

**NEW ORLEANS BOWL
MIDDLE TENNESSEE VS APPALACHIAN STATE**

NEW ORLEANS -- While the future of Appalachian State interim coach Mark Ivey is unknown, Mountaineers players left no doubt about how much they appreciated the way he handled his lone game in charge, carrying him off the field in triumph.

"It was an honor," said Ivey, a former Appalachian State player who took over when Scott Satterfield left for Louisville two weeks ago. "I'm glad that the kids think enough about me to want to celebrate with me and have fun because I love every one of those kids. They are exceptional."

Appalachian State receiver Malik Williams passed for two touchdowns on trick plays, quarterback Zac Thomas caught a scoring pass and threw for three more, and the Mountaineers routed Middle Tennessee 45-13 in the New Orleans Bowl on Saturday night.

Cameron Peoples had a 63-yard touchdown run for the Mountaineers (11-2), who gave Ivey, a former Appalachian State player, a victory in what might have been his only chance to coach his alma mater.

Ivey -- who'll soon be replaced by North Carolina State offensive coordinator Eli Drinkwitz -- looked determined to make his lone game as interim coach a memorable one.

"I had a blast," Ivey said, noting that one of his "core values" is to have fun amid the work of preparing to play. "If you can't make this fun, if you can't love what you do, there's no purpose of being here."

Appalachian State even tried a surprise onside kick in the first half -- and it might have worked if Clifton Duck had not snatched the high-bouncing ball just before it had covered the mandatory 10 yards for a legal touch by the kicking team.

That was one of few things that didn't go right for the Mountaineers, but Middle Tennessee (8-6) could not take advantage of it. Three plays later, Tae Hayes' interception and 27-yard return set up Appalachian State on the Blue Raiders 41. Soon after, Williams connected on his second TD pass, which the former high school QB threw to Thomas after taking a pitch from running back Darrynton Evans on a reverse.

"Coach Ivey's done a phenomenal job with this team," Thomas said. "We owe a lot to that man."

Middle Tennessee's Brent Stockstill was 25-of-37 passing for 330 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions.

"We couldn't get open. We couldn't protect. We couldn't run the ball. For an offense, that's tough sledding," Middle Tennessee coach Rick Stockstill said. "You've got to give them credit. They didn't give us much breathing room."

APPALACHIAN AIR

Williams' first TD passing came after he caught a backward pass from Thomas near the right edge of the field and launched a 30-yard strike down the sideline to Thomas Hennigan.

Thomas threw his first touchdown pass in the final minute of the first half, when he found Henry Pearson from a yard out. In the second half, he hit Corey Sutton for TDs of 17 and 11 yards. He finished 15 of 24 for 177 yards, but also was intercepted twice by safety Reed Blankenship.

THE TAKEAWAY

Middle Tennessee: Brent Stockstill was under constant pressure from an Appalachian State defense that has allowed fewer than 16 points per game. He was hit as he threw on his second interception and sacked six times. The Blue Raiders couldn't get their ground game going, either, finishing with just 62 yards rushing.

Appalachian State: The Mountaineers finished with 448 total yards, including two runs of more than 60 yards. Evans' 62-yard run set up Thomas' first TD pass and stood as the third-longest run in New Orleans Bowl history until it was eclipsed by Peoples' blazing