

Burnett Blog: "One Game, One Belt"

Kickoff set for 2:04 PM today on ESPN3

December 1, 2012 · @MTAthletics

Defining success can be done in a number of ways with different variables for different scenarios. If there is one scenario that proves success in the realm of college football, it's winning a championship. This goal can be reached today for the Blue Raiders, as they will face the Red Wolves of Arkansas State for the outright Sun Belt Conference title.



The path to victory will not come easy. The Red Wolves present an explosive offense with a quarterback that can hurt you with both his arm and his feet. With new head coach Gus Malzahn leading the troops this season; the offense has seen a surge of points on the scoreboard and a huge increase in yards per game. So far, throughout the 2012 season, the Blue Raiders have been about as good as you can be when overcoming adversity. Injuries have been common this year but the ability of the backups to step in and accept their role and also succeed in their roles has driven the team to this point. This is also a credit to the coaching staff for their job of recruiting guys who are able to step in and contribute right away.

Offensively, the Blue Raiders must bring consistent play to today's game. Last week, there seemed to be a lack of rhythm in the Troy game and that type of play will not win this game on the road in a hostile environment. In my opinion, this game will come down to the play of the offensive line. They have to be able to open holes for running back Jordan Parker, who has burst onto the scene and seems to only be getting better each week. Also, there must be protection for quarterback Logan Kilgore. Kilgore has done an excellent job of staying in sync with his receivers this year but seemed to struggle last week with pressure in his face. He was consistently flushed out of the pocket and forced to make decisions on the run, at times running for his life. Solid, crisp routes by the receivers will help this but he must have time to find the open guy.

Defensively, take the success you had last week and build on it. Playing with a depleted secondary and an injury-plagued front seven, the Blue Raiders held their own against a powerful Troy offense. Even with former walk-ons in the secondary the passing yards were held in check. The issue this week is they will be facing a quarterback who can make the same throws on the run as he can when standing in the pocket. Also, because he is so mobile he is not afraid to tuck it and run at any given moment. Because of this, the front seven and especially the defensive line will be called upon to

keep him contained. I wouldn't be surprised if Tyrone Nix has something up his sleeve to have one of his linebackers or possibly a defensive end spy the quarterback on every play. This means the designated player will mirror the quarterback keeping him in the backfield and preventing him from running the ball.

Opportunities such as playing for a championship are rare. It takes hard work, dedication, and an excellent coaching staff to reach this point. Savor every moment and remember what got you this far. It's that mentality that must drive the team throughout the game today. This won't be the first time Middle Tennessee will face a good team in a hostile environment. They have already proven they can win these games and that confidence is what gives me confidence in this group today. It's championship Saturday and every Blue Raider fan across the country will be tuning in to cheer on the boys to bring home the title. It's one game for one belt and the right to be conference champions! Go Blue Raiders!

Printed on July 22, 2014

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/64277>