Big plays lift Raiders to 38-21 victory over North Texas

Middle Tennessee one win from bowl eligibility

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - An explosive offensive performance coupled with stout defensive play helped Middle Tennessee to a 38-21 rout of North Texas on Saturday afternoon at Floyd Stadium.

The Blue Raiders (5-3, 3-1 Sun Belt) played sharp offensively in their black helmets and uniforms, totaling 448 yards on the day. MT forced four Mean Green (3-5, 2-2 SBC) turnovers to secure their third conference win.

For the third time under head coach Rick Stockstill, the Raiders reached five wins in eight contests. The other two times occurred when MT reached bowl games in 2006 and 2009. Another MT win would put MT with six wins for the fourth time in the last seven years.

Offensively, the Blue Raiders relied on the arm of Logan Kilgore and the hands of his play making receivers. Kilgore reached 300-plus yards for the third time in his career when he completed 20 out of 30 passes for 349 yards and three touchdowns. Kilgore threw four passes of 34 yards or more in the contest. He also ran a career-high 45 yards for a touchdown.

The Raiders had two wide receivers catch 100-plus yards for the first time since playing WKU on Oct. 24, 2009. Anthony Amos and Kyle Griswould caught 11 passes for a combined 261 yards and three touchdowns. Amos moved into 10th all-time in a single season with 794 yards, while Griswould set a personal best in yardage and touchdowns.

Middle Tennessee's defense collected three interceptions, two sacks and a fumble on Saturday. The bruisers were led by Jajuan Harley with a season-high 14 tackles and an interception. MT had three tackles-for-loss as O'Shae Bridges and Leighton Gasque each had a sack.

Harley's interception helped jumpstart the Raider offense in the first quarter. Eight plays later, Kilgore

threw an 18-yard touchdown strike to Amos to give MT the seven point edge with 9:18 on the clock.

The MT offense found more open pockets in the secondary and Kilgore connected with Griswould with a 72 yard touchdown pass to put the Raiders up 14-0. Carlos Lopez tacked on his 10th field goal of the season, extending the Blue Raider lead to 17-0.

Middle Tennessee used its long-yard passing game to its advantage. Kilgore threw a 49-yard pass to Griswould to give the Raiders a 23 point lead with less than three minutes remaining in the first half.

For the half, MT amassed a season-high 304 yards of offense at the intermission, including 248 yards from the air. North Texas was limited to 97 yards. Kilgore completed 11-of-15 for 248 yards and three downs. Leading the receivers, Griswould had three grabs for 140 yards and two touchdowns.

MT used its deep passing attack to start the second half as Kilgore threw Vincent Van Horne a 34-yard pass. Jordan Parker tallied a four yard touchdown to put the Raiders up by 31. Parker finished the game with 59 yards on 18 carries and a touchdown. At the 10:20 mark in the third, Antoinne Jimmerson tallied a two yard touchdown to erase a shutout and narrow the Raider lead to 31-7.

Kilgore used his feet to find open field and ran 45 yards for a career-long rushing touchdown to extend the Raiders lead back to 31 points. UNT added its second touchdown when Derek Thompson found Carlos Harris for 13 yards to make the score 38-14 as the third quarter came to a close.

Jimmerson added a touchdown at the 6:38 mark to make it an interesting contest. However, Kevin Byard's interception sealed the win for the Blue Raiders as they reached the most wins at this point in the season since Oct. 6, 2001.

Middle Tennessee has a short week of preparation as the Blue Raiders travel up I-65 to visit rival WKU on Thursday, Nov. 1. Kickoff is slated for 8:15 p.m. on ESPNU.

