MT snatches fifth road victory of season at USA

Blue Raiders collect four turnovers in the win

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MOBILE, Ala. - Stout defensive play forced four South Alabama turnovers as Middle Tennessee secured a 20-12 win over the Jaguars Saturday at Ladd-Pebbles Stadium.

An early field goal by South Alabama (2-9, 1-6 Sun Belt) set the tone of a defensive struggle. The Blue Raiders (7-3, 5-1 SBC) used a touchdown and capitalized on turnovers to stave off a potential upset. The game got tighter in the third quarter when USA scored a touchdown to narrow the contest to 17-12. A MT field goal coupled with an interception secured the much needed seventh win for Middle Tennessee.

Saturday's victory gave MT its fifth win on the road, the most by a Middle Tennessee squad since 1992.The Raiders have now reached seven wins three times under head coach Rick Stockstill.

Jajuan Harley forced three of the four South Alabama turnovers. The junior collected an interception in the second quarter, followed by a fumble recovery in the third and a threat-ending interception in the fourth. Harley also grabbed five tackles in the contest.

Offensively, the Blue Raiders used 70 plays for 445 yards of offense. Freshman Jordan Parker paced the MT rushing attack with career-high 154 yards on 24 carries.

Quarterback Logan Kilgore became the fifth all-time passer at Middle Tennessee with 16 completions out of 29 attempts for 233 yards and two touchdowns. The junior gunslinger passed Jonathan Quinn with 5,052 yards in his career. Kilgore also registered his 14th 200-yard passing performance.

Smyrna native Jeremiah Bryson encountered his best collegiate game to date with six grabs for 90 yards, including a 49 yard reception. Wide receiver Anthony Amos moved to ninth all-time after his 69 yards moved him to 1,308 in his career.

Freshman Khari Burke had a team-leading nine tackles for the Blue Raiders defense which forced six tackles-for-loss. South Alabama played a balanced offensive attack, accumulating 338 yards, but the four turnovers proved to be costly. The Blue Raiders have now forced 23 turnovers in the last nine games.

To start the game, South Alabama struck first as the Jags' Michel Chapuseaux connected on a 19 yard field goal. The Raiders responded two drives later with a four play and 97 yard scoring drive. MT used back-to-back rushes from Parker (23 yards) and Reggie Whatley (24) yards to pick up offensive momentum. Kilgore found Bryson with a 49 yard pass to give the Raiders a 7-3 edge at the 9:39 mark in the first quarter.

Two interceptions in the second quarter helped Middle Tennessee remain ahead. Freshman T.T. Barber's defensive grab set up a 26 yard field goal from Carlos Lopez to give the Raiders a 10-3 lead. USA capitalized on a Blue Raider running into the punter penalty late in quarter. Chapuseaux knocked in a 45 yard field goal to cut MT's lead to 10-6 at the break.

MT was just one for five on third down conversions in the first half, while the Raiders amassed 185 yards. Kilgore was 7-of-11 for 108 yards and a touchdown. Parker carried the pigskin five times for 80 yards. USA had 204 yards on 48 plays. 116 of those yards came from rushing with Terrence Timmons leading with 56 yards.

Offensively, the Blue Raiders regained momentum with a score on their opening drive in the second half. It marked the third consecutive game Coach Stockstill's squad had scored on their opening second half possession. MT used a methodical 75 yard drive capped by a Kilgore to Amos touchdown to give the Raiders a comfortable 11 point lead.

South Alabama soon fought back making a couple of big plays. Quarterback Ross Metheny threw a 45 yard pass to Gabe Loper. The long yardage pass set up an 18 yard touchdown strike from Metheny to Corey Besteda, making it a 17-12 game. Metheny finished 17-of-30 for 189 yards and a touchdown.

Lopez added a 19 yard field goal in the fourth quarter to stretch the Raiders' lead. The three point score by Lopez was his 14th of the season, marking the fourth most in a single season. With just 3:20 left in the game, South Alabama's comeback was short-lived when Harley grabbed his third turnover of the day. MT grabbed the first ever meeting with the Jaguars.

As momentum continues to ride high, the Blue Raiders carry a three game win streak into its home finale at Floyd Stadium. MT hosts rival Troy in the Battle of the Palladium next Saturday, Nov. 24. Kickoff is set for 2:30 p.m. on ESPN3.

1st Quarter

South Alabama drove seamlessly down the field, but encountered trouble from Middle Tennessee's front line in the goal line situation. Kevin Byard made a big play to push USA back on second down, while the Raiders held USA to a field goal as Michel Chapuseaux made a 19-yard field goal with 9:39 left in the period. A deep punt by South Alabama looked to be daunting for the MT offense. However, the Raiders maneuvered four plays for 97 yards. Jordan Parker broke away from the Raiders' own two yard line with a 23 yard scamper. Reggie Whatley followed with 24 yards on the next play. Logan Kilgore fired a 49 yard strike to Jeremiah Bryson to put the Raiders up 7-3 with 5:14

on the clock. The touchdown reception was first for Bryson, a Smyrna native. The long drive was the 13th time the Raiders had scored a touchdown on a 90-plus yard drive. Kilgore moved to fifth all-time with that touchdown throw, passing Jonathan Quinn's mark of 4,864 yards. Middle Tennessee had another scoring opportunity late in the game, but was forced to punt.

