Raiders, Toppers to meet Thursday

Both 3-1 in SBC

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COACH RICK STOCKSTILL: I said last week how important the North Texas game was, and I thought our team responded very well. We have put ourselves in a position to make a run at this conference the next four weeks, so each game from here on out is magnified in its importance.

WKU is a good football team. Defensively, they are on top of the conference in most statistical categories, and they have some really good players on that side of the ball. Offensively, they are pretty much the same, schematically, that they have been the last two years, they want to run the football. I think the biggest improvement is with their quarterback, as he is now becoming a bigger threat as a passer. It is a very important football game, and I am excited about going up there and playing this game.

(On close games the last two years): A lot of games in the Sun Belt are very evenly matched. Close games result when you have two evenly matched teams. Last year we didn't play very well in the kicking game, we had an extra point blocked, missed a chip shot field goal, and they returned a kickoff for a touchdown. The year before that, we returned a kickoff for a touchdown, blocked an extra point and then blocked a field goal on the last play of the game to win it. I think the kicking game will play a huge factor in this contest, just like it has the last two years.

The Sun Belt is a very competitive conference this year, which results in very competitive games, more this year than ever before. I think this is the best this conference has ever been, with some really good teams in the conference this year.

(On playing on Thursday night on National TV): That will get our players a little juiced up. We have played on Thursday before, but those are usually 6 pm games. This will be at 8:15, the latest we have ever played. So that will be a little different.

(On Western developing a swagger after winning seven games in a row last year, and how it might affect his team): It doesn't really matter who we play. We have a confident football team. We have some swagger, or juice, or whatever you want to call it, of our own. I like this football team. I like our focus, our mental toughness right now, and our intensity. I like our state of mind. We'll go up

there with every bit of confidence, every bit of juice and swagger and jazz and everything we need to go up there and play well.

(ON LOGAN KILGORE): He has performed very well. At times last year, he played very well, and at times he didn't play as well as he would have liked. I think that was part of being a first-year starter. He has worked hard since January, thru the spring, thru the summer, thru fall camp, to get better every day. I believe every player can get better every day, not just in the spring, or June and July, and Logan has done that.

He studies film on his own all the time, and has prepared himself to be a winning quarterback. I have extreme confidence in Logan, no matter what the situation is.

If we hadn't beaten North Texas last week, this game would not have been as important. We'd have two losses and basically be out of the conference race. But it is a big game now. We are 3-1, they are 3-1, and that just magnifies it for us.

They beat us last year, and we have something to prove. We have that chip on our shoulder, that edge, that toughness that we want to play with. That fuels our drive, our motivation.

(On your feelings about turning the program around from last year): I'm proud of our football team. I like the character of this team. I said that after we lost our first game, and I said it again after we lost at Mississippi State. There is something about this team that is special. After we got back from Mississippi State, we had a great week of practice, and we played pretty good against North Texas. I am proud of our team and how they have worked to improve since January. They have put themselves in position to accomplish a couple of our goals that are still out there. We have a chance to do something special.

QB LOGAN KILGORE: (On watching film of WKU): We didn't watch film on last year's game because we are not the same as we were last year, and other teams are different. We've watched film from games this year. Our attack this year is more complex.

(Does being a 10-point underdog bother you?): Not really. That's some of the same people that picked FIU to win the conference this year. We only pay attention to what we have to do every single day. Our coaches are going to put together a great game plan, they are going to work us and make sure we get the same amount of work that we'd get in a regular week. We are playing a really good team, and I am sure they are not going to slack off any, either. If you are not ready to play in this one, then you are probably in the wrong sport.

(Without Benny Cunningham at running back, does that put more emphasis on passing game?) No. When Benny was out for the FAU game, both Jordan (Parker) and Drayton (Calhoun) rushed for over 100 yards each. Reggie Whatley has also given us a good change of pace back there, and I have all the confidence in Jeremiah (Bryson) to run the ball well. Benny is a tough guy to lose, but it's not going to be something that we dwell on every week. That's the way it is, it's college football, and that's the way it is. The guys that are replacing him are working hard every day in practice and they are getting better every week.

DE OMAR McLENDON: (On loss to WKU last year) The sting of that game is still there for me, but I try not to think about last year. We are a different team, they are a different team. We've been playing well, they have been playing well. It is just another challenge for us to get to where we want

to be. We are just worried about ourselves.

(On being a 10-point underdog) I embrace being the underdog. When everyone else doubts you, that is when your team grows closer together. Your teammates and your coaches are going to believe in you when no one else does. The underdog role doesn't bother me at all.

(On significance of chain around his neck): This just represents the unity on or defense, and each week, we give one out to who Coach says is the strongest link on the defense. This week, it is the defensive line. We are going to have to be tough up front. If all of us are linked together, there won't be any creases or holes.

(On what to expect from WKU): I think they are going to run the ball and test our defense early. Once we stop the run, I think their quarterback (Jakes) will try to air it out. They have better receivers than they did last year. I don't think the scheme for them will change because that is what has been successful for them.

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