

# Middle Tennessee holds off FIU in frenzied final minute

## Blue Raiders off to best start since 2001

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**MIAMI, Fla.** - A game that saw two lead changes in the final minute went in Middle Tennessee's favor Saturday as the Blue Raiders held off a last second FIU comeback to knock off the Panthers, 34-30.

Trailing by 17 earlier in the game, the Blue Raiders (4-2, 2-1 Sun Belt) came from behind to take a 27-23 lead with under seven minutes left in the contest. From there, FIU

(1-6, 0-3 SBC) took advantage of stopping Middle Tennessee on third down and drove the field 80 yards in 1:21. Jake Medlock threw a 30-yard bullet to Willis Wright, as the Panthers retook a 30-27 lead with just a minute left.



The Raiders took advantage of a FIU excessive celebration call, as Reggie Whatley returned the ball 43 yards. On the first play, Logan Kilgore fired a 28-yard pass to Christian Collis. Two plays later, Whatley broke through the Panther defense to give the Raiders a 34-30 lead.

Just 36 seconds remained as FIU regained possession. The Panthers threw completions of 21, 13 and seven yards to get down to the Middle Tennessee 31. With just one second left, Medlock threw a 30-yard pass to Willis Wright at the one yard line. Leighton Gasque and a trio of Blue Raider defenders pushed Wright away from the end zone as time expired and MT clinched the victory.

Saturday's win gave Middle Tennessee its best start under head coach Rick Stockstill and the best since opening the season 5-1 in 2001. The Raiders outscored the Panthers, 24-to-10, in the second half

Offensively, the Blue Raiders put together a season-high 523 yards. Senior Benny Cunningham again set new personal bests. Just two weeks removed from a strong performance at Georgia Tech, Cunningham rushed a career-high 36 times for a new best 230 yards. He added two touchdowns, while averaging 6.4 yards per carry. For good measure, Cunningham added four grabs in the first half for 55 yards, giving him 285 all-purpose yards against FIU.

Much like the Georgia Tech victory, MT used a balanced attack as Logan Kilgore completed 17

passes for 267 yards and a touchdown. The redshirt junior became just the ninth MT signal-caller to reach over 4,000 yards in his career. Senior wide receiver Anthony Amos snagged career highs with eight receptions for 148 yards.

For the third consecutive game, Craig Allen reached double-digit tackles with 10 tackles, a sack and a tackle-for-loss. Cornerback Khari Burke notched a team-best seven solo stops for eight tackles with one credited pass breakup.

FIU amassed 522 yards for the game, recording 380 of those from the air. Medlock threw 24 completions for 380 yards and two touchdowns as the Panthers lost their fifth straight contest.

In the first half, FIU used three 60-yard plus scoring drives to hold a 20-10 edge over Middle Tennessee at the halfway point. The Panthers totaled 262 yards, 125 from the arm of Medlock to take the 10 point lead at the half.

MT started off slow, but rebounded as Benny Cunningham led the way with 96 yards on 11 carries. Kilgore finished the half with seven completions for 89 yards and a touchdown.

Middle Tennessee struck first as the Raiders capitalized on a FIU fumble. Carlos Lopez hit a field goal from 33 yards out to give MT the 3-0 lead at the 4:20 mark in the first quarter. FIU responded with a strong 75-yard drive in less than two minutes. Medlock found a 25 yard touchdown strike to Glenn Coleman, giving FIU a 6-3 advantage.

Early in the second quarter, FIU added another touchdown when De'Andre Jasper ran 26 yards off a reverse to extend the Panther's lead to 13-3. Another long yardage drive proved to be successful for FIU as the Panthers milked six minutes off the clock and used a four yard Darian Mallory touchdown to lead 20-3 with just 1:39 left.

Middle Tennessee used a big 33-yard pass from Kilgore to Cunningham to get prime field position. Just a couple of plays later, Kilgore found Anthony Amos in the corner of the endzone for a 20-yard touchdown, narrowing the Raiders deficit to 20-10 at the break.

