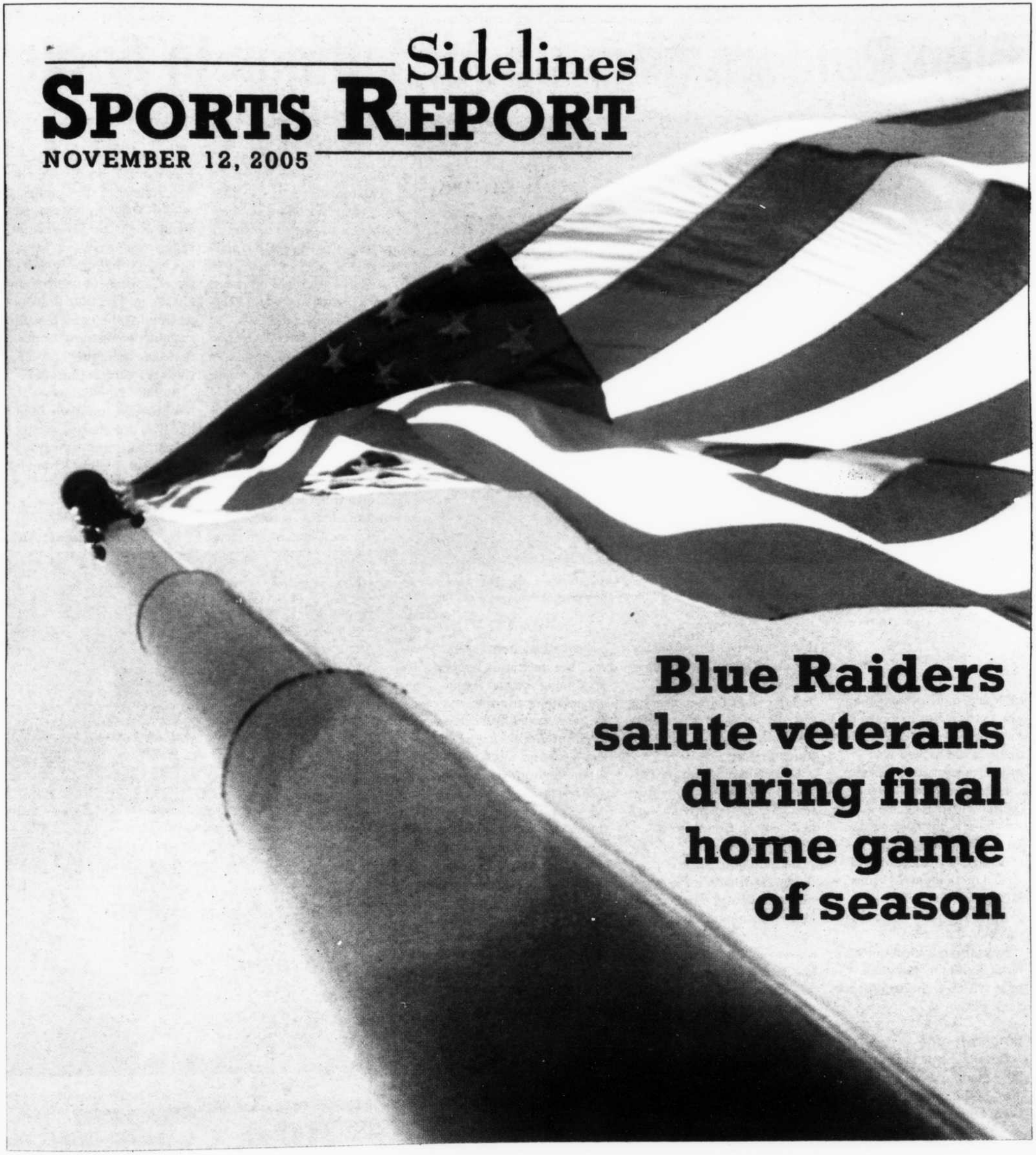
Sidelines
SPORTS REPORT
NOVEMBER 12, 2005



