

# Blue Raiders fall to high-octane offense of ULM

## Allen sets career-high 15 tackles in the loss

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### MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

ULM's strong offensive attack combined with some missed Blue Raider opportunities lifted the Warhawks past Middle Tennessee 31-17 at Homecoming on Saturday afternoon.

The Warhawks (3-2, 1-0 Sun Belt) used 500 offensive yards, while holding the Raiders (3-2, 1-1 SBC) to 307. Despite trailing 24-3 early in the third, Middle Tennessee fought back to a 31-17 deficit. However, an interception in the fourth quarter sealed the victory for ULM.



ULM controlled the time of possession, nearly doubling the Blue Raiders with 39:54 minutes compared to 20:06. The Raiders lost the crucial turnover battle, giving up two fumbles and an interception compared to just one Warhawk interception.

Quarterback Logan Kilgore threw 23-of-34 for 238 yards and one interception. Anthony Amos led all Raider receivers with seven catches and 96 yards, including a 37-yard grab in the fourth quarter.

Senior Benny Cunningham totaled 62 rushing yards on 14 attempts. The Nashville native registered two touchdowns, making it nine touchdowns in the last 10 quarters for the tailback.

Defensively, Craig Allen led the Raiders with a career-best 15 tackles. The senior bested his previous high of 10 set against Georgia Tech a week ago. Redshirt freshman Kevin Byard also reached double-digit tackles with 10 solos and an assist.

Early in the first quarter, Roderic Blunt's first career interception gave life to the MT offense. The Raiders were stopped short of a touchdown, but senior Carlos Lopez knocked a season-long 44-yard field goal to give Middle Tennessee a 3-0 edge with 8:36 left in the period.

On the next ULM possession, tailback Jyruss Edwards barreled down the Blue Raider interior line to score a 16-yard touchdown. The play capped off an eight play, 71 yard drives in 3:31.

As the Raiders were driving, MT fumbled at the ULM 28 and turned the ball back over to the 'Hawks. ULM's Justin Manton capitalized with a 32-yard field goal to give the Warhawks a 10-3 lead with 11:41 left in the second quarter.

The Warhawks again continued with big plays as Browning fired a 47 yard pass to Je' Ronn Hamm. Just a few plays later, Hamm caught a three-yard pass to give ULM a comfortable 17-3 lead at halftime.

In the first half, Browning completed 16 passes for 192 yards and a touchdown. Middle Tennessee was held to just 127 offensive yards in the first half and 29 in the rushing attack. Kilgore was 10-of-17 for 98 yards, while Cunningham had 24 yards on five carries.

A time consuming drive to start the third quarter helped ULM manage a 75-yard drive to take a 24-3 lead.

A response of urgency was needed for MT and the Raiders used Cunningham's eight yard touchdown run at 5:29 to narrow their deficit to 24-10.

Middle Tennessee's momentum was short-lived when a fumble at the ULM 31 gave the Warhawks life. Browning threw a 28-yard pass to Tavares Mayes on a fourth and seven. Just two plays later, Donald rushed up the gut, giving the Hawks a 31-10 lead in the third quarter.

The Raiders again answered ULM as Cunningham added his second touchdown, cutting the Hawks lead to 14, 31-17. An offensive opportunity fell apart for the Blue Raiders after ULM's Isaiah Newsome snatched an interception in the end zone with 8:25 left in the contest. From there, the Warhawks used effective plays to run out the clock en route to their Sun Belt opening victory.

Middle Tennessee hits the road for a two game swing starting next week at FIU. Kickoff is slated for 5 p.m. Central in Miami, Fla.

### **1st Quarter**

The Raiders were stopped defensively by the Warhawks, but MT capitalized on a ULM turnover. Kolton Browning was pick-pocketed by Roderic Blunt, as the redshirt junior ran 21 yards to the ULM 33 yardline. The Blue Raiders were forced back due to penalties to use a Carlos Lopez 44-yard field goal to take the early lead. The kick was the longest for Lopez this season. The Warhawks answered driving methodically down 71 yards and capping it off with a 16-yard Jyruss Edwards rushing touchdown. With a strong offensive drive, the Blue Raiders fumbled at the ULM 28 and the Warhawks took over with 1:39 left in the opening quarter. The Warhawks had amassed 141 yards compared to just 61 for the Raiders. Logan Kilgore was 5-of-8 for 40 yards for MT, while Browning completed seven passes for 56 yards and rushed for 22 yards.

### **2nd Quarter**

ULM capped off its drive with a 32-yard kick from Justin Manton, taking a 10-3 lead over the Raiders. Browning threw a 47 yard rocket to Je'Ron Hamm helping the Warhawks get in the Blue Raider

redzone. Later in the drive, Browning again connected with Hamm to give ULM the 17-3 lead.