The Blue Raiders didn't waste time in the second half. MT used two big catches from Kyle Griswold and Amos to get deep in the red zone. Cunningham scored his 10th touchdown of the season with a one yard run to narrow FIU's lead to 20-17.

Jack Griffin added a 45-yard field goal to extend the Panthers lead to 23-17 with 10:10 left. To start the fourth quarter, Carlos Lopez connected on a 30 yard field goal to cut the Panther lead to three points. Lopez finished the day with 2-for-2 along with four made PATs.

From there, the Raiders added a 24-yard touchdown from Cunningham to take the 27-23 lead. FIU responded with a 30-yard TD from Wright with just a minute left.

MT added a 24 second drive capped by a seven yard run from Whatley to take the 34-30 lead. FIU moved down the field with 36 seconds to go, but fell short as Wright's catch was one shy of the touchdown marker.

The Blue Raiders remain on the road next week to play SEC-foe Mississippi State. Kickoff is slated for 6pm Central either on ESPN2 or ESPNU.

## 1st Quarter

After a five minute plus drive for FIU, James Roberson recovered a fumble for the Raiders at the FIU 17 to end the Panthers opportunity. For the third time this season, MT scored on its first offensive possession. Logan Kilgore ran 14 yards on 3rd and 10 to give Middle Tennessee a first down in FIU territory. Once in the red zone, FIU held the Raiders to a 33 yard field goal with 4:20 left in the first quarter. FIU quickly rebounded with a 75 yard drive that last nearly two minutes. Jake Medlock connected with wide out Glenn Coleman for a 25 yard touchdown strike to give FIU the 6-3 lead with 2:28 left. FIU place kicker Jack Griffin missed the extra point. Logan Kilgore was held to just three passing attempts, while Benny Cunningham had 78 yards on eight attempts.

## 2nd Quarter

Middle Tennessee couldn't score on an offensive opportunity. The Panthers responded with a 62 yard drive. De'Andre Jasper scored on a 26-yard reverse to extend the Panthers lead to 13-3 with 13:01 left in the quarter. Logan Kilgore made his first pass in the second quarter with a 13 yard strike to Anthony Amos. He later found Benny Cunningham for a 16 yard pass, but the Raiders couldn't score. Later in the quarter, FIU used a six minute drive to add another touchdown. Darian Mallory rushed up the gut to extend the Panthers edge to 20-3. With just 1:39 left, Middle Tennessee drove down the field. Kilgore found Benny Cunningham for a 33 yard catch. Later in the drive, Kilgore fired a 20 yard strike to Antony Amos with eight seconds remaining to narrow the Raiders' deficit to 20-10 at the half. Overall in the first half, MT had 212 yards compared to 261 for the Panthers. Kilgore connected on 7-of-15 passes for 89 yards and a touchdown. Benny Cunningham led MT in rushing and receiving. The senior ran 11 times for 96 yards, while grabbing four catches for 48 yards. FIU's Jake Medlock led the Panthers with 10 completions for 126 yards and a touchdown. Glen Coleman had 52 of those yards with a TD.

## 3rd Quarter

The Blue Raiders opened the second half with a strong 75 yard drive. Kyle Griswold and Anthony Amos caught a pair of big plays to get the Raiders deep in FIU territory. Benny Cunningham capped the drive with a one yard touchdown to narrow FIU's lead to 20-17. FIU used a 49 yard catch from Willis Wright to get the Panthers in scoring territory. Defensive lineman Craig Allen collected his first sack of the season against Jake Medlock to push the Panthers back. Jack Griffin connected on a 45-yard field goal to extend FIU's lead to 23-17. Later in the quarter, Benny Cunningham ran for 13 yards on fourth down for the first down. The Raiders were 7-of-7 on fourth down conversions this season. Later in the drive, Kilgore's pass on fourth down was broken up. The Panthers drove down the field, but a 53-yard field goal attempt by Jack Griffin was partially blocked by Stephen Roberts. The Raiders drove down the field to get back into FIU territory as the third quarter came to a close.