Blue Raiders salute veterans during final home game of season

Blue Raiders gear up for Indians in finale

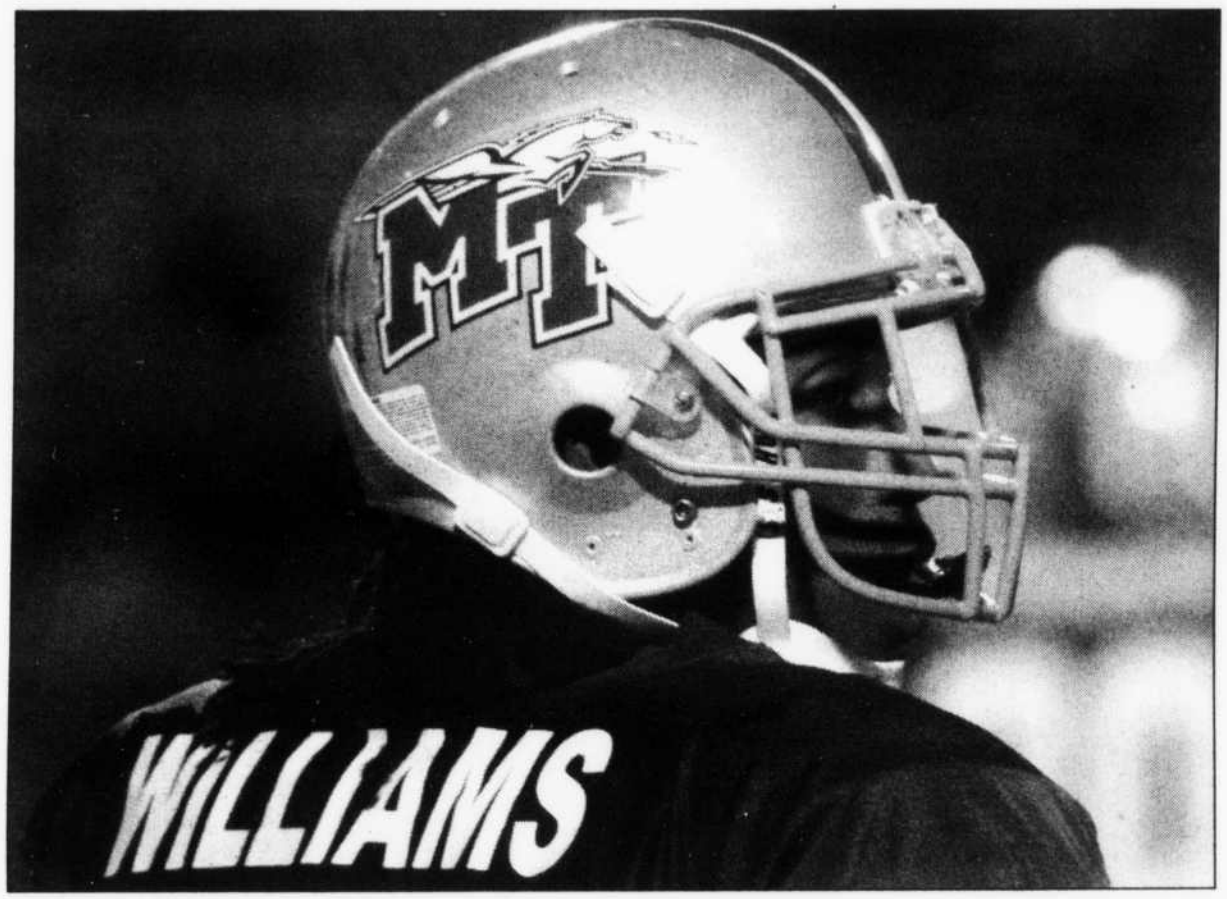


Photo by Jay Richardson | Chief Photographer

MT wide receiver Bobby Williams takes breather between plays at last week's game against Arkansas State. The Blue Raiders won 45-7.

By Jon Leffew
Staff Writer

Despite quite possibly the worst predictions in football history last week, the Blue Raiders made Arkansas State and myself look very incompetent.

Nonetheless, the show must go on, and this week's game is, at least for now, the biggest game for the Blue Raiders this year.

A win this week results in a virtual tie between MT and ULM, with two Sun Belt games left on the schedule for the Blue Raiders.

Even though I lost quite a bit of credibility last week, here are a few predictions for Senior Day 2005.

When MT runs

Despite my picking on the Blue Raider rushing attack most of the year, Eugene Gross and company have done a pretty good job of running the ball and controlling the clock.

As a matter of fact, heading into this week, Gross leads the SBC in scoring with eight touchdowns.

Ronald Steed, who carried the ball for the first time this year, averaged nearly six yards per carry on his way to 67 yards and a score.

Even though the Blue Raiders are near the bottom of the national and Sun Belt rankings for rushing offense, the offense somehow usually finds a way to run the ball effectively against most opponents.

This week should be no different, as the Indian defense is currently allowing 188 yards per contest.

Advantage: MT

When MT passes

MT quarterback Clint Marks has struggled at times this year, but the junior stepped up in a big way last week.

The junior from Fort Myers, Fla., was named SBC Offensive Player of the Week after his 208 yards and three touchdowns against Arkansas State.

Marks now has five touchdowns on the year, and he has thrown for 200 yards per game in the team's past two games.

Last Saturday, a few other Blue Raiders actually decided to join Cleannord Saintil (who leads the SBC in receiving) in catching passes from Marks.

Gross and Taron Henry had three receptions apiece, fullback Nick McAfee had a touchdown and Bobby Williams had a touchdown and 60 total receiving yards.

The Blue Raider offense seems to be clicking on all cylinders at the perfect time, and an Indian defense that is allowing 215 yards per game through the air shouldn't provide much resistance this week.

The Indians do, however, have 14 interceptions on the year, so Marks (who has five interceptions this season) may struggle.

If Marks can build upon last week's performance and keep the ball away from ULM's Chaz Williams, who leads the nation in interceptions per game (with five picks in seven games), the Blue Raiders should be in good shape.

Advantage: MT

When ULM runs

The Indians' leading rusher is Calvin Dawson, who has 418 yards and four touchdowns.

However, Dawson is the least of the Blue Raider defense's worries this week.

ULM quarterback Steven Jyles is arguably one of the best athletes in the country, and his ability to run and pass should keep the MT defense busy on Saturday.

The MT defense, at least on paper, appears to be up to the challenge. The Blue Raiders are leading the conference in rushing defense, and opponents are averaging only 3.5 yards per carry against MT.

