

# Defense continues to shine during second spring scrimmage

## Four interceptions and eight sacks highlight defensive performance

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### Photo Gallery

#### **MURFREESBORO, Tenn. –**

The defensive unit put forth a solid effort Saturday morning in the second Middle Tennessee football scrimmage of the spring at Floyd Stadium. The Blue Raider offense was held to 254 yards passing and 117 yards on the ground during the 102-play scrimmage.

A total of eight sacks were registered on the day with redshirt sophomore Leighton Gasque leading the charge with three. Redshirt junior Craig Allen and redshirt senior Kendall Dangerfield each had a pair, while redshirt freshman Ykeem Wells also was credited with a stop.

In addition, tackles for loss were collected by redshirt freshman Jerrold Frazier, redshirt sophomore Patrick McNeil and junior Corey Carmichael.

The defense also grabbed four interceptions, including a pair in the end zone. Redshirt junior Kenneth Gilstrap and redshirt freshman Kevin Byard hauled in picks to prevent touchdowns, while redshirt junior Sammy Seamster and redshirt junior Jajuan Harley also stepped in front of passes for the turnover. Seamster's interception came on the first pass thrown by redshirt senior quarterback Jeff Murphy.

Murphy ended the day as the top signal-caller in terms of yardage with 115 on 10-of-17 attempts. He



completed a long of 20 yards to redshirt senior Harold Turner Jr.

Redshirt junior Logan Kilgore converted 12 of his 23 passes for 86 yards and a touchdown, hitting senior Tavarres Jefferson from nine yards out. Turner also caught Kilgore's longest toss of the scrimmage, a 20-yard strike.

Redshirt freshman Shaun White was the only other quarterback to see action and he recorded a 7-of-13 performance for 54 yards and a touchdown. His scoring strike was a 28-yarder to redshirt senior Anthony Amos.

Overall, the three quarterbacks completed 29-of-53 for 254 yards, two touchdowns and four interceptions.

Turner's two long hauls enabled him to register a team-high 67 yards on just four catches. Redshirt freshman Christian Collis added a team-best five grabs for 25 yards, while Amos finished with 49 yards on three receptions.

Four rushing touchdowns were also scored, by four different players. Senior Benny Cunningham paced the backfield with 47 yards on nine touches, including a two-yard score. Redshirt junior Drayton Calhoun tallied 24 yards on 10 carries, while redshirt junior William Pratcher also scored from two yards away as part of his 20 yards on team-high 12 rushes.

Murphy and redshirt sophomore Reggie Whatley each found pay dirt on one-yard touchdowns. Redshirt freshman Jeremiah Bryson collected 17 yards on only three carries.

Senior placekicker Carlos Lopez converted two of his three field goal attempts, making kicks from 31 and 38 yards. His lone miss, a 55-yarder, was partially blocked by sophomore Shubert Bastien.

Middle Tennessee will return to the field at 3:15 p.m. Tuesday in the next-to-last practice before Saturday's Spring Game, which will be held at 1 p.m. at Floyd Stadium. More details on the Blue-White Spring Game will be released this week.

Quotes:

**Head coach Rick Stockstill:**

There were some good things and some bad things. We had a lot of procedure penalties on offense that stalled some drives and that was disappointing. We've got to get those corrected. We jumped offside too much and turned the ball over four times on interceptions. We have to do a better job protecting the ball.

Benny ran good, Logan made some good throws, showed good poise in there. Same with Murphy. He missed a couple of throws, but he did a nice job of throwing the ball. Shaun continues to improve.

Benny, I thought was impressive. He ran hard, he was physical. I thought the other backs danced a little too much, were too tentative. For the most part, I thought our line did a solid job.

Defensively, I was impressed with the entire defense. The front played really well: Omar McLendon, Jimmy Staten, Pat McNeil. Craig Allen played well at linebacker. Kevin Byard, Kenneth Gilstrap, all of our secondary played really well. Sammy made a great interception, Byard continues to improve, Jajuan Harley played better today.

Overall, I was pleased. I thought they played hard, they competed hard.

Our field goal kicker made two and missed one, so he did better this week, a little more consistent than last week, but we have to continue to get better there.

We had some drops by our receivers that tried to run before they caught it, just fundamental things that we have to continue to coach and get better at.

**Cornerback Kenneth Gilstrap:**

My interception was something that I had been working on all week. I got beat on the same play yesterday and the coach told me the proper adjustment. It's learning, going to work every day and me maturing as a player, from studying to the game room to the field.

We have some new guys back there this spring. Jajuan Harley transferred and sat out last year. We have a young guy named Kevin Byard that I feel could be the best safety ever to come through here. This is a talented group of DBs. We come to work every day and I feel like we have the potential to be as good as any group we've had here.

I have studied MT football, and our goal is to be the best, going all the way back to the Mod Squad, Ray Bonner and that bunch back in the '70s. They are regarded as the best to play here and our goal is to be as good as they were.

We play a team defense, a pressure defense and when the guys up front get pressure, we can make interceptions. It's a team concept and we are only as good as our teammates. You can't be a player by yourself.

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