Blue Raiders fall at Arkansas State

Middle Tennessee now waits for potential bowl placement

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JONESBORO, Ark. - Middle Tennessee could not keep up with the Arkansas State Red Wolves' offense Saturday, failing to score in a 45-0 loss at Liberty Bank Stadium in a game that decided the Sun Belt championship.

The Blue Raiders were shut out for the first time in the 2012 season on Saturday. Middle Tennessee mustered 203 yards of total offense as Arkansas State racked up 512 yards. Jordan Parker ran the ball 18 times for 73 yards. Quarterback Logan Kilgore was 15-of-26 passing for 114 yards with two interceptions. Stephen Roberts, Justin Jones, and Roderic Blunt each had a team-high seven tackles.

Arkansas State (9-3, 7-1 Sun Belt) took the ball to start the game and drove right down the field. The Red Wolves ran seven plays for 75 yards on their opening drive, highlighted by a 21-yard pass by Ryan Aplin to Taylor Stockemer, and scored on a four-yard scamper by Aplin to take a 7-0 lead 2:38 into the game.

Middle Tennessee (8-4, 6-2) looked to respond on its opening drive. Starting from their own 35-yard line, the Blue Raiders got a 23-yard run by Parker on the first play of the series. Parker also converted a 4th-and-1 on the drive in Arkansas State territory. Middle Tennessee had the ball on the Red Wolves' 25-yard line when a Kilgore pass was intercepted by Arkansas State's Nathan Herrold who returned the ball to the Middle Tennessee 33-yard line. The Red Wolves' scored five plays later, as a nine-yard David Oku touchdown run made the score 14-0.

The Blue Raiders went three plays and out on their next possession, but a Josh Davis punt pinned Arkansas State to their own 15-yard line with 5:01 remaining in the first quarter. The Red Wolves capitalized on a pair of long runs by Aplin, including one that went for 28 yards, and Rocky Hayes to get into Middle Tennessee territory. Arkansas State drove down to the Blue Raiders' six-yard line before Josh Jarboe caught a pass from Aplin for a touchdown to end the quarter, giving the Red Wolves' a 21-0 lead.

Middle Tennessee started the second quarter with the ball on their own 25-yard line. Facing a 3rd-

and-8, Kilgore hooked up with Kyle Griswould for a 13-yard pass and catch to keep the drive alive. The duo hooked up for another 13-yard reception to get near midfield. The Blue Raiders faced another third down at their own 48 but Parker was stopped one yard short of the first down. On fourth down, Middle Tennessee faked a punt. Cory Carmichael took the snap and ran one yard for the first down. Three plays later, the Blue Raiders faced another 4th-and-1 in Arkansas State territory but the Red Wolves stopped Parker to get the football back.

Arkansas State wasted no time in reaching the end zone as Aplin tossed a 59-yard touchdown strike to Julian Jones to make the score 28-0. The Red Wolves added one more score before halftime. Rocky Hayes' 12-yard touchdown capped a nine-play, 80-yard drive over 4:00 to put Arkansas State in front 35-0 with 23 seconds remaining in the half. The Red Wolves scored 10 more points in the third quarter to take a 45-0 lead. Arkansas State had the ball for 20:30 in the second half.

Middle Tennessee, which is bowl-eligible for the third time in the last four seasons, should know its postseason possibilities on Sunday.

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