But, the Blue Raiders haven't seen an athlete quite like Jyles this season, so barring an early injury, he gives the Indians a slight advantage.

Advantage: ULM

see Matchup, page 6

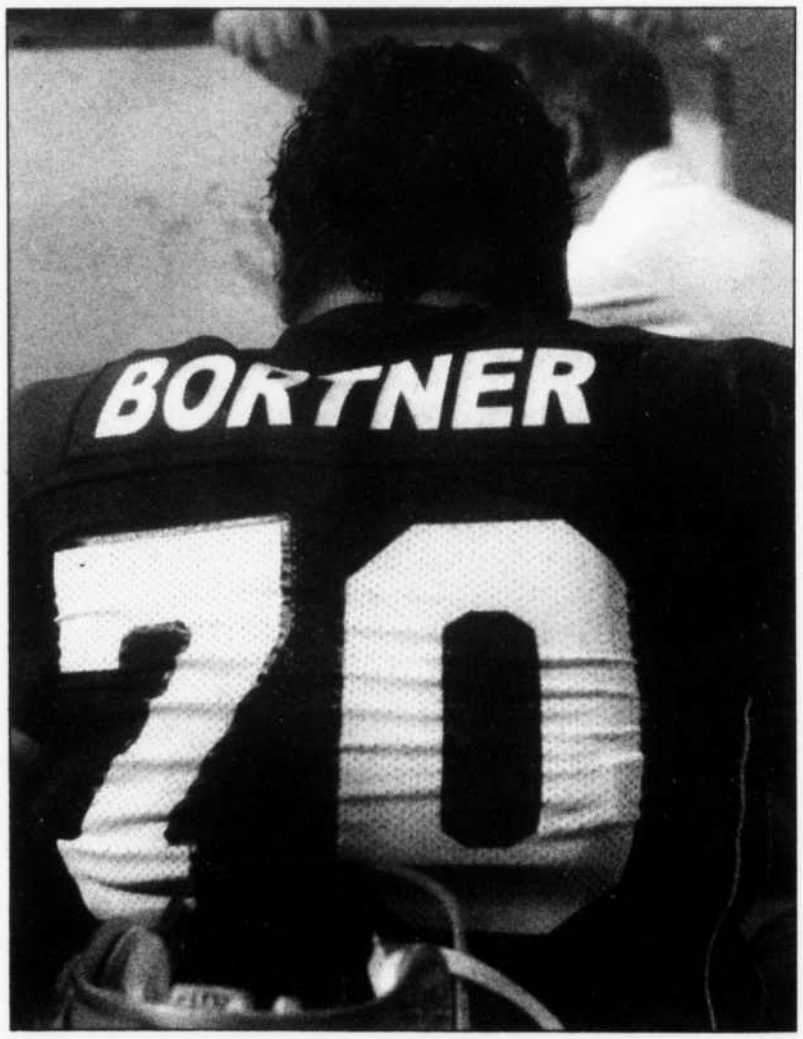


Photo by Jay Richardson | Chief Photographerer

Richard Bortner is the heaviest of MT's offensive line, weighing in at 334 lbs.

Saintil makes mark on Blue Raider offense

By Jonathan Hutton
Staff Writer

Saintil

Playmaker. Middle Tennessee senior wide receiver Cleannord Saintil has the word written on his taped wrists during football games.

"I'm just going out there and making plays," Saintil said. "I'm a football player. I've been playing this all my life. Every time we have to play somebody, I'm going out there and making plays and that's what I have to accomplish."

