Stockstill believes Blue Raiders on right path

Spring drills are underway

March 17, 2012 · Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - After a solid workout on a hot day to open spring practice, Middle Tennessee Head Coach Rick Stockstill feels like his team is “on the right path.” “It was a good first day, it was nice and hot, and I thought the guys pushed through it, both mentally and physically,” said Stockstill. “There were a lot of times today when we extended them pretty good for the first day of spring. We are not where I want to be, but we are definitely on the right path.” Stockstill watched his team and coaches intently during the two-hour session in helmets and uniforms, but no pads. “It’s hard to tell much on the first day,” added Stockstill. “I liked our tempo, but we have to get a little bit faster, and that is more communication than anything else. I liked their energy, I liked their tempo. I told them afterwards that if we continue to work like this and coach like this, we’ve got a chance to improve over the next five or six practices. It is going to be hard over the next few days, working so many people, to get the perfection that you seek, that you want. But there is nothing that can keep you from working hard or giving great effort. No matter whom you are, how fast you are, how slow you are, everybody can compete at a high level, and give great effort.” A shoulder injury to wide receiver Marcus Henry, a junior college transfer, put a damper on the day. “I got mad over that,” said Stockstill. “I want us to be aggressive, but we have to be smarter about it. We have to stay on our feet. Marcus went for a reception, and the defensive back went for a strip of the ball, they got tangled up, and Marcus landed

on his shoulder. He is probably done for the spring." The Blue Raiders will return to the practice field on Sunday. **PLAYER COMMENTS FROM DAY ONE:**

Omar McLendon: There is a different attitude about this team after last year. The younger guys have a sense of "we have to prove ourselves." Chris Sharpe (soph. cornerback) dropped a sure interception and when he came off the field we all got on him about it. And, on the very next play, he intercepted one. I feel like the younger guys are working, and the older guys should feed off of that. Shubert (Bastien) and Jiajuan (Fennell) both got to play a lot last year as freshmen, and this year we should expect them to play even more. They should have even more confidence since this will be their second year. Max (Ugboaja) needs to come along. He saw the field a lot last year. We just need for all of the guys to buy-in and we all need to be heading in the right direction. I'll never forget last season. It was a learning experience, so it is always in the back of my mind, "No repeat of last season". It was a horrible feeling, and I've had a bad taste in my mouth ever since." **Alex Stuart:** We've got to be tougher. I'm not trying to sling mud at anybody, but we had several people that were weak, both mentally and physically. You have to be tough. That's how you win football games. You've got to have people that want to get tough, get down, get dirty and get nasty. It is okay to remember last season, but you have to put it in the past and move on. **Anthony Amos:** I see myself as a 'go-to' person, but in our offense, everyone is expected to be a go-to receiver. I am just trying to lead by example. **Dearco Nolan:** I was moved back to defensive end from tackle, and that's my natural position, but it doesn't really matter to me where I play. Last year, we lost a couple of guys at end, and I had to play tackle. But it really doesn't matter to me which position I play, I just want to help the team. Coach Cauthen was with the team last year, and he is a great coach. He explains things very well. It is important for this team to know that winning is not entitled. We've got to come hard every day, come to work every day, nothing is given to you. The defense is going to work hard, come to work every day, get takeaways and play hard-nose football.

Printed on May 21, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/59598