2nd Quarter

With the Jaguars driving, Jajuan Harley interrupted the momentum with his second interception of the year at the MT nine yard line. As South Alabama regrouped, the interception bug bit again when freshman T.T. Barber inked his first collegiate interception. The Blue Raiders capitalized when Carlos Lopez hit his 13th consecutive field goal from 26 yards. Late in the game, the Raiders attempted a blocked punt. However, it was waived off due to running into a punter, giving the ball back to the Jags. USA's Chapuseaux capped off the half with a 45 yard field goal to make it a 10-6 game. The Blue Raiders totaled 185 yards on 24 plays, while USA gained 214 yards on 48 plays. Logan Kilgore was 7-of-11 for 108 yards and 1 touchdown. Jeremiah Bryson had five grabs for 80 yards, while Jordan Parker rushed five times for 49 yards.

3rd Quarter

For the third consecutive game, the Blue Raiders opened the second half with a scoring drive. Jordan Parker helped open things up with a 29 yard rush. Logan Kilgore found Anthony Amos for his ninth touchdown catch of the year to put MT up 17-6. Jajuan Harley continued his outstanding play by recovering a fumble at the South Alabama 41 yard line. The Raiders drove down, but a Lopez missed field goal left the Raiders empty handed. South Alabama added in a touchdown to make it a 17-12 ball game. Ross Metheny found Corey Besteda for 18 yards for the first Jag touchdown.

4th Quarter

In the fourth quarter, Middle Tennessee needed some breathing room. The Jags drove on a few offensive possessions, but could not find the endzone. Christian Collis caught a 37 yard pass at the Blue Raider 10 yardline. Middle Tennessee failed to punch it in, but the Blue Raiders used a 19 yard field goal from Lopez to stretch the lead to eight. Middle Tennessee missed an opportunity to extend its lead to 11 with four minutes to play. However, Jajuan Harley found his second interception and third turnover of the day to end the Jags threat.

NOTES

CAPTAINS: Today's game captains were Omar McLendon, Jimmy Staten, and Micah James.

KILGORE MOVES TO 5TH: With 233 passing yards today quarterback Logan Kilgore surpassed Jonathan Quinn for fifth place on the all-time passing list. Kilgore now has 5,052 career passing yards and now has his sights set on fourth place Dwight Dasher (5,643).

AMOS CRACKS TOP 10: WR Anthony Amos moved into the Top 10 on Middle Tennessee's receiving yardage list after reeling in five catches for 69 yards against USA. Amos now has 1,308 receiving yards to rank ninth on the list. Amos surpassed Patrick Honeycutt and Sancho McDonald today.

CAREER DAY FOR BRYSON: Redshirt freshman Jeremiah Bryson turned in his best game as a

collegian against USA. The Smyrna, Tenn., native set personal-bests in receptions and receiving yards with six grabs for 90 yards. Bryson reeled in his first collegiate touchdown on a career long 49-yard reception.

LOPEZ FOURTH: Senior place-kicker Carlos Lopez connected on his 14th field goal of the season against USA. The 14 made three-pointers equals the fourth most in a single-season in Blue Raider history. The all-time record is 18 set by Alan Gendreau in 2009.

BACK-TO-BACK FOR PARKER: True freshman Jordan Parker went over the 100-yard rushing mark for the third time this season with a career-high 154 yards on 24 attempts against USA. Parker, who had 149 yards at WKU, has now had back-to-back 100-yard games to become first Blue Raider to accomplish this since William Pratcher last season.

AMOS TIES WRIGHT: Senior Anthony Amos registered his ninth touchdown catch of the season on Middle Tennessee's opening drive of the second half against USA. Amos is now tied with Kerry Wright (2003) for second on the single-season list. The all-time record is 11 set by Wright in 2004.

HARLEY MANAGES CAREER DAY: Junior safety Jajuan Harley managed a career day with five tackles, a forced fumble, a fumble recovery and two interceptions.

KILGORE MOVES UP TD LIST: With two touchdown passes against USA, QB Logan Kilgore ran his career total to 37. That mark ties him with Clint Marks for fourth on the all-time list. Kilgore is now chasing Dwight Dasher for third (40).

QUICK HITTERS: MT has now won 7 games for the third time in the Rick Stockstill era (2006, 2009) ... MT won its fifth road game of the season to match the most since the 1992 had five road victories ... MT is now 6-1 in the 10th game of the year under Stockstill ... MT has opened the second half with a TD now in three straight games ... Middle Tennessee's 97-yard drive for a TD in first quarter was the 13th 90-yard plus scoring drive in the Rick Stockstill era and second of 2012 ... Jeremiah Bryson registered his first collegiate TD on a 49-yard pass from Logan Kilgore in the first quarter ... QB Logan Kilgore started his 23rd career game today which ranks as the most on the team ... DE Omar McLendon played in his team-best 46th game today ... Jajuan Harley recorded his second and third career interception in win over USA ... LB T.T. Barber had his first career interception in the second quarter off a pass breakup by Khari Burke ... DE Omar McLendon recorded his second sack of the season and fifth of his career in the fourth quarter ... QB Logan Kilgore recorded his 14th career 200-yard passing game today against USA and ranks third all-time in that category.

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