### 3rd Quarter

ULM used another methodical drive to open the second half. The Warhawks uses 75 yards and 4:27 to take a 24-3 after a five yard Jyruss Edwards rushing touchdown. With a sense of urgency, the Raiders took only a minute-plus to score as Benny Cunningham rushed in an eight yard touchdown. A MT drive was halted with a fumble that gave ULM great field position at MT's 35 yardline. The Warhawks converted a fourth down as Browning sliced through the Blue Raider offense with a 28-yard pass to Tavares Mayes. A few plays later, Centarius Donald ran up the middle, extending ULM's advantage to 31-10. Logan Kilgore found senior Anthony Amos for a 37 yard play deep in ULM territory as the Raiders entered the fourth quarter.

### 4th Quarter

Benny Cunningham notched his ninth touchdown in the last 10 quarters with a run up the middle to cut ULM's lead to 31-17. The defense stood strong as Middle Tennessee forced a three and out. But the Warhawks used a fake punt to gain 11 and ensure themselves a first down. The Raiders forced ULM to punt to regain possession. A defensive holding call on ULM helped the Blue Raiders to a first down on the Warhawk 37 yardline. Isaiah Newsome snatched a Kilgore interception to thwart the Blue Raider threat.

### Game Notes

**CAPTAINS:** Today's game captains were OL Josh Walker, S David Jones, and LB Craig Allen.

**GROUND ATTACK:** With 64 yards rushing today, Middle Tennessee now has 912 total rushing yards through five games. That total is the most through five games to start a season under Rick Stockstill and the most by the Blue Raiders since they gained 1,314 rushing yards in the first five outings of 2001.

**CAREER-HIGH FOR ALLEN:** Linebacker Craig Allen, who had 10 stops in last week's game at Georgia Tech, turned in a career effort against ULM. The Carrollton, GA, native recorded 15 tackles to pace the Blue Raider defense.

**CUNNINGHAM FINDS END ZONE ... AGAIN:** Benny Cunningham's third and fourth quarter touchdowns give him nine over the last 10 quarters. Cunningham leads the Blue Raiders with nine rushing touchdowns on the season and now has 19 for his career. The senior has 21 total touchdowns for his career and came into today's game ranked third nationally in scoring.

**QUICK HITTERS:** LB Roderic Blunt recorded his first career interception to stop ULM's first drive of the game (first by a LB since Darin Davis in 2010) ... MT saw its streak of scoring in 12 straight quarters come to an end in the second quarter ... Punter Josh Davis' 64-yard punt was his longest since the 2010 season ... Middle Tennessee wore gray pants for the first time since defeating FIU in the final regular season game of 2010 and displayed the blue jersey, gray pant combo for first time since Minnesota in 2010 ... QB Logan Kilgore started his 18th career game today which ranks as the most on the team ... DE Omar McLendon played in his team-best 41st game today ... WR Kyle Griswold equaled his career-best with 7 receptions today.

## Quotes

### Head Coach Rick Stockstill

**On tonight's game...** ULM is a good football team but we were our own worst enemy today. We made too many mistakes, especially in the first half. We had three holding penalties in the first half and we had a couple guys jump offsides. But as bad as we played, in the second half we still had a chance. Then Benny had his fumble and they turned it into seven points. Then we had the interception at the end. I thought we were really close all the way up until the end, but we just couldn't capitalize on our opportunities.

**On ULM's offensive play...** They've got a good offense. We didn't cover their receivers very well, especially in the first half. But their quarterback is good and they made us make mistakes. It's a tough offense to defend. They were really effective on third down, too, and that mixed with the turnovers and penalties is really what cost us tonight.

**On the turnovers...** I really thought we were in it the whole game but those two turnovers late were really backbreakers.

**On the team moving forward...** We're 1-1 in the league and all we need to do is come out this week, fix our mistakes and get ready to go to FIU next weekend.

### QB Logan Kilgore

**On tonight's game...** I'm proud of the way we fought and everybody's attitudes, but at the end of the day we just made too many mistakes. I think there were three or four times today we'd have a first and ten and all of a sudden it was first and 20. They did a good job on our running game. I don't think we underestimated them. They haven't played a bad game yet. We just made too many mistakes. But even with those mistakes, we were still in the game toward the end and that's encouraging.

**On FIU...** They're a good team. They have struggled but they're good and they'll be tough at home so we need to come out this week and fix our mistakes and get ready to play next Saturday.

### LB Roderic Blunt

**On tonight's game...** All week in practice we worked on containing the quarterback. We tried to execute that, but we just couldn't get off the field on third down in the first half. We made some adjustments at halftime and that seemed to help because we played better. We gave up too many long third down conversions and that's something we'll get fixed this week.

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