After break, Raiders ready to get back on the field

MT, USA kickoff Saturday at 2:30 PM

November 13, 2012 · @MTAthletics

Coach Rick Stockstill's quotes about South Alabama game at press luncheon Tuesday:
"Coming off of the Western Kentucky game, and then having the open date, it gave us some time. We are not going to get anybody back from an injury, but after nine games, it gives our guys a chance to heal our bodies, get the bumps and bruises healed, and recharge our batteries mentally as much as physically. We are anxious to get playing again.

South Alabama, as I told our team, is a good football team with a bad record. Every game they have played has been a close game. Defensively, they are very talented. They are in the top three in most defensive categories in the Sun Belt. We are going to see man coverage, our receivers are going to have to win on the outside, Logan (Kilgore) is going to have to be very accurate on his throws. Anytime you play a "man coverage" team, those things are going to be paramount. And up front, we are going to have to protect well.
You can't look at South Alabama as this being their first year in the conference. They have a lot of juniors and seniors, and they played one year of club football that didn't count against their eligibility, so this is a very mature team that we will be playing this week.

Offensively, they will be another spread team with a quarterback that is dangerous with his feet. He can run around, he's a good passer, accurate with the football. Their offensive line might be the strength of their offense. They are big and physical up front, and have great speed in the backfield and outside on the perimeter. Their big issue is that they have turned the ball over at critical times that have ended up costing them, but they are a good football team.

We'll have to go down there knowing that this is the biggest game we have played so far, and that is how we are going to approach it.

(On road game success): We talked about that at the first of the year. We only have five home

games, and two of them were our first two games, which means we have seven of our last ten on the road. To win on the road, you have to be mentally tough, and I think we have a mentally tough team. It is especially hard to win conference games on the road. You have to be mentally tough to do that, and we have done that this season.
Another factor is that we have done a good job of protecting the football on the road other than the Mississippi State game. That is a critical factor when you play on the road.

(On having something to prove this year): To me, that attitude has to start with us as a competitor or a coach. You have to prove to yourself first that you are a good player, then a good team. I don't worry about what everybody out there says (in regard to pre-season picks). For those people who predicted us to come in seventh, I'm not going to wave something and say "you were wrong". I don't care about that. I just want us to prove to ourselves, individually and collectively, that we are a good team and that we are better than some people might think we are. "

(On score-board watching now MT is tied for the SBC lead): Even when we had one loss and Monroe was still undefeated; it wasn't going to do us any good to score-board watch. We all know what's happening. We know who wins and loses, but you can only control what you can control, and that is us. We have no control over how South Alabama is going to play, so you worry about yourself. Everybody wants you to build this team up and such, but if you just take care of yourself, if you make yourself as good a player as you can, both individually and collectively, then the team will get better.

We didn't play our best football against Western Kentucky. We played good, but we didn't play our best game. There is still plenty of improvement we can make out there, and that is what we have to do this week. I think Sunday's practice was a little sloppy, but I think today we will go out and do what we have to do to get better."

(On bowl talk): Our main goal at the start of the year back in August was to win the conference championship and second was to go to a bowl, and we know that if we don't beat South Alabama, we can't get the conference title, so we don't talk about bowls and they don't talk to me about it. "

QUARTERBACK LOGAN KILGORE

On MT's open week activity: "Like Coach Stockstill said, we had practice Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday last week. We lifted on Thursday afternoon and early Friday morning so it's not like we were lying around or anything like that. Heal up; get treatment, just kind of get your mind off the day-to-day grind a little bit. It wasn't like we lost focus or anything like that."

On MT's success on the road this season: "First off, it's a testament to Coach Stockstill and the rest of the coaching staff. Being on the road, it's a kind of elevated focus. It's a maturing thing for the team to be able to go into a different environment, staying in a different hotel. Most of us haven't been to these cities. We enjoy playing in those types of environments. I'm not talking about Mississippi State or Georgia Tech; obviously they have hostile environments. For whatever reason, like my first start against Minnesota or Georgia Tech, it's a good turnout but for some reason Sun Belt games aren't as high a priority as on the road. That Western Kentucky game was a great environment. That's why you want to play college football. We go down to FIU and they're 2-5, 2-6 or whatever. We're at the two-yardline and I look at Benny (Cunningham) and we can't hear each other because the student section is so loud. I think all that stuff put together adds up to an environment

we enjoy playing in."

On adjusting to being in first place in the Sun Belt: "All that stuff is going to take care of itself. If there was a way to never know what another score was, it's not going to change. If we win, we put ourselves in a good position. If we don't, we lose that position. Whether it's first place, second place, bowl game, whatever, the mission is still the same. Today, it's full pads just like it is every Tuesday. We're going to go out and have a good practice and work on beating South Alabama. That's all it is. It's not looking at Troy, Arkansas State or where we're going. It's about winning this game against South Alabama and giving ourselves a chance to achieve our goals."

On South Alabama: "They've had success in the last couple years. I know we, as a team and a program, personally know how it feels to be better than your record. Every game late in the year last year, it was like 'yeah, we're 2-and-whatever, but I feel like we're going to win this game.' I guarantee that's how they feel. They've been in every single game. Like Coach Stockstill said, they're a couple timely turnovers from being right in there. It's their first year in the conference. They're going to come out and play tough every single game. We're treating this no different than Western last week or the following week against Troy. It's a conference game. We know they're good. It's easy to see on film."

On Proving Detractors wrong: "I don't think it's proving them wrong, it's proving ourselves right. We know how good we can be. We haven't played a perfect game yet, but I know that I'm surrounded by good players. It's nice to see guys getting recognition. I know that we've got a lot of good talent on this team and our coaching staff is one of the best around. It's kind of gratifying to see it coming together."

On looking at bowl projections: "Something Coach Stockstill said, and it's one of my favorite lines - 'You win the conference, you go to a bowl. If you don't, it's up in the air.' Western went 7-5 last year, didn't go to a bowl game. We have six wins, we're bowl eligible. If we don't win these next three games, we're not guaranteed a bowl game. We've got to beat South Alabama."

On making the bowl case stronger: "We're at six wins now and seven is what we are trying to get this week. Eight puts us in an even better situation, and nine wins the conference. That's really what it's about. We've got to win these three games. It's a three-game season right now. The good thing is that we put ourselves in a position to where we can talk about these things. I was on the team two years ago when we were 3-6 and had to win three in a row. Right now, we're 6-3 and still have to win three in a row. There's no way around it and it starts with South Alabama."

Printed on May 25, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/64003