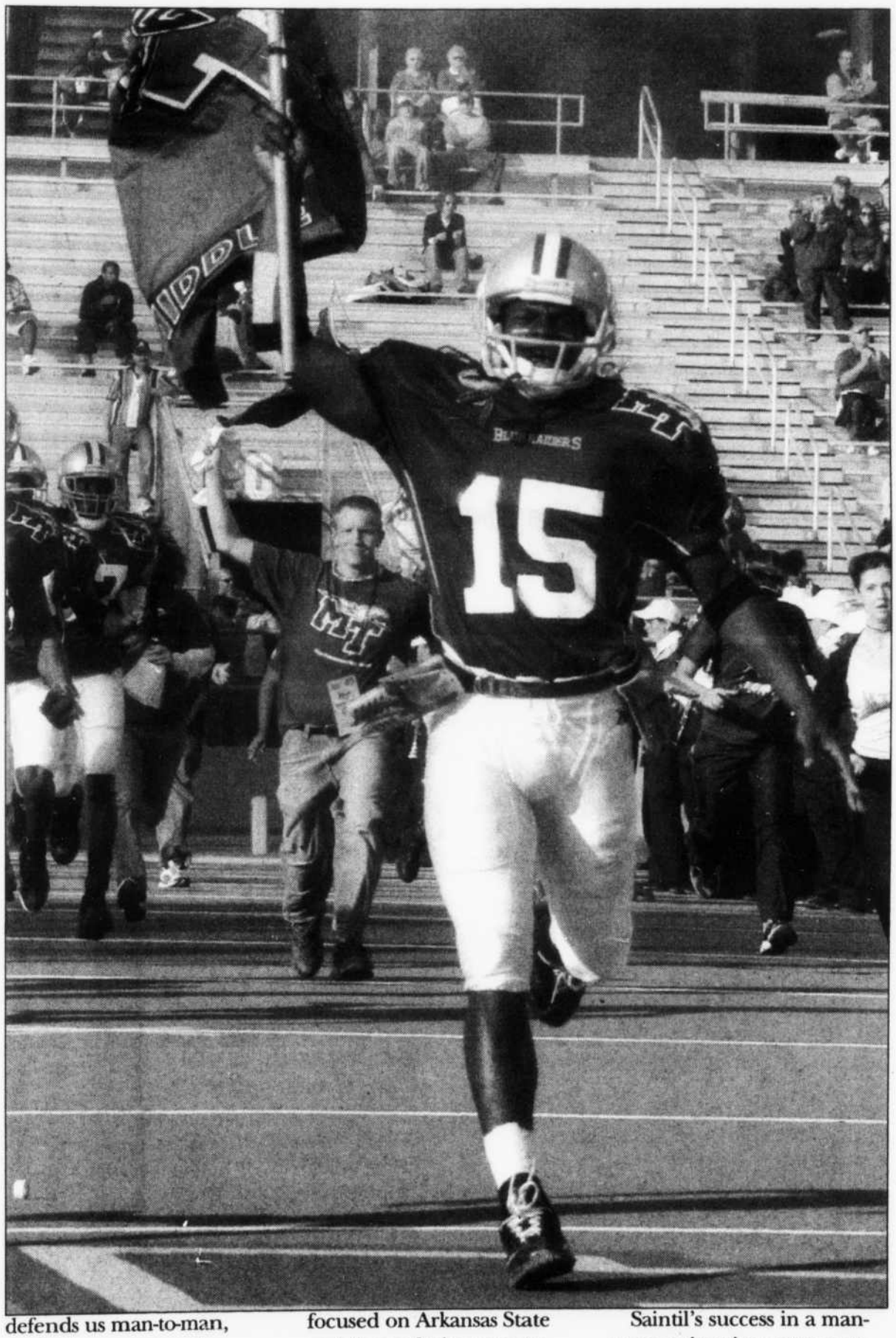
With fellow senior wide out Chris Henry out for the season with a broken leg, Saintil was forced to step up and has become the go-to-guy for the Blue Raiders. He leads all MT receivers with 39 catches for 512 yards and averages just over 73 yards receiving per game through seven contests.

But Saintil doesn't look at himself as the go-to-guy for MT. Saintil said he looks at it as having fun and doing what he is capable of doing.

"I really don't look at it like that," Saintil said. "I really look at it as just playing football and going out and having fun out there and going out there to win."

In last Saturday's 45-7 win over Arkansas State, Saintil exploded for five catches with 84 yards and a touchdown. The receiver found himself being covered man-to-man, and if a team decides to play man-to-man on Saintil, they might as well slap him in his face.

"That's what I like," Saintil said. "I feel like if a team defends us man-to-man, that's disrespecting the receiver. That's letting you know you're not good and that's letting us know our quarterback's not good, so we came to practice really focused on Arkansas State and them playing man-to-man and we just went out there and did our job, made plays, everything in the air, that was our goal – come down with it."



Saintil's success in a man-to-man situation may come from playing as an inside receiver last season when Kerry Wright ruled MT's offensive game plan. This season, Saintil is the outside guy - the playmaker. He credits his knowledge of getting the inside feel as to why he picks up on coverage packages and knowing where to fit inside of an opponents zone.

"That was a big transition," Saintil said. "In [Junior College] I played a little bit inside but it was mainly running the ball. When I got here, they really got me inside fully. I learned the coverage, like cover two, cover three. I got smart as a football player. I think that kind of helped my game. When I went outside, everything was so easy to me; I could find zones that I could sit in. Everything is coming slowly to me now so I'm starting to get that feeling like I usually have."

If Louisiana-Monroe plays Saintil man up like ASU tried to do, Saintil will get the feeling once again. Saintil said that the main focus isn't on him, though. It's on getting to where the Blue Raiders want to be.

"Monroe just lost so that is really gonna open things up," Saintil said. "We may have a chance to go to a bowl game."

Saintil and the Blue Raiders (3-4, 2-2 Sun Belt Conference) will attempt to win their second home game of the season this Saturday when the Indians (3-5, 3-1 SBC) play against the Blue Raiders at 2 p.m. ✦

Sun Belt teams make bids for bowl seat

By David Hunter
Staff Writer

The race for the Sun Belt Conference title just got tighter after Saturday's football action.

Florida International 31 Louisiana-Monroe 29

The Indians dropped out of the top spot in the SBC with the loss.

ULM kicker Ragan Walters had a chance to win the game and keep the team in the pole position in the standings

However, Walters' 35-yarder with 12 seconds to go went wide right, along with their chances of going to the New Orleans Bowl.

For the Golden Panthers it was a historic win. The team earned their first-ever win in the conference and beating an I-A team for the first time.

FIU quarterback Josh Padrick was 21-of-35 for 235 and three scores in the victory, ULM quarterback Steven Jyles countered with 32-of-49 for 384 yards.

FIU improved to 2-5, 1-3, while ULM fell to 3-5, 3-1.

Troy 28 Florida Atlantic 14

The Trojans came from behind in the 3rd quarter to pull off the conference victory.

Troy quarterback Julian Foster found Smokey Hampton for a 14-yarder to tie the score. With 2:35 to go in that same quarter, Foster connected on a 41-yard score to Darius Williams.

