Blue Raiders fall to SBC leader ASU, 45-19

MT hosts FIU in home finale next Saturday

November 19, 2011 · Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – Scoring droughts in the first and third quarters doomed the Blue Raiders chances to upset Arkansas State and hand the Sun Belt Conference co-champions their first league loss of the year. The Blue Raiders fell to the Red Wolves 45-19 at Floyd Stadium on Saturday afternoon before an announced crowd of 12,806.

Arkansas State wasted no time in getting on the scoreboard, taking the opening kickoff and driving 66 yards in three plays to score on a 26-yard pass from Ryan Aplin to Dwayne Frampton in only 44 seconds. ASU added a 2-point conversion on a pass from Neely Sullivant to Nathan Herrold to make the score 8-0.

MT forced a punt on ASU's next possession. Leighton Gasque blocked the punt that rolled out of the end zone for a safety to close the score to 8-2.

Late in the first quarter, a William Pratcher fumble was recovered by ASU at the Blue Raider 19. Two plays later, Aplin found Anthony Kinsey for a 21-yard scoring pass, and the extra point made the score 15-2.

In the second quarter, ASU struck again on a 70-yard drive in six plays, with Frankie Jackson going in from 8 yards out. The extra point was good and the Red Wolves led 22-2. A Brian Davis field goal with 5:54 remaining in the half upped the lead to 25-2.

At this point, Middle Tennessee's offense came alive and scored two quick touchdowns. Jeff Murphy, who played the whole game at quarterback for the Blue Raiders, engineered an 80-yard drive in 13 plays for MT's first offensive score of the game. Benny Cunningham's 1-yard run and Alan Gendreau's extra point made the score 25-9.

After an Arkansas State fumble gave the ball back to Middle Tennessee at the ASU 14, Gendreau kicked a 26-yard field goal, then Arness Ikner intercepted an Aplin pass and returned it 46 yards to the ASU 12. On the first play, Murphy found Sancho McDonald for a touchdown, and Gendreau's kick cut the ASU lead to 25-19 at halftime.

Despite having the momentum coming out of the locker room, the Blue Raiders would get no closer. The offense went three-and-out on their first three possessions of the second half, while Aplin led ASU on scoring drives of 57 yards in ten plays, and 39 yards in two plays to stretch the lead back to 39-19.

Arkansas State added another touchdown in the final frame, but missed the extra point to make the final score 45-19, as the Blue Raiders did not score in the second half.

Offensively, MT had 299 yards of total offense (80 yards rushing and 219 passing), while ASU, who leads the Sun Belt in almost every offensive category, piled up 536 (203 rushing and 333 passing). Murphy hit 28 of 48 passes for 219 yards and one touchdown. Kyle Griswould was is favorite receiver with 7 catches for 63 yards. Murphy was also the team's leading rusher with 46 yards on 15 carries. No other Blue Raider had more than 17 yards rushing.

Ikner had a great afternoon defensively, with nine tackles, a 46-yard interception return and a fumble recovery. T.L. Edwards had nine solo tackles and returned a fumble 35 yards. Freshman Shubert Bastien, subbing for the injured JiaJuan Fennell, had eight solo tackles, one tackle for loss, one forced fumble and a QB hurry.

Middle Tennessee suffered its fourth consecutive loss to fall to 2-8 on the season, and 1-5 in Sun Belt Conference play. ASU is 8-2, 7-0.

The Blue Raiders will play their final home game of the 2011 season when they host Florida International at Floyd Stadium next Saturday at 2:30 PM. They will close their season at North Texas on Dec. 3rd..

MURPHY SETS CAREER MARKS: Junior Jeff Murphy got his second career start today and responded with personal best marks in completions and attempts. Murphy completed 28 of 48 passes for 219 yards for his second career 200-yard passing game. The 28 completions tied for the sixth most in a single game.

GENDREAU TIES SBC RECORD: With 5 points today, senior place-kicker Alan Gendreau tied former Arkansas State kicker Josh Arauco as the Sun Belt Conference's all-time leader in points scored by a kicker. Gendreau now has 288 total points to equal Arauco's mark and needs one more for the record. Gendreau is also tied with Arauco for second place on the SBC's all-time scoring list and is just seven shy of becoming the all-time points leader in league history.

RARE SAFETY: Middle Tennessee's safety it recorded due to the blocked punt in the first quarter was the first since 2007. The Blue Raiders registered two safeties in the 2007 game at North Texas.

GASQUE GETS BLOCK: Leighton Gasque registered his first career blocked kick when he rejected an ASU punt in the first quarter that resulted in a safety. It marked the fifth blocked kick of the season by the Blue Raiders with three punts and two field goals. Over the past three years, MT has now blocked 19 kicks and 25 total under Rick Stockstill.

GASQUE MOVES UP SACK LIST: Freshman Leighton Gasque recorded his team-leading seventh sack in the first quarter against ASU. His 7.0 sacks tie Chris McCoy, Tavares Jones and Anthony Hicks for third place on the single-season list. The 7.0 sacks also ranks as the most ever by a freshman.

GRISWOULD ON FIRE: Kyle Griswould, who has been used as a running back and receiver this season, has been worked hard the past two games. During that span, Griswould has caught 14 passes for 162 yards, including a career-high seven grabs against Arkansas State.

QUICK HITTERS: ASU scored on its opening possession today marking the fourth time an opponent has scored on the opening drive this season (2nd in a row) … DE Shubert Bastien made his first collegiate start today against ASU … QB Jeff Murphy made his second career start in today's game against ASU … DT Dearco Nolan registered his second career sack late in the first quarter … Benny Cunningham's 1-yard TD run was the ninth rushing score of his career … Arness Ikner's second quarter interception was the second of his career … WR Sancho McDonald had his sixth TD reception of the season in the second quarter and the 12th of his career.

Printed on June 18, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/56704