

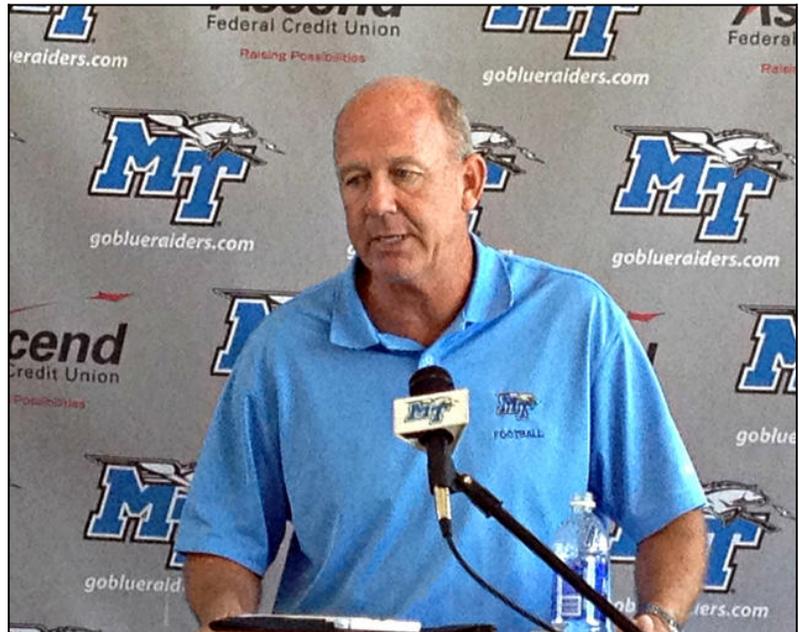
Football holds first press conference

Season opener is Thursday vs McNeese

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COMMENTS FROM HEAD COACH RICK STOCKSTILL ABOUT OPENING GAME

We are really excited about next Thursday night and the opportunity it presents. I am proud of this football team, and how hard they have worked since the end of last season. This team is a very focused group right now. We have worked very hard this month, and we still have five practices left before we kick it off. I couldn't be more excited about how we have improved during August.



McNeese State will be a really good challenge for us. They are really fast in all three phases of the game. Offensively, their strength is probably their offensive line. Four of their five starters are seniors, they have good size, and they have played a bunch of snaps. Their quarterback is back and they have some excellent skill guys. One of their receivers (Ernest Celestie) played against us a couple of years ago at North Texas, and scored on a long pass. It was called back because of a penalty, but he is a dangerous threat. Overall, the strength of their team is their speed, and they are very athletic.

Defensively, they can all run. They are also very athletic and fast.

Everybody is hungry. We all have a chip on our shoulders from last year, and we are anxious to get this season started.

We want to win the game, and so does McNeese. We talk about winning the play, winning each snap, and do whatever it takes to win the game. I want to win the game, I want to play smart, and I want us to play like we have been coached. It is critical that we get off to a good start. I think it is about us, and not them. It will come down to how well we do what we have been coached.

In the opener, you have to base your scouting on what they did last year, so it's the unknown. What have they changed? What have they kept from last year? And your freshmen and your new guys will all be playing their first college game. So the unknowns make the first game really critical. And the kicking game is always critical in the first game.

Most opening games are lost, not won. We have to be fundamentally sound to cut down on mistakes that will beat you. We have to have mental intensity. Without that, you can't play as physical, you can't play as tough or efficiently as you'd like to play.

We had a lot of seniors last year that were backed up by freshman, and you knew that the freshmen weren't going to push the seniors. This year, I like our competitive edge, our competition for playing time.

One of the things we are going to have to do is make their quarterback uncomfortable, make him move around, disrupt his rhythm. We have to come at him from different directions, blitzes, or create pressure with our front four. We have to make him move around back there.

QB Logan Kilgore

Quarterback Competition: It's kind of just being ready when your numbers called. All of the backups have done a good job. Those guys have done well and I'm excited about moving forward. I think I have some smart guys that can be watching certain things during the games.

On Bronson: Just like any other good player we play, he's very active and he's all over the field, he's kind of a ball hawk.

On starting 1-0 after last season's 2-10 record: It's just as important as if we went 12-0 last season. This is a new year, I know this team is seeking out our identity, and what better way than to start strong.

Practicing for first game versus other games: To be honest, it's not that different. We didn't actually start focusing on McNeese, scout-wise, until the past couple days. We've been focusing on installing our offense and fixing our mistakes, not worrying about what the defense is doing.

Knowing if team is ready: I would've sworn last year we weren't going to lose a game, and that's how I feel this year. We're preparing every single week and we're going to get better. We have winners in that locker room. Last year was a tone thing, and this year is something new and I'm excited to come out week one and start this journey.

DE Omar McLendon

Size of McNeese O-Line: I just look at them as any other team, but it's not about them, it's about us. We've been emphasizing on being physical, being tough, especially on the defensive line because that's where it all starts. I don't look at size or how long they've been playing. You beat the guy in front of you, it doesn't matter what size they are or what their classification is.

Putting last year in the rearview mirror: We're always eager to start a new season. Even if we were 12-0 last season we're just eager to get back out there and have fun and play the game we love.

Is team ready? What tells you is the focus of the team. We're a lot tougher. Practices have been a lot tougher than the past three years. Guys are wanting to improve and pushing through. Guys aren't complaining and guys actually want to get better. Lot of battles every day at practice. I have to go against Kevin Mix every single day, and I know he's giving 100 percent. There's a whole other mentality for us. We're gelling together and team chemistry is amazing.

What do you see in younger players? Lot of our young guys are mature. Guys are stepping up before their time instead of saying 'I'll step up when this guy is a junior or a senior and ready to

leave.' Guys are looking to get playing time early.

The senior class: We know it's our last year; we don't have to talk about it. I think most of the guys on the team treat every day like it's their last, and I think that's why we are going to be better this year.

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