Foster completed a 6-yard touchdown pass to James Earl Cray in the final quarter to end the scoring.

Foster finished the day with 271 yards passing and three scores.

Troy is now 4-5,3-2 on the season, while FAU drops to 1-8, 1-4.

Louisiana-Lafayette 31 North Texas 28

For the first time ever in SBC history, UNT has two losses inside the conference.

This came after ULL running back Tyrell Fenroy scored from a yard out with 1:10 to go in the game to pull out the win.

In the game, Fenroy had 102 yards rushing and found the end zone three times in the win.

On the other hand, UNT running back Patrick Cobbs ran for a season-best 197 yards and also scored three times.

Cobbs filled in full-time after UNT's other running back Jamario Thomas left at the half with a strained hamstring and did not come back. He might be back for the FAU game next week.

ULL improved to 4-5, 3-2 on the season, and UNT dropped to 2-6, 2-2.

The loss will end the Mean Green's run representing the SBC in the New Orleans Bowl as conference champion. UNT had won the past four SBC titles, and went 1-3 in the bowl game. ✦

MT winds down season with final home game

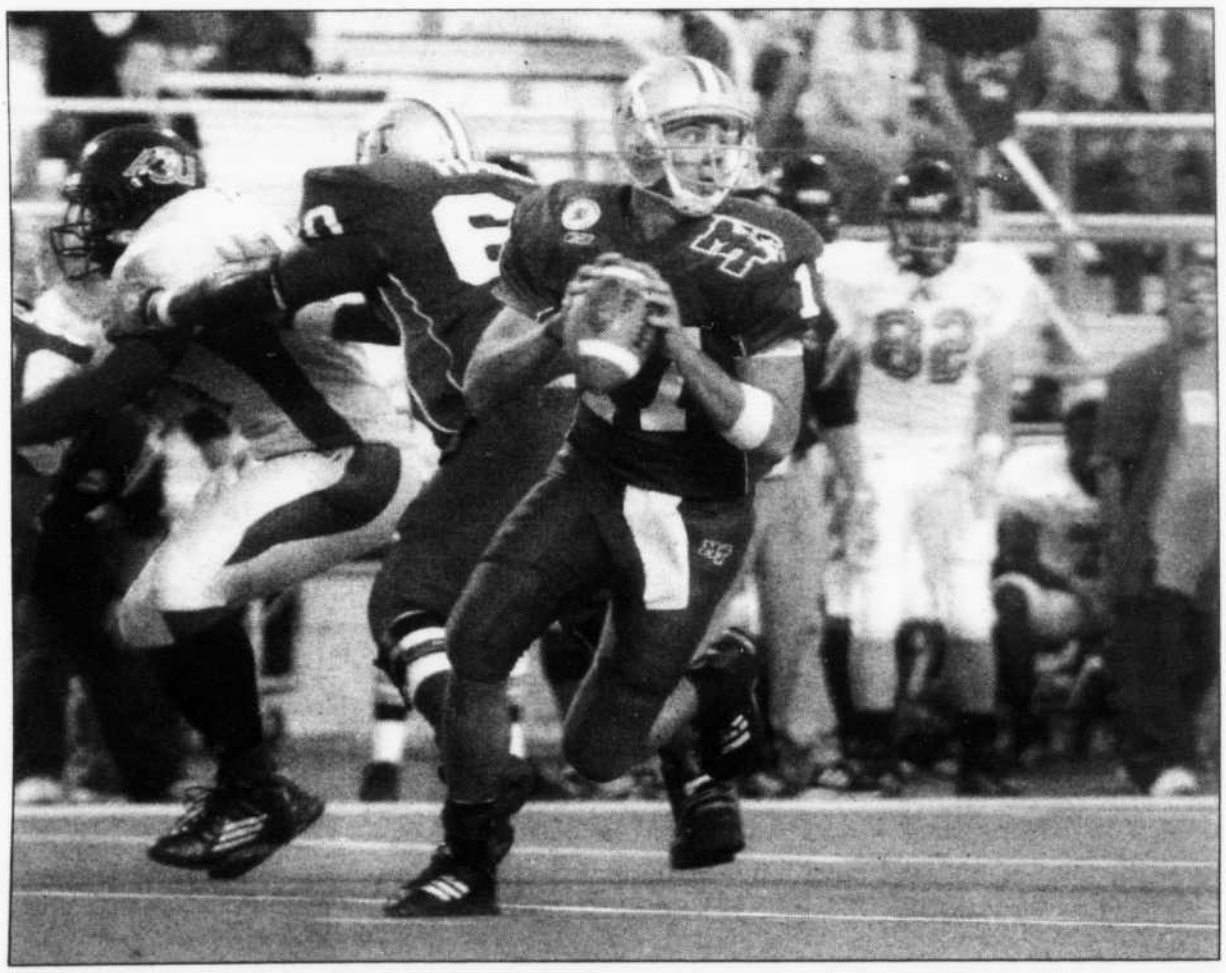


Photo by Jay Richardson | Chief Photographerer

MT quarterback gears up for a pass against Arkansas State at last week's first home victory. Marks was named SBC player of the week for his performance, 23 passes for 208 yards and three touchdowns.

By Jill Davis
Staff Writer

The Blue Raider football team will play its last home game of the 2005 season Saturday afternoon.

