School-record crowd helps Blue Raiders celebrate Centennial birthday against Georgia Tech

30,502 witness 100th birthday

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – Quick scores that came early and often lifted Georgia Tech to a 49-21 victory over Middle Tennessee in the Blue Raiders' home opener Saturday in front of a school-record 30,502 at Floyd Stadium. Logan Kilgore led the Blue Raiders in passing with 114 yards on 16-of-28. Jeff Murphy added 54 yards on 5-of-6, while Andrew Banks was 1-of-1 for 27 yards through the air. Sancho McDonald grabbed a game-high five receptions for 44 yards, including the squad's only scoring catch. He was one of nine different Middle Tennessee players with a catch. Defensively, Omar McLendon had a career night, collecting a personal-best 10 tackles, including eight solo stops. He was the only player for either team to reach double-digit tackles. Georgia Tech was led offensively by Synjyn Days and David Sims with 91 yards on the ground apiece. The pair guided the triple-option rushing attack to 382 yards on 65 carries and five touchdowns. GT was also efficient through the air, as starter Tevin Washington hit on 5-of-8 passes for 202 yards and a pair of scores. The visitors were led on defense by Julian Burnett's eight tackles, which included the team's only stop for a loss. The Yellow Jackets wasted no time in getting the scoring started, as they needed only one play to go-ahead, 7-0. Washington located a wide-open Tony Zenon down the visitor sideline and he raced untouched 73 yards into the

end zone at 14:46. The Blue Raiders were stopped after five plays on their initial drive before a Josh Davis punt pinned Georgia Tech down at its own 2-yard line. The long field ahead, though, did not deter the Jackets from setting their sights on the long road ahead. GT methodically used its triple-option offense to march down the field before Washington went up the middle on a quarterback keeper at 4:10 to put the Yellow Jackets ahead, 14-0. The time-consuming possession took 9:25 off the clock, as the visitors covered the 98 yards on 17 plays. Washington kept the ball for the final five plays, including the score. Middle Tennessee started its next drive on its own 40 after the Georgia Tech kickoff went out of bounds. The Blue Raiders progressed to the GT 29 before lining up for a 46-yard field goal. Alan Gendreau's attempt was pushed left, keeping MT from adding points to the scoreboard. The Yellow Jackets again wasted no time in piling points on the board. Washington hit Stephen Hill, who stepped out of a potential tackle before darting towards pay dirt at 2:12 to increase the lead to 21-0 on a 71-yard completion. Despite a solid return back to the MT 44 by Eric Russell, the Blue Raider offense appeared to be stopped after three plays. Facing a fourth down, Middle Tennessee ended the first quarter with an 18-yard rush by Benjamin Cunningham to keep the drive alive entering the second 15 minutes. Three plays into the second quarter, Kilgore was picked off by Isaiah Johnson at the GT 10. Another long field laid out in front of the Yellow Jackets, but it did not seem to slow down the high-powered offense. Seven plays later Georgia Tech again crossed the plane to push the lead to 28-0. Washington and Hill connected on the drive's big play, a 43-yard toss across the middle, and three plays later the signal caller darted across the line from seven yards out for his second rushing touchdown of the evening with 10:45 left in the half. As it appeared the Blue Raiders may be driving again deep into Jacket territory, a completion to Tyler Mason was fumbled, as Rashaad Reid stripped the ball and Johnson rolled on top of it, returning it to GT at the Yellow Jacket 17-yard line. Kilgore found Reggie Whatley for a 17-yard catch on the previous play. The Middle Tennessee defense finally stopped Georgia Tech offensively, forcing the visitors to punt for the first time. The Blue Raiders capitalized on the opportunity for their first score of the contest and cut the deficit to 21, 28-7, at the 3:12 mark. Middle Tennessee returned to the run game eight of the 11 plays during the possession, including back-to-back 11 and 13-yard touches by Cunningham, to traverse the 68 yards into the end zone. D.D. Kyles capped the drive with a 15-yard rush for the score, the longest play during the possession. The momentum carried over the next Blue Raider defensive stop, holding GT off the board highlighted by a Morris Moore sack on the final play from scrimmage before half-ending punt. The Yellow Jackets went back to work on their first drive of the third quarter. They needed just six minutes to map out 85 yards on 11 plays for their next score, a 2-yard scamper around the right end by Orwin Smith to increase the lead to 35-7 at 7:36 of the frame. An 18-yard rush by Sims and a 19-yard carry from Zenon helped set up the touchdown. Georgia Tech tacked on another score before the stanza expired at 1:27 when backup quarterback Days rattled off his sixth-straight rush from five yards out to make it a 42-7 contest. Davis' two carries before the touchdown went for 10 and 28 yards, respectively, as he managed the majority of the drive that covered 63 yards on eight plays. As Middle Tennessee maintained the ball as the fourth quarter began. However, just two plays into the frame, a Kilgore completion to Jamal Gray was coughed up on a force by Izaan Cross and the Yellow Jackets' Jason Peters fell on it at the GT 39, returning the ball back to the visitors. Jiajuan Fennell made sure Georgia Tech did not retain possession for long, as on the Jackets' first play, he knocked the ball loose from Charles Perkins before falling on it and giving MT a short field with just 38 yards to go. The Blue Raiders started their next drive with Banks throwing across the field to Cunningham for 27 yards, moving them down to the 11-yard line. Four plays later, Cunningham finished the possession with a score from a yard away at 12:57 for a 42-14 showing on the scoreboard. The final Yellow Jacket score came at 3:16, a one-yard carry from Days, to increase the advantage back to 35, 49-14. Georgia Tech chewed 9:41

