

# Raiders step out of conference to face powerful Yellow Jackets

## Kickoff is 11:08 AM Central on Raycom Sports

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**ATLANTA** - A Middle Tennessee football team that has shown marked improvement in the last two games will travel to Atlanta on Saturday to take on a Georgia Tech team that is very likely only overtime losses to ACC powers Virginia Tech and Miami away from being ranked among the very best teams in the nation. To compound the degree of difficulty, Tech is one of only two teams in the FBS that runs a triple option offense, and they do it very well.



This will be the third consecutive year that the Blue Raiders and Yellow Jackets have played, with Tech holding a 2-0 edge by decisive margins the past two seasons.

Kickoff will be at 11:08 am (CDT) in Bobby Dodd Stadium in downtown Atlanta. The game will be telecast live on Raycom Sports (Channel 628, 644, 646 and 653 on DirecTV, 420 on Dish, 28 on Comcast Cable SD or 183 in HD), with Mike Hogewood (pxp), Riley Skinner (color) and Elizabeth Moreau (sidelines) on air.

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The game will also be broadcast live over the Blue Raider Network with Chip Walters doing the play-by-play, and former Blue Raider and NFL quarterback Kelly Holcomb handling color analysis. Flagship stations include Murfreesboro's WGNS AM-1450 and their FM affiliates, 100.5 and 101.9, and WMOT-89.5 FM, as well as Nashville flagship WNSR AM-560. Bill Ziolkowski will serve as the producer.

Blue Raider fans may also follow their team on Twitter @MTAthletics, while live stats and web audio are also available on GoBlueRaiders.com.

One of the big questions entering the game is, can Middle Tennessee's improved and more aggressive defense slow down the Georgia Tech offense that has put up 91 points and nearly 700 yards in the two previous games with the Blue Raiders.

Tech won 42-14 in Atlanta two years ago after leading by only six at the half, then visited Murfreesboro last September and dampened the University's Centennial Celebration by throwing a 71-yard touchdown pass on the first play of the game, and going on to post a 49-21 victory on Horace Jones Field.

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Rick Stockstill noted the difficulty of preparing to stop Georgia Tech's triple option offense.

"You almost have to retrain your defense. Against Memphis, we were in pass rush mode on almost every snap, and now we have to go to playing the run first. We have to be extremely sound on our assignments, and we have to play defense with our eyes. We have to watch the quarterback very carefully.

"You can't say, 'I thought I saw him pitch the ball', or 'I thought I saw him pull the ball'. As soon as you do that, they are going to split one up the middle, or the quarterback is going to keep it for a big play."

Perhaps defensive end Omar McLendon, a Georgia native and one of only two seniors on the aggressive Middle Tennessee defense, said it best.

"Defending Georgia Tech is assignment football. The ends and tackles take the dive, pitches are on the linebackers, safeties and corners. On Saturday, we have to be really disciplined, play with our eyes, play off our keys, and we'll be successful."

Senior quarterback Tevin Washington will be at the controls of the Yellow Jacket offense. He is a senior with lots of experience. Perhaps his most notable achievement was setting the Tech record for most yards rushing by a quarterback in a game when he gashed the Clemson defense for 176 yards last October.

But he also throws the ball well. Washington has passed for 1,841 yards and 16 touchdowns in his career, and has a pass efficiency rating of 147.1, which ranks second in Georgia Tech history.

While the Blue Raider defense will have to be successful in stopping the Tech offense, the whole burden will not fall on them. The offense, led by quarterback Logan Kilgore will have to be effective as well. Its purpose will not only be scoring, but keeping the Tech offense limited on the number of plays it can run.

"We have to protect the ball on offense, we have to convert on third down, we have to sustain drives, and we have to keep their offense off the field," declared Stockstill.

Perhaps lost in all the hype over the Tech offense, particularly the running game, is the fact that the Blue Raiders are pretty good on the ground as well. Middle Tennessee, behind a deep corps of runners, is averaging nearly 200 yards a game rushing. When you factor in a passing attack led by the Kilgore to Anthony Amos tandem that has accounted for 226 yards a game, they will present problems for the Yellow Jackets as well.

After facing the Jackets, Middle Tennessee will return home to face perhaps the most impressive team in the Sun Belt so far, Louisiana Monroe, on October 6th. It will be the annual Homecoming game with all of the trimmings. MT is 1-0 in SBC play, having beaten FAU in the second game of the season.

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