The Blue Raiders (3-4, 2-2) will face top seeded Louisiana Monroe (3-6) at Floyd Stadium. After last weekend's unbelievable defeat over Arkansas State 45-7, the MT football program is hoping to see the momentum of the players continue in Saturday's contest.

MT trails the Indians by one game in losses. The Blue Raiders have outscored Louisiana in the last five meetings 40-7 in the third quarter.

Contribution to the win in last week's game was shared by junior quarterback Clint Marks and the defensive line. In order to snag a win against the Indians, both of these forces must contribute during Saturday's match up.

Clint Marks played his best game of the year against Arkansas State, completing 14 of 23 passes for 208 yards and three touchdowns. He was also announced Sun Belt Conference Offensive Player of the Week recording over 200 passing yards in the past two games. Marks leads the league in completion percentage at 66.7 percent and is second in passing efficiency. He enters the game Saturday with 4,482 passing yards for the season.

The defensive line will have to step up in Saturday's game to measure up to their previous performance against Arkansas State, which included four forced three-and-outs. Last week, the Blue Raiders will need a similar performance this week against Steven Jyles and the high-powered ULM offense.

The Blue Raiders take to the field Saturday afternoon against the Indians. Kickoff is set for 2:05 pm CT. ✦

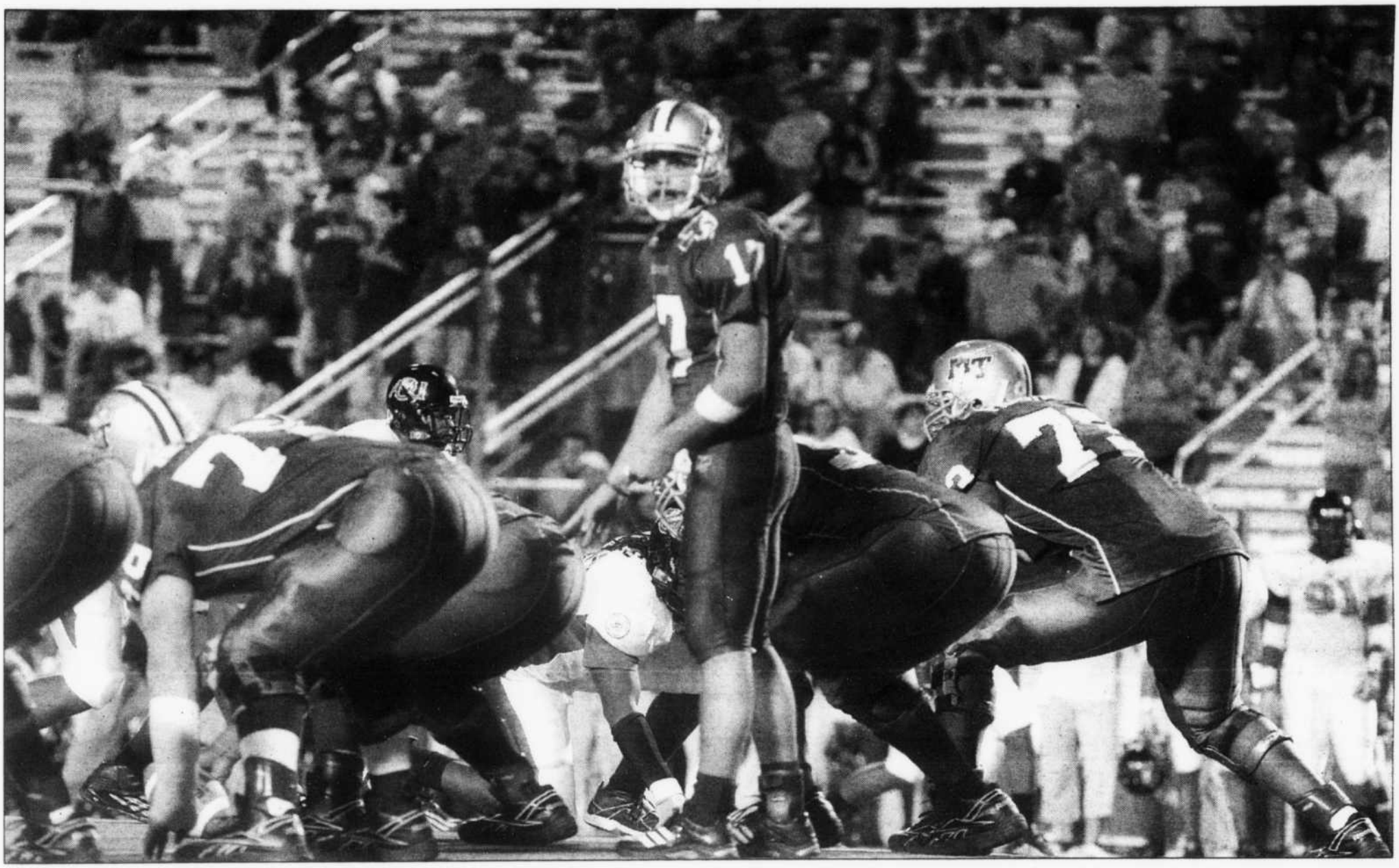


Photo by Jav Richardson | Chief Photographerr

On the heels of last week's victory, the Blue Raiders host Sun Belt Conference leader Louisiana-Monroe at Floyd Stadium this week.