off the clock on 16 plays, covering 73 yards, before putting the finishing touches on their scoring in the game. Middle Tennessee did not give up despite the score. Backup quarterback Murphy came in for the final possession and engineered a nine-play, 68-yard drive before linking up with Sancho McDonald on an 18-yard strike, capping the possession and deciding the final margin. The Blue Raiders will take next week off returning to action in 14 days by opening Sun Belt action at Troy in Troy, Ala., at 3:30 p.m. Sept. 24. **Middle Tennessee Postgame Notes:**

RAIDERS SET ATTENDANCE RECORD: Tonight's announced crowd of 30,502 is a new Floyd Stadium record, breaking the previous mark of 28,105 set against Memphis on Sept. 12, 2009. The top three crowds in Blue Raider history have now occurred under Head Coach Rick Stockstill.

KYLES SCORES: Senior D.D. Kyles scored his first touchdown of 2011 and the eighth rushing of his career when he bowled in from 15 yards out in the second quarter. Kyles' 15-yard run was the longest of the season.

100TH: Middle Tennessee celebrated its 100th birthday this weekend. A cake depicting the athletic complex was unveiled at halftime as the Band of Blue played Happy Birthday.

RUSSELL HITS 1,000: KR Eric Russell became just the sixth player in school history to reach the 1,000-yard mark in career kickoff return yards with 93 yards in the loss to Georgia Tech. Russell currently ranks sixth on the all-time list and is chasing fifth place Orlando Crenshaw (1,042), finishing the game 32 yards shy of catching him.

BANKS THROWS: WR Andrew Banks completed his second career pass when he connected with Benny Cunningham on a 27-yard strike in the fourth quarter. Banks is now 2-for-3 all-time in the passing department for 30 yards. His previous completion came during the 2009 season against Clemson, also from the ACC.

MCLENDON LEADS DEFENSE: Junior DE Omar McLendon not only led all players with 10 tackles, including eight solo stops, he also smashed his previous career-best effort. His 10 tackles topped his previous best of four, set in the last two season openers against the Big Ten's Minnesota in 2010 and at Purdue last week. He previously had a high of three solo tackles, recorded against the Boilermakers.

QUICK HITTERS: LB Darin Davis made his team leading 15th straight start today … OT Mike Williams made his team-leading 38th career start today … After making his first career start at center last week, Alex Stuart started at right tackle against GT … WR Shane Blissard extended his streak to 12 straight games with at least one reception … WR Reggie Whatley made his first career reception in the second quarter for 17 yards … He finished with three grabs for 40 yards … DT Morris Moore recorded the first sack of his career at the end of the first half … R-Freshman Isaiah Anderson started at right tackle to begin the second half in place of Alex Stuart … Jiajuan Fennell recorded his first career fumble recovery in the fourth quarter, a miscue he forced.

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