensive Player of the Year. Tanner, coming off of knee surgery in 2009, rushed for 928 yards and 13 touchdowns, and caught 21 passes for 194 yards. He was named to the All-Sun Belt Conference second team. He holds the school record for touchdowns in a game, six vs

North Texas in 2008, and scored twice in the GoDaddy.com Bowl in Mobile in January. He also returned kickoffs for the Blue Raiders. Stockstill pointed out that all three played on special teams, noting that this was very important in getting a roster spot in the NFL. “All three of these guys were good players on special teams. When you are drafted as a free agent, or even a late round pick like Rod, you have got to make it as a special team’s player. You make it as a special team’s guy first, and then you make it as a position player.” Stockstill talked about how much more difficult it was this year because of the lockout. “When you are drafted in March in a normal year, you have the rest of March, all of April, May and June to learn the new system, offensively and defensively, and you get ready at the end of July for preseason camp, and then you have four exhibition games, which gives you plenty of opportunities. “This year, after the lockout, they only had about four weeks, five weeks, to show what they could do, so it’s a tremendous compliment to them that they made it.” Issac’s Jags host the Tennessee Titans, Tanner’s Cowboys play at the NY Jets and Lattimore’s Packers host New Orleans, all on Sunday. Former Blue Raider Erik

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