Double-overtime heartbreaker for Blue Raiders Thursday night

MT plays first overtime game in Stockstill era on ESPNU

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – Middle Tennessee played the first overtime game of the Rick Stockstill era but fell short during the second extra frame as Western Kentucky escaped with a 36-33 victory Thursday night in front of 23,307 fans at Floyd Stadium in Murfreesboro, Tenn., and countless others watching live nationally on ESPNU. The Blue Raiders gained a three-point advantage after the first possession of the second overtime period, but the Hilltoppers countered with the winning touchdown, and not needing the extra point, came away with the triumph. Bobby Rainey hauled in a seven-yard pass from Kawaun Jakes to cap a five-play possession. Rainey finished with a game-high 146 yards on 37 carries, while adding 57 yards on six touchdowns for 203 all-purpose yards. Kadeem Jones had just 15 yards on the ground but scored twice. Jakes completed one-half of his 34 attempts for 222 yards and the winning touchdown, finding Jack Doyle the most often for six times and 100 yards. Logan Kilgore registered 282 yards on 23-of-47 through the air and two touchdowns. Middle Tennessee nearly had two players reach the century mark on the ground, led by William Pratcher's career-best 106. D.D. Kyles nearly caught him, falling 10 yards short to contribute 96 yards on a team-high 19 rushes. Anthony Amos and Malcolm Beyah each recorded a team-high seven catches with Amos reaching the century mark at 100 yards, while Beyah had 55. Western Kentucky moved into Blue Raider territory on its first drive but it was halted quickly thereafter when Casey Tinius' 48-yard field goal attempt fell well short of reaching the uprights after Darin Davis got a hand on the kick for a partial

block. Middle Tennessee countered by driving down the field, using quick passing strikes early and two Hilltopper penalties along the way, to score the game's first touchdown on a 2-yard Kilgore dash at 7:37 for a 7-0 lead. The Blue Raiders needed 10 plays to cover 69 yards before Kilgore capped the drive with his first career-rushing touchdown after he connected on his opening four passes for 40 yards, finding Tavarres Jefferson and Beyah two times apiece. The WKU infractions included a 12-yard personal foul call and a six-yard pass interference penalty, both half the distance to the goal line, kept the possession alive. The Hilltoppers took advantage of a facemask penalty on the ensuing kickoff to start their next drive at their own 40. Eleven plays later, the short field paid off as Jones punched the ball across the goal line to knot the scoring at 7-7 with 1:06 left in the opening quarter. The MT defense felt it had the Toppers stopped near the 20-yard line, and on a third-and-six after a timeout, Jakes located Rainey out of the backfield for a 14-yard gain to help set up the score. Two possessions later, Jakes would complete a 19-yard third down toss to Jones, keeping the drive alive. Then, two plays after that, the signal caller dropped back into the pocket and was stripped of the ball by Leighton Gasque. After a mass scrum in which the ball squirted loose a couple times, all black shirts were on the bottom of the pile and Craig Allen emerged with the ball to give it back to the Blue Raiders. The possession would be short-lived, however, as Kilgore was picked off by Derrius Brooks just two plays after MT regained control at the 1-yard line on a diving grab in front of Jamal Gray along the home sideline. After WKU was stopped from advancing more than four yards, the Blue Raiders were set up with a short field themselves, at their own 46. Kilgore marched his squad down to the Hilltopper 17, aided by a defensive pass interference call, before being replaced for one play by backup quarterback Jeff Murphy. Andrew Jackson stepped in front of Murphy's only attempt, returning the ball to Western Kentucky (1-4) after the interception and subsequent 18-yard return. Neither team threatened to score again until WKU's final possession of the half. The visitors got the ball on the positive side of the midfield stripe after MT was pinned down at its own 1-yard line and a Nathaniel Toulson punt set the Toppers up at the Blue Raider 34. Four plays later, all WKU could muster was five yards before Tinius lined up for his second field goal try of the stanza. His 46-yarder missed to the right and the score remained tied heading into the intermission. As the second half started, both teams had initial drive that stalled early. Middle Tennessee then capitalized on its second possession by scoring on a 25-yard Kyles sprint right up the middle at 10:17. Two plays prior, Pratcher ran a similar path and gained 33 yards. All four of the plays that covered 75 yards were on the ground. After the touchdown, Alan Gendreau's extra point was blocked by Jared Clendenin and the Blue Raider advantage swelled only to a half dozen, 13-7. Tyree Robinson electrified the Hilltopper sideline with a 29-yard return on the ensuing kickoff. Two plays later, Jakes located a wide-open Joel German in the end zone for an apparent tying score. However, the receiver dropped the catch despite no Middle Tennessee (1-4) receivers within 10 yards of him. The Blue Raider defense then stopped Rainey for a loss of five on the next play, forcing a Hendrix Brakefield punt. Pratcher continued to chew up yardage on the ground, taking the first three Kilgore handoffs for 44 yards, including a 26-yarder on the third carry, to push the Blue Raiders into Hilltopper territory. Unfortunately for MT, just three plays later, a Kilgore to Beyah connection went five yards before Robinson popped the ball loose. Ryan Beard fell on the loose ball, returning the ball to WKU at its own 20. Jakes completed a 34-yard strike to Jack Doyle for 34 yards to initiate the drive. Three plays later, the Hilltoppers attempted a trick play with Jamarielle Brown throwing a pass to his quarterback, but it was dropped. The Brakefield punt was downed at the 2-yard line, again setting up a long field for Middle Tennessee. However, the Blue Raiders were unable to stay on the field for long, as Pratcher was caught behind the line of scrimmage on the first play for a safety on a Jackson stop in the end zone to pull Western Kentucky within four, 13-9, with 5:40 remaining in the third quarter. The Middle Tennessee defense held firm on the next WKU drive, but the home offense