Blue Raiders welcome ULM this Saturday

By Nichole Terry
Staff Writer

This weekend Middle Tennessee State University will welcome the number one team in the Sun Belt Conference to Blue Raider stadium for a highly anticipated league battle.

The Louisiana-Monroe Indians (3-5, 3-1) will pay a visit to Murfreesboro this Saturday to take on the MTSU Blue Raiders (3-4, 2-2) in the sixth meeting of the continuation of an especially competitive series between the two Sun Belt Conference contenders. Middle Tennessee is leading the series with a 4-1 advantage over the Indians after Louisiana-Monroe has failed to pull out a victory against the Blue Raiders in the past four consecutive meetings between the two teams. The Blue Raiders look to extend the streak to 5 games this weekend as they go up against one of the best teams in the NCAA.

In his third year at ULM, Head Coach Charlie Weatherbie leads one of the best well-balanced squads in the nation. Leading his offensive attack is senior quarterback Steven Jyles. In his last year as an Indian, Jyles holds the holds the number one position as Sun Belt Conference total offense. His performance over the past four years has put him at the head of the league's career total yardage with 7,563 yards and he is looking to extend his records in passing yardage and touchdown passes.

Jyles number one target on offense is junior wider receiver Drouzon Quillen of New Orleans, LA. Quillen held the No. 7 position in the Sun Belt Conference grabbing 44 receptions for 758 yards in 2004 and held an average of 17.2 yards per catch. With ULM's loss to Florida International last weekend Quillen shifted into eighth place in career receiving yardage with 1,780 yards. With all of his noted speed and athleticism, Quillen provides every opponent with an ample challenge.

The Indians defensive assault possesses the number one threat in the nation within their secondary. Only a sophomore, corner back Chaz Williams has struck fear in the gut of any and every quarterback that has gone up against Louisiana-Monroe this season. Leading the NCAA in interceptions per game this year with five in the last seven contests, Williams is an incomparable threat in the defensive backfield. Williams was tied for number one in the Sun Belt Conference in recovered fumbles with three last season, as a freshman, and held the third place slot for solo tackles with 76.

Louisiana-Monroe will come to Floyd Stadium as the Blue Raiders will attempt to hand the Sun Belt Conference leaders their second loss in the league.

Kick-off is at 2 p.m. CT ✦

From Matchup, page 2

When ULM passes

The Indians are second in the SBC in passing offense, and opponents have sacked Jyles only eight times all season.

This, like every other scenario, could go either way, and it will likely be the performances of Jyles' teammates that determine who wins this match up.

The Indians start three sophomores and two freshmen on the offensive line, so look for the Blue Raider defense, which has ten different players with a sack, to exploit their weaknesses.

However, only three different receivers have caught touchdowns for the Indians this year, so the MT defense gets the nod.

Advantage: MT

Special Teams

Perhaps the only part of the Blue Raider special teams unit that stands out is the punt team, led by Colby Smith.

Smith is second in the SBC in punting average (42 yards) and opponents are averaging only 3.8 yards per punt return.

However, the MT return game is adequate but not spectacular, and Smith has missed six of his nine field goal attempts this season.

The Indians are similar.

Punter Joel Stelly leads the conference in punting (43.9 yards), and the team is only three of eleven in field goal attempts on the year.

However, there are no clear advantages for either team.

Bradley Robinson, MT's punt returner could be the x-factor on Saturday.

Robinson is third in the conference in punt returns (with a 5.9 yard average), and the Indians are allowing 5.1 yards per return.

However, unless Robinson breaks a return for a touchdown, this one is another toss up.

Advantage: Even

Intangibles

The Blue Raiders are playing in a game in November that actually means something for the first time in a long time.

With a win, the team will move into a tie for the conference lead, which could be crucial considering the team's final three regular season games will be on the road.

MT leads the overall series with ULM, 4-1, and the Blue Raiders are 22-4 in home finales since 1979.

The Indians, meanwhile, are coming off a disheartening loss to Florida International last week, and should be looking to improve upon their three turnovers in the loss.

The Blue Raiders have the nod, if only because it's Senior Day.

Advantage: MT

Coaching

The Indians are led by head coach Charlie Weatherbie.

Weatherbie has a 9-22 overall record at ULM, but these numbers are a bit skewed.

He has made significant strides in building a solid program, as evidenced by the team's turnaround from 2003 to 2004 (one win to five).

This year, his team had control of the SBC until last week, and can still clinch a berth in the New Orleans Bowl if they win out.

Conversely, MT's Andy McCollum has gone from whipping boy to savior twice this season alone, and the Blue Raiders now face a similar situation.

If MT wins their final three SBC games, they'll likely earn their first trip to the New Orleans Bowl.

The Indians looked sloppy last week, and the Blue Raiders looked amazing.

I have to go with who's hot.

Advantage: MT

Conclusion

As is usually the case in a Sun Belt conference football game, both teams look very evenly matched.

So, despite the fact that MT owns most of the advantages in this story, Saturday's contest will more than likely be a close one.

If both teams play like they did last week, MT should win.

However, Jyles is the type of player that could single-handedly change the outcome of the game.

