

The Burnette Blog: Win the battle in the trenches

Early game in Atlanta today

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It may be early in the year but this young 2012 season has already had its share of excitement within matchups of Non-AQ (Automatic Qualifier) and AQ (Automatic Qualifier) conference teams. University of Louisiana-Monroe upset the Arkansas Razorbacks and Western Kentucky upset the Kentucky Wildcats, both in overtime. Not only are they both Non-AQ teams but both represent the Sun Belt Conference. The Blue Raiders will have their chance today in



Atlanta when they meet in a head-to-head matchup with the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets.

In recent years the Yellow Jackets have had the Blue Raiders number, but something about this season has a different vibe to it. Coming off two straight wins where we've seen the offense open up the scoring and the defense hold its own in the running game, the Blue Raiders seem poised to give the Yellow Jackets all they can handle. The biggest challenge for the Blue Raiders will easily be on the defensive side of the ball given the unique style of offense the Yellow Jackets bring to the table.

The Blue Raider defense has spent all week in practice understanding the ins and outs of the triple option. Coach Stockstill put it simply when he stated someone will need to cover the fullback, quarterback, and pitch man on each play. This seems easy yet always gives defenses trouble due to the style of blocking the offensive line will use. Drills that practice cut blocks were common all week in individuals for all eleven men on the field for the defense. The battle up front will be crucial if the defense will have success. The defensive line will need to play nastier and with more determination than at any point, not only in this season, but in their career. The Blue Raiders held Memphis to just 74 yards rushing and will have to bring that same momentum to the field today knowing the Yellow Jackets will look to the ground as their bread and butter to score points.

The Blue Raider offense seems in mid-season form as they are firing on all cylinders at this point. Logan Kilgore continues to find receivers as his passing yards are adding up. The return of Benny Cunningham gives the offense that much more firepower in the backfield with multiple options to choose from. All the running backs have looked solid in both their cuts on run plays and their blitz

pickup throughout practice this week. The battle up front will decide the outcome of this game as the offensive line will be under enormous pressure to open holes for the backs and give Kilgore plenty of time to throw. An over-emphasis of physicality and hard-nosed play has been stressed to these guys throughout the week.

When toe meets leather today the difference in the two teams will not be noticeable at the skill positions but rather up front in the trenches. Both the offensive and defensive line will need to bring their "A" game, in order for the team to have success. If the Blue Raiders can gain an edge early from their line play, look for some things to open up for the visitors. It's a tough challenge, but one the Blue Raiders are excited about. Go Blue Raiders!

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