sputtered again and returned the ball back to the Hilltoppers on another Toulson punt. Using the field position battle to its advantage, Western Kentucky begun its next possession needing only 37 yards to find pay dirt. Max Ugboaja and SaCoby Carter sacked Jakes on the first play, pushing WKU back five yards, but then two plays later, Jakes lobbed a 24-yard pass to Boe Brand down to the MT 10-yard line. Rainey then finished the drive with a scoring scamper on the next play, putting the Toppers ahead, 16-13, with 35 seconds to play in the period. Middle Tennessee maintained possession as the fourth quarter began and it started with Kilgore connecting on a 16-yard pass to Anthony Amos along the far sideline. The Blue Raiders inched their way down to the WKU 18 before Gendreau lined up for a 35-yard field goal. His kick went wide right and MT continued to trail by three with 13:11 left. A defensive stance put the ball back in MT's hands starting at the 12:02 mark. Kilgore linked up with his receivers for a pair of long-distance catches, starting with 25-yard dart across the middle to Amos stretching the drive to midfield. Two plays later, Kyle Griswould was found along the WKU sideline for a 37-yard completion down to the visitors' 11-yard line. After Middle Tennessee failed to cross the plane, Gendreau converted a 22-yard field goal to knot the score at 16-16 with 9:23 to go. John Evans grabbed the ensuing kickoff at his own 10, danced through a couple tackles and used his blocks to race 90 yards to the far end zone and put the Toppers back on top, 23-16, at the 9:10 mark. Despite the quick score, the Blue Raider offense did not wilt and reacted by driving the ball back down field on its next possession. In its longest drive of the game, covering 86 yards on 15 plays, it was a fourth-down Kilgore connection to Amos from eight yards away that forced yet another deadlock, 23-23, with just 4:55 remaining. Plays highlighting the possession included a pass interference call against the WKU defense on a second-and-10 when Kilgore attempted to throw a deep bomb to Beyah. The 15-yard penalty advanced the ball to MT 44, and just five plays later, the Blue Raiders were in the red zone. After Kyles rushed for two yards, Kilgore hit Amos on a 17-yard completion to the 1-yard line. However, Beard then sacked Kilgore for a loss of seven yards on first down setting MT back further from the end zone than it desired. It would take three more plays before the signal caller found his receiver by throwing off his back foot for the tying score. WKU drove down the field one last time, setting itself up for the potential go-ahead score, getting the ball with 2:42 left in regulation. With both teams calling all their timeouts to preserve time, penalties began to hamper the Hilltopper progress. Eventually, they were pushed back to their 29-yard line before stopping the clock one last time with just two seconds left. Tinius trotted on for field goal try from 46 yards away, but Shubert Bastien leaped up and put his hand in front of the kick to knock it down as time expired. In the first overtime, Western Kentucky got the ball first. It needed seven plays to cover the 25 yards but Jones eventually punched the ball into the end zone from a yard away to put WKU ahead, 30-23. Middle Tennessee wasted no time in finding the game's fourth equalizer, as Kilgore hit Sancho McDonald along the home sideline for a 25-yard score on the first play to force a second extra period at 30-30. The Blue Raiders retained possession to begin the second overtime. The half dozen plays amounted to no touchdown and Gendreau came on to convert a 23-yard field goal to give MT a 33-30 edge before WKU scored the winner. Middle Tennessee returns to action in just over two weeks, Oct. 22, when it travels to Boca Raton, Fla., to battle Florida Atlantic at 7 p.m. Central in a Sun Belt Network televised game. **Middle Tennessee Postgame Notes:**