So, a balanced Blue Raider defense or Jyles and the Indian offense? ✦

MT 27 **ULM** 24

Middle Tennessee Roster Matchup

Middle Tennessee vs. Louisiana-Monroe

Pos.	No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
Offense					
QB	17	Clint Marks	6-2	203	Jr.
TB	20	Eugene Gross	5-9	208	Jr.
FB	31	Nick McAfee	6-0	248	Sr.
WR(X)	15	Cleannord Saintil	5-11	197	Sr.
WR(Y)	13	Taron Henry	6-0	190	So.
WR(H)	3	Michael Cannon	5-10	176	Fr.
WR(Z)	87	Bobby Williams	6-3	183	Fr.
TE	85	Stephen Chicola	6-5	248	So.
LT	60	Willie Hall	6-6	310	Jr.
LG	79	Brandon Nix	6-4	286	So.
C	57	Marcus Gates	6-2	281	Jr.
RG	75	Brian Smith	6-5	318	Sr.
RT	73	Germayle Franklin	6-4	316	Jr.
Defense					
LE	94	Devarick Scandrett	6-4	281	Sr.
NG	92	Jeff Littlejohn	6-2	318	Sr.
T	91	Quinton Staton	6-2	270	Sr.
RE	43	Erik Walden	6-2	238	So.
-or-	45	Sean Mosley	6-3	265	So.
SAM	40	Dennis Burke	6-1	242	Sr.
MIKE	25	J.K. Sabb	5-11	230	Jr.
WILL	33	Jonathan Bonner	6-0	222	Jr.
LC	24	Bradley Robinson	5-10	170	So.
LS	30	Jeremiah Weaver	5-11	187	Sr.
RS	8	Jonathan Harris	5-10	207	Jr.
RC	2	Keon Raymond	5-11	187	Sr.
Special Teams					
PK	46	Colby Smith	5-9	181	Jr.
P	46	Colby Smith	5-9	181	Jr.
PR	3	Chris Henry	5-8	171	Sr.
DS	36	John Crawford	6-0	240	Sr.
KR	15	Cleannord Saintill	5-11	197	Sr.
KO	49	Paul Wheeler	6-1	222	Sr.
H	47	Walt Bell	5-10	188	Jr.

Pos.	No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Year
Offense					
QB	8	Nick Noce	6-3	210	Sr.
TB	42	Antonio Warren	5-11	203	Sr.
FB	47	Oren O'Neal	6-0	248	Sr.
Y	9	Levi Dejohnette	6-0	175	So.
W	3	Gary Vincent	5-9	166	Jr.
TE	81	Manuel Barton	6-4	232	Sr.
LT	63	Matt Mandich	6-3	299	Fr.
LG	61	Lance Martin	6-4	295	Sr.
C	69	Tanner Jenkins	6-1	292	Jr.
RG	76	Kyle Koets	6-4	307	Fr.
RT	77	Cody Brown	6-5	325	Sr.
Defense					
DE	54	Jonathan Najm	6-2	243	Jr.
DT	98	Myron Anderson	6-5	276	Sr.
NT	43	Jamarrow James	6-2	276	Jr.
DE	44	Brian Flagg	6-2	240	So.
SLB	37	Koby McKinnon	6-2	217	So.
MLB	32	Devrett Wade	6-0	230	Jr.
WLB	30	Chris Littleton	5-11	205	Jr.
SS	16	Tyrell Johnson	6-1	197	So.
FS	21	Khayyam Burns	6-0	185	So.
LC	20	Montis Harrison	5-11	184	So.
RC	2	James Johnson	5-8	177	Sr.
Special Teams					
P	36	Jarod Little	6-1	196	Jr.
K	88	Eric Neihouse	5-9	183	Sr.
PR	2	James Johnson	5-8	177	Sr.
KR	33	Darren Toney	5-11	182	Jr.

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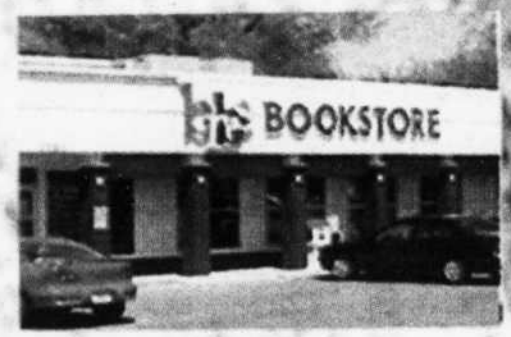

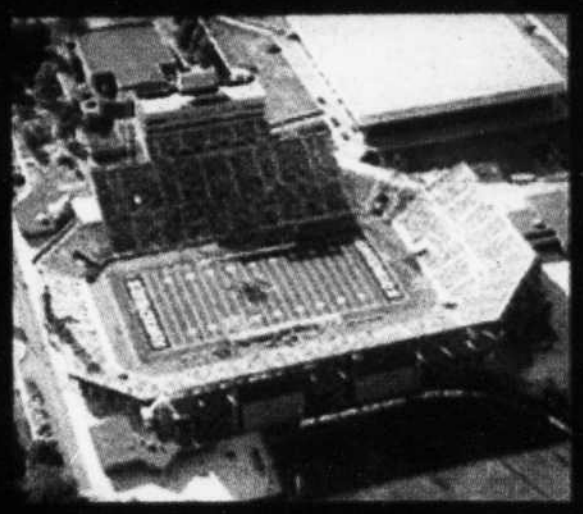

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