The Burnette Blog: "Seize the Moment"

Key SBC game today at Floyd Stadium

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During the course of a season there will be moments that will shine brighter than others and there are moments that some wish could be frozen in time. For many Blue Raider players, family members, and fans, that moment was last Saturday afternoon. The boys had just walked off the field after dismantling a Georgia Tech team that was favored to win by 30 points. Instead, Middle Tennessee decided before the game that wasn't going to happen. They went toe-to-toe with an ACC opponent that was a preseason favorite to challenge for a league title, and left Atlanta with a 49-28 victory that is sure to sting the Yellow Jackets for weeks to come.

That moment is now over. There is a new challenge upon the Blue Raiders that starts today with an opponent who made their mark on the road upsetting the Arkansas Razorbacks and nearly pulling off another over the Auburn Tigers. These are two teams that know how to win, and lately, are not shy putting points on the scoreboard. The Homecoming festivities will bring an exciting atmosphere for all the fans, and as for the team, their job is simple: Win the game! Middle Tennessee now has an opportunity to take full control of the Sun Belt Conference race at the halfway point of the season taking their destiny into their own hands.

With this being said, the Warhawks from Monroe, Louisiana will not go quietly. The Blue Raider defense will have to take the same intensity and hard-nosed style of play they brought to the field last week and rise above that today. Just before a bull takes the ring it can be seen lashing its horns and kicking its feet in the waiting stall. That sense of aggression and hostility will be what the defense needs when toe meets leather. All week in practice the defensive line has been told to contain the quarterback and pursue him with relentless effort because this quarterback can make plays both with his feet and his arm. The secondary will have its greatest challenge yet because the opposing offense will use the air attack to move the ball. Linebackers must be on point with their reads knowing when it is run or pass and not be afraid to meet a back head on in the hole, driving their feet through his body.

Offensively, the tape doesn't lie. They will be ready for the Benny Cunningham Show when the time comes so Kilgore must know when to get them out of a bad situation if a run is called versus an 8-

man front. Wide receivers must work to get separation quickly against the defensive backs in order to give Kilgore a quick read if necessary from the heavy rush. And of course, the boys up front must be ready to pick up more than they can block if this team comes with a blitz, which I expect them to do after the way Cunningham gutted the Yellow Jackets up and down the field last week.

Throughout the week, the offensive coaches have harped on attacking the line of scrimmage and playing fast. Wearing down this defense late in the game will cause them to play on their heels and allow the line to open holes and present a balanced attack for the Blue Raiders.

This matchup has not been named the Sun Belt Conference game of the week for nothing. These two teams have proven at home and on the road they can win. The winner of this game will control their own destiny toward a conference championship and a bowl game come December. It's time for Middle Tennessee to seize the moment. At 2:30 today, when the ball is kicked, the leashes will come off and the cracking of helmets will begin. Play relentless and with the effort that there is no tomorrow and it will be a great day. Go Blue Raiders!

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