Raiders preparing for Saturday's game at Mississippi State

ESPN2 to show game nationally

October 16, 2012 · @MTAthletics

COACH RICK STOCKSTILL:
(On Benny Cunningham): Benny Cunningham is lost for the rest of the year. He injured his knee on the next-to-last offensive play of the game at FIU. It's an unfortunate situation, but we can't make excuses, we can't whine or cry. I hate it for Benny on a personal level. He has meant so much to this football team, this university. I hope he will make a full recovery and fulfill his dream of playing in the NFL.

(On Miss. State game): We are excited about the Mississippi State game. I am proud of how our team competed at FIU, the toughness and resiliency that we showed, so we are looking forward to this one. They are obviously a very good football team, ranked 16th in the nation, and 12th in the BCS. They are undefeated and playing with a lot of confidence. They have really improved their throwing game in the last couple of years. Their QB has thrown 12 touchdown passes and only one interception. Defensively, they are really fast and athletic. Their secondary is outstanding, with two corners that can play anywhere in the country.
From our standpoint, we have to do a good job of staying on the field, we have to convert on third down, and obviously a high priority for us is protecting the football.

(On difference in Benny being hurt last year and being injured this season): There was more to it than Benny being hurt last year. We had other people hurt, we were using a makeshift offensive line. Our offensive woes last year were not all by Benny getting hurt. At that time, we only had one healthy tailback in William Pratcher. This year, our offensive line is still healthy. We also have Jordan Parker, Drayton Calhoun, Reggie Whatley and Jeremiah Bryson, in addition to Pratcher. We have much more depth back there this year, than last year. Also, Logan (Kilgore) is a much better, more experienced quarterback this year than he was a year ago. That's not to say we won't miss Benny, because we will. But we'll do just like we do every game, and that is use two or three backs, see who has the hot hand, and hang our hat on him.

(On who will replace Cunningham): Benny got hurt in the first half of the game with McNeese, and was out the next game against FAU. Both Calhoun and Parker went over 100 yards rushing. I know FAU is not Mississippi State, but that was only the second college game for both of those guys.

(On also losing receiver Marcus Henry): It will actually be harder to adjust to losing him. Benny has three or four solid guys behind him. But Tavarres Jefferson is already out for the year, and those were the only two guys to play that position. So we are going to have to move some guys around at wide receiver. We may put Reggie Whatley there, and move Jeremiah Bryson there as well.

QB LOGAN KILGORE:
(On playing without Cunningham): We have guys who have played running back this season. When Benny was healthy, everybody had a role that they played. They would come in for a few plays to give Benny a rest, then he'd come back in. Now it is time for somebody to step up into Benny's role. Maybe the home run threat isn't going to be there, but I have confidence in them. The last half of the schedule is going to be hard, and it is going to take quite a performance out of them. I hope they will be ready and I think they will be. They all practice hard and prepare well. Now it's time to prove it.

(On last year's second half of the season): When Benny went down, D.D. (Kyles) was also hurt, and the full load fell on Prat (William Pratcher). I have full confidence in Drayton Calhoun, Jordan Parker, Reggie Whatley and Jeremiah Bryson coming back there. We are a lot better equipped to handle Benny being out. Still, losing Benny is a tough loss.

(On playing at Mississippi State): A win would be great, but it's going to be an uphill battle. They are a good defense, they move around a lot. Once again, it is about us. We had a good day of practice on Monday, and I know that it would be a big win for our program, but at the end of the day, our goal is to win the Sun Belt Conference. It is fun to go into hostile environments. We've played at Purdue, Georgia Tech, places like that. Obviously they are going to be pretty excited, they are 6-0. If you can't get excited for these games, you are in the wrong sport. It will definitely be a big test for us.

DE OMAR MCLENDON:
(On facing MSU's huge offensive line): I think we might be able to utilize our speed. Normally, when guys are that big, they move a little slower. I believe we can take advantage of our speed against their size, use some stunts to get around them.

(MT is 3-0 on the road, but is this a different animal facing an SEC team?): I think we thrive off of situations like this, all of the noise, the cowbells, getting booed. I enjoy it. I like being the underdog, and I like for people to think that we are going to go out there and not do anything. We end up going out and playing hard, playing our best, and just competing and playing Raider football.

Printed on March 8, 2014
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/63395