GOING OVERTIME: Middle Tennessee competed in its fifth overtime game as a member of FBS and are now 2-3 in those games following the loss to WKU. The last time MT played an overtime game before tonight was in 2003 at home against Louisiana-Lafayette. MT lost that one in four overtimes.

PRATCHER TOPS 100: Sophomore William Pratcher registered the first 100-yard rushing game of his career by rushing 16 times for 106 yards against WKU. Pratcher has now registered his career

high in rushing for the third straight game.

AMOS HAS 100 GAME: Walk-on wide receiver Anthony Amos, who caught the game winning TD against Memphis with 11 seconds to play, recorded the first 100-yard game of his career against WKU. Amos, who caught the game tying TD with 4:55 left in the fourth quarter on fourth down, finished the game with a career-best seven catches for 100 yards.

GASQUE ANOTHER SACK: Reserve linebacker Leighton Gasque recorded his team-leading third sack of the season when he dropped WKU QB Kawaun Jakes in the second quarter. He also forced a fumble on the play that was recovered by MT. Gasque now has 3.0 sacks on the season, and all three have come when he has lined up at defensive end.

DAVIS, BASTIEN GET FIRST BLOCKS: Senior linebacker Darin Davis was credited with his first career blocked kick when he rejected a WKU field goal in the first quarter and freshman Shubert Bastien also earned his first block when he knocked down a WKU field goal attempt at the end of regulation. It went down as the second and third blocked kicks of the year by the Blue Raiders and the 23rd in 68 games under Rick Stockstill. Since 2008, the Blue Raiders have now blocked 20 kicks to rank second nationally.

GENDREAU TIES FOR 3RD: With two field goals in the loss to WKU, senior PK Alan Gendreau now has 42 for his career. The 42 made three-pointers tie for the third most in Sun Belt Conference history with North Texas Nick Bazaldua and ULL's Sean Comiskey. He now needs eight more to tie Troy's Greg Whibbs for second.

RARE SAFETY: The safety given up by Middle Tennessee late in the third quarter marked the first against the Blue Raiders since 2005. That year, MT allowed a safety against Alabama.

BLOOD DRIVE WINNER: During the first quarter of tonight's game, it was announced Middle Tennessee was the winner of the annual Blood Drive between MT and WKU. MT had 589 pints compared to 422 pints by WKU.

QUICK HITTERS: QB Logan Kilgore scored the first rushing TD of his career on the Blue Raiders' opening possession of the game (2-yard run) … MT scored on its opening drive of the game for the first time this season and the first time since the Memphis game in 2010 – a span of 15 games … RB William Pratcher made his first collegiate start tonight against WKU … Game captains tonight were Alex Stuart, Jiajuan Fennell, and Reginald Farmer … Linebackers Corey Carmichael and Jonathan Brooks did not dress tonight due to violation of athletic department policies … OT Mike Williams made his 41st career start tonight … Kyle Griswould had his first rushing attempt vs. WKU after moving from WR during the week following the injury to Benny Cunningham … MT has won the coin toss in all three home games this season … RB William Pratcher's 33-yard run in the third quarter was the longest of his career … The blocked PAT by WKU in the third quarter was the first blocked PAT of the Blue Raiders since Oct. 5, 2010 by Troy … PK Alan Gendreau connected on his 41st career field goal when he hit a 22-yarder in the fourth quarter … WKU's 90-yard kickoff return for a TD marked the first against MT since 2009 when Clemson's C.J. Spiller went 96 yards for a score.