

# Raiders prevail in OT thriller over Florida Atlantic

## Combination of big plays gives MT first C-USA victory

September 21, 2013 · @MTAthletics

**BOCA RATON, Fla.** - Middle Tennessee prevailed in a thrilling down to the wire contest, defeating Florida Atlantic 42-35 in overtime to win their first game as a member of Conference USA on Saturday at FAU Stadium.

The contest saw five ties with the Blue Raiders (3-1, 1-0 C-USA) never trailing in the

contest. Florida Atlantic (1-3, 0-2 C-USA) answered multiple times including a flurry of action during the final minutes of regulation.



Reggie Whatley's 64-yard rushing touchdown put MT up 35-28 with under two minutes remaining in the fourth quarter. After earning good field position, the Owls marched down 54 yards where quarterback Jaquez Johnson found Lucky Whitehead for a 21-yard TD to tie the game with just three ticks left.

In only the sixth overtime since MT joined the FBS ranks, senior signal caller Logan Kilgore found Kyle Griswold for the 19-yard game-winning touchdown. With FAU on its last leg on fourth down, Kevin Byard pick pocketed FAU's Johnson to seal the victory.

The Blue Raiders moved to 3-1 for the second consecutive season and the first time in back-to-back years since 1991-92.

Middle Tennessee ran 296 yards on the ground and threw for 150 for 446 total yards of offense. Florida Atlantic put together 503 total yards with 321 coming from the air. However, FAU committed a hampering five turnovers.

Whatley and teammate Jordan Parker helped the Blue Raiders reach over 200 yards rushing for the second time this season. Whatley belted a personal-best 155 yards and three touchdowns on 10 carries. Meanwhile, Parker reached his seventh 100-yard game with 115 on 28 rushes.

The passing attack was led by Kilgore, who completed 13-of-23 for a touchdown and one interception. His one touchdown pass marked the 40th of his career, tying him for third all-time with Dwight Dasher.

Tavarres Jefferson became the go-to wide out, as he snagged a team-best five catches for 66 yards.

Defensively, T.T. Barber led the Raiders with 14 total stops. Christian Henry reached double-digits with 10 tackles and a forced fumble. Dearco Nolan was a force for the Raiders on Saturday, recording three of the four Blue Raider sacks and forcing two fumbles. Byard and Jared Singletary finished the game with an interception each.

The Blue Raiders methodically drove down the field to open the game. Jefferson snagged 19-yard and 17-yard passes from Kilgore to setup a 10-yard touchdown by Parker.

In the second quarter, Florida Atlantic forced a turnover with a Damian Parms interception to put the Owls inside the Raiders' 10-yardline. The INT set up the game-tying score with an eight yard strike from FAU's Jaquez Johnson to William Dukes.

The rushing attack proved to be lethal on the next scoring drive. The Raiders ran on all seven plays and capped it with a 15-yard Whatley touchdown to help MT regain a 14-7 advantage break. Stephen Roberts' fumble recovery at the end of the second quarter prevented Florida Atlantic's threat.

The Blue Raiders put together 226 total yards, with 128 coming from the ground in the opening half. FAU was limited to 27 yards rushing, but threw 120 in the air for a total of 147.

By sticking to the run in the third quarter, Florida Atlantic used 5:18 and marched down 76 yards on 11 plays to tie the contest. Johnson registered his first touchdown with a seven-yard run.

A third Owls fumble proved to be costly as Middle Tennessee's James Roberson picked it up. A 33-yard Whatley run set up a Kilgore to Corey Carmichael 2-yard strike, putting MT up 21-14 with less than six minutes left in the third. Florida Atlantic answered again as the Owls marched down 80 yards and tied the game with a three-yard touchdown from Johnson. Johnson finished the game 31-of-50 for 321 yards and three touchdowns, while rushing 34 yards and a pair of TDs.

From there, the two C-USA foes traded a pair of touchdowns in the final minutes of the fourth quarter. Kilgore's 19-yard game-winning touchdown to Griswold in overtime gave MT its' third victory of the season.

Middle Tennessee remains on the road with a visit to BYU next Friday, Sept. 27. Kickoff is set for 8 p.m. CT in an ESPNU televised broadcast.

## **GAME NOTES**

**CAPTAINS:** Today's game captains were OL Darius Johnson, S Kevin Byard, and FB Corey Carmichael.

**ALL WHITE:** For the first time since 1978, Middle Tennessee came out in white helmets. In fact, the Blue Raiders were in all white for what is believed to be the first time in school history.

**FIRST BLOCK:** Middle Tennessee recorded its first blocked kick of the season when it rejected a punt in the first quarter. Senior Kenneth Gilstrap was credited with his first blocked kick of his career and the 27th under Rick Stockstill. Of the 27 under Stockstill, six have now come against FAU.

**BIG GAME FOR NOLAN:** Senior defensive end Dearco Nolan turned in a huge game for the Blue Raider defense. Nolan was credited with a career-best three sacks, while also forcing two Owls fumbles. He finished the game with four tackles.

**CARMICHAEL SCORES:** Fullback Corey Carmichael, who made the move to the offensive side of the ball this season, recorded his first collegiate touchdown against FAU today. Carmichael hauled in a 2-yard pass from Logan Kilgore for the TD and his second career reception.

**KILGORE TIES DASHER:** Senior Logan Kilgore's 2-yard touchdown pass to Corey Carmichael was the 40th of his career. That total ties him with Dwight Dasher for third on the all-time list and he needs one more to tie Teddy Morris for second.

**PARKER GETS 100:** Sophomore Jordan Parker recorded his seventh career 100-yard rushing game when he collected 115 yards on 28 carries against FAU. Parker now has three in four games this season and six over his last eight games. Parker's seven 100-yard games ties for the ninth most in school history.

**OVER 200:** Middle Tennessee had its second 200-yard rushing game of the season after collecting 296 yards on the ground against the Owls. It was the 28th time under Rick Stockstill the Blue Raiders have topped the 200 mark and the 20th time since 2009. Five of the 200-yard games have come against FAU.

**WHATLEY HAS CAREER-BEST:** Junior Reggie Whatley turned in a career performance against FAU with a personal-best 154 yards rushing to go with three touchdowns. Whatley's previous rushing high was 48 yards against Mississippi State in 2012.

**OVERTIME:** Middle Tennessee is now 3-3 all-time in overtime games during the FBS era after today's victory ... The Blue Raiders are 1-1 under Coach Rick Stockstill during the extra period.

**QUICK HITTERS:** Jordan Parker's first quarter TD was his fourth of the season which is a new season best for the sophomore who had three in 2012 ... Reggie Whatley's touchdown run in the first half was the first of the season for the junior ... Leighton Gasque recorded his 13th career sack at the end of the first quarter to put him fifth on the all-time list (needs one more to tie Tavarres Jones for 4th) ... WR Kyle Griswold made his team-leading 19th straight start today ... Kyle Griswold has now caught at least one pass in 26 straight games which ranks fourth longest in school history ... Tavarres Jefferson has made at least one reception in 17 straight games ... DT Jimmy Staten, P Josh Davis, and OL Josh Walker all played in their 40th career games which is tops on the team ... The Blue Raiders last had two rushers with 100-plus yards against FAU last season ... MT is 3-1 for the second consecutive season ... This marks the first time since 1991-92 that the Blue Raiders have won three of their first four games to start the season in back-to-back years.

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*Printed on March 9, 2014*

*Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/70072>*