1st Quarter

North Texas' first offensive possession was short-lived when Jajuan Harley intercepted a Derrick Thompson pass to give the Blue Raiders their first offensive drive. MT capitalized as Logan Kilgore connected with senior wideout Anthony Amos for 18 yards. The drive went eight plays for 64 yards in 2:50. With the passing attack hot, Kilgore found Kyle Griswould in the middle for a 72 yard touchdown - the longest reception of Griswould's career. On the next MT possession, Kilgore found Amos deep in North Texas territory with a 52 yard pass. The reception set a new career-high for Amos, passing his previous best of 47 yards against Mississippi State this season. Carlos Lopez notched a field goal to give MT a 17-0 edge with 1:13 left in the quarter. The Blue Raider offense racked up 202 yards offensively, limiting the Mean Green to just 28 yards. Kilgore completed six of eight for 177 yards and two touchdowns. Amos led the receiving corps with 74 yards and a touchdown.

2nd Quarter

The second quarter remained mostly quiet. North Texas couldn't find offensive momentum despite driving to MT's side of the field. Logan Kilgore threw another long ball for 49 yards to Kyle Griswould for the touchdown, taking a 24-0 lead. With the Mean Green driving with a minute left on the clock,

Chris Sharpe found his first career interception. The Raiders finished the half totaling 304 yards on 33 plays. Kilgore was 11-of-15 in the first half with 248 yards and three touchdowns. Kyle Griswould had three receptions for 140 yards and two touchdowns.

3rd Quarter

The Raiders continued where they left off. Kilgore threw a 34-yard pass to Vincent Van Horne to get in redzone. A play later, Jordan Parker carried the pigskin four yards to put the Raiders up 31-0. The Mean Green erased the shutout with an eight play, 73 yard drive. Antoinne Jimmerson ran in the two yard touchdown at 10:20 to narrow the Raiders' lead to 31-7. On the next drive, the Raiders offense continued its dominance. Kilgore used his feet to run a career-long 45 yards to paydirt as MT extended its advantage to 38-7. UNT drove 80 yards and capped the possession with a 13 yard Derek Thompson pass to Carlos Harris for the touchdown.

4th Quarter

Redshirt freshman O'Shae Bridges earned his first career sack in the fourth when he knocked down Derek Thomspon. Ykeem Wells pounced on the fumble to give MT possession at its own 47. North Texas fought back with 15 yard rushing touchdown from Jimmerson at the 6:38 mark. However, North Texas' onside kick opportunity failed as the Raiders recovered. With the two minute offense in full effect, the Mean Green drove down effectively to the plus-side of the field. Kevin Byard intercepted his second pass this season with a one hand grab in the end zone to ice the game for Middle Tennessee.

Game Notes

BIG WIN: Today's win over North Texas not only erases the bad memory of a 59-7 defeat at the hands of the Mean Green last year but more importantly gives the Raiders a fifth win. The 5-3 mark after eight games marks the third time under Rick Stockstill MT has started 5-3 with the other occasions being bowl years of 2006 and 2009. It also goes down as the earliest date to five victories since 2001 (Oct. 6).

CAPTAINS: Today's game captains were Kyle Griswould, Omar McLendon, Benny Cunningham, and Kendall Dangerfield.

BLACK HELMETS: Middle Tennessee wore black helmets for the first time in school history. It also marked the first time MT has not worn the silver helmets since 1978 when the helmets were white - a span of 389 games. The Blue Raiders started wearing the silver helmets when Boots Donnelly took over in 1979.

GRISWOULD HAS CAREER DAY: Wide receiver Kyle Griswould enjoyed a career day against North Texas with three catches for a personal-best 140 yards and two touchdowns. Griswould had scoring plays of 72 and 51 yards with the 72 yarder being a career long for the junior and the third longest play of the season by MT.

AMOS CRACKS TOP 10: With 121 receiving yards today, senior Anthony Amos ran his season total to 794 yards. That figure ranks 10th on the all-time single-season list at MT.

KILGORE TOPS 300: Quarterback Logan Kilgore registered his third career 300-yard passing game

and the first of the season with 349 yards against North Texas. Kilgore now ranks tied for second on the all-time list for 300-yard games with Clint Marks and Kelly Holcomb. It also went down as the 13th career 200-yard passing game and sixth of the season. Kilgore, who ranks third all-time in 200-yard games, is chasing all-time leaders Wes Counts and Clint Marks. Both had 18 for their career.