## 4th Quarter

Middle Tennessee used a 31 yard Carlos Lopez field goal to narrow the Panthers lead to three points. FIU struggled offensively, giving the Raiders a chance to bounce back. Middle Tennessee used several big plays at key moments. Logan Kilgore threw a 28-yard rocket to Anthony Amos on 3rd and 22 to give MT prime field position. Benny Cunningham broke away from the FIU defense and scored a 24-yard touchdown to give Middle Tennessee its first lead since the first quarter. The Panthers didn't go down lightly. With just a minute remaining, Jake Medlock connected to Willis

Wright on a 30-yard touchdown to give the Panthers a 30-27 advantage. However, an excessive celebration penalty would move the kickoff 15 yards. Reggie Whatley took advantage as he returned 43 yards to the FIU 40. Logan Kilgore threw a 28-yard pass to Christian Collis to give MT prime position. Just two plays later, Whatley broke for seven yards to give the Raiders a 34-30 lead with 30 seconds left. FIU used its speedy offense to get in MT territory. With just one second left, Willis Wright caught a pass at the one yard line, but was stonewalled by a group of MT defenders to end the game. The victory gave Middle Tennessee its best start in the Rick Stockstill era and the best since going 5-1 in 2001.

### Game Notes

**CAPTAINS:** Today's game captains were Juno Prudhomm, Omar McLendon, and Benny Cunningham.

**CUNNINGHAM TOPS 100:** Senior running back Benny Cunningham registered his second 200-yard game of the season and the third 100-yard game of his career in tonight's game against FIU. He is the first Blue Raider to top 200 yards twice in a season since Dwone Hicks in 2001 (he had 217 yards at GT). Cunningham finished with a career-best 36 carries for a personal-high 232 yards. In his last two road games, Cunningham has a total of 449 rushing yards.

**4,000 MAN:** With 267 passing yards against FIU, quarterback Logan Kilgore went over the 4,000-yard mark for his career. Kilgore is just the ninth signal-caller in school history to reach the 4,000-yard plateau. Kilgore also passed Joe Craddock for eighth on the all-time passing yards list.

**KILGORE TIES WALKER:** Logan Kilgore registered his 30th career touchdown pass when he connected with Anthony Amos late in the first half. The 30 scoring strikes ties Billy Walker (1964-67) for seventh on the all-time list. Kilgore needs four more to surpass Mickey Corwin (1983-84) for sixth.

**FIRST BLOCK:** Middle Tennessee recorded its first blocked kick of the season when Stephen Roberts rejected an FIU field goal attempt in the third quarter. It marked the 26th blocked kick under Rick Stockstill and the 14th field goal. It was also the first block of Roberts' career.

**ANOTHER 200:** QB Logan Kilgore registered the 12th 200-yard passing game of his career with 267 yards against FIU. That ties for the fifth most in school history with Dwight Dasher, Joe Craddock, Kelly Holcomb, and Jonathan Quinn. Next on the list is career leaders Wes Counts and Clint Marks who both have 18.

**REACHING 500:** Middle Tennessee reached 500 yards of offense for the second time this season. Against Georgia Tech, MT totaled 510 yards on Sept. 29. MT totaled a season-high 523 yards of offense in Saturday's win over FIU.

**AMOS CAREER-HIGH:** Anthony Amos turned in a career-best performance against FIU with eight receptions for 148 yards.

**QUICK HITTERS:** QB Logan Kilgore started his 19th career game today which ranks as the most on the team ... DE Omar McLendon played in his team-best 42nd game today ... Raiders wore all white for first time this season ... LB Stephen Roberts made his first collegiate start ... WR Jeremiah Bryson makes first career start ... MT scored on its opening drive of game for third time this season ... MT gave up first sack of a QB all season late in the first quarter ... FIU was called for first penalty

with 6:27 left in 2nd quarter ... MT opened the second half with a touchdown scoring drive to mark the third time this season ... LB Craig Allen recorded his first sack of the season early in the third quarter and the fourth of his career ... Craig Allen registered his third straight double figure tackle game with 10 against FIU.

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