AMOS OVER 100: Anthony Amos recorded his fifth career 100-yard receiving game and fourth of the season in the win over North Texas. Amos finished with eight catches for 121 yards.

MULTIPLE PICKS: Middle Tennessee's defense recorded multiple interceptions for the first time since the GoDaddy Bowl against Miami, OH in 2011 (bowl of 2010 season). The Blue Raiders finished with three interceptions to give them six for the season which is one more than the team had all of 2011.

QUICK HITTERS: With Anthony Amos and Kyle Griswould topping the 100-yard mark in receiving it went down as the first time MT had two players over 100 yards receiving since Oct. 24, 2009 (vs WKU) ... WR Anthony Amos has now caught at least one pass of 33 or more yards in four straight games ... DB Jajuan Harley recorded his first career interception to stop UNT's opening drive of the game and later in the game Chris Sharpe recorded his first career pick ... MT scored on its opening drive for the fourth time this season and was the second time it opened with a TD (Memphis) ... QB Logan Kilgore started his 21st career game today which ranks as the most on the team ... DE Omar McLendon played in his team-best 44th game today ... Vincent Van Horne recorded a career long 34-yard reception ... QB Logan Kilgore's 45-yard touchdown run was the longest run of his career ... DT O'Shae Bridges registered the first sack of his career early in the fourth quarter ... Kevin Byard grabbed his second interception of the year in the fourth quarter.

Postgame Quotes

Head Coach Rick Stockstill

On tonight's game...

It was a great win for us and I'm really proud of how we played. We played with a lot of emotion. I thought our focus was good all week. I'm really proud of our toughness. We were really physical, and that's a good thing to see.

On bouncing back from last week...

I said last Sunday that anyone who was on that plane from Mississippi State should be embarrassed with our performance. We talked about it all week, and we talked about it again today before going out to the field. We had something to prove today, and I thought our guys did a good job of doing that today.

On the black helmets...

Chris Massaro gave us the ok to do it today. I didn't tell our players until after Raider Walk today. I didn't tell our managers until last night. I did say it wasn't going to get us any extra points, but our kids loved them and I thought they looked great out on the field.

On the offensive production...

They play a lot of quarter two, their linebackers are very active and we had a tough time running the ball at times. So we changed some things up and had success through the air and then that opened our running game back up again. Our kids did a great job of adjusting and I'm proud to see that.

On Logan's touchdown run...

Logan is a good runner and hopefully that run will give him some confidence to keep running the ball.

On getting ready for next week...

We have a short turnaround for next week. I'm really proud of how our team played today bouncing back from last week. But we have to get ready in a hurry to play a good Western Kentucky team Thursday. We'll be in tomorrow getting ready.

QB Logan Kilgore

On tonight's game...

We work hard every week but it's great to see it all come together today. Their motto is to run the ball and stop the run. I think they did a good job on our running game, but we were able to use play-action really well and were able to execute. They're a good team and had a big come back last week and they came back a little today, but we were able to finish them off and get the win.

On the black helmets...

Coach Stock does a good job taking care of us. He also says wearing black or different uniforms isn't going to get us any extra points or help us play better. They surprised us in the locker room before the game and it's always a treat to wear black.

On the touchdown run...

That play is a run pass check on my part and when I saw their defensive formation, I knew all I had to do was get past the first level and there would be no one else. I just made sure to look around and make sure no one was going to catch me.

On the Western Kentucky game...

It's a quick turnaround but this is what you live for as a college football player. They're a really good team and I'm excited to get up there and play. Last year was a good game down to the wire and we'll be ready this year.

SS Jajuan Harley

On tonight's game...

It was a much-needed win for us. Our team played well. On defense we want to get turnovers and feel like that can get our team going. We want to give the offense good opportunities to get points on the board. We were so motivated coming off last week. We were so embarrassed last week and we didn't want to have that happen two weeks in a row. We knew they're a physical team and would try

to come in and run it down our throat, but we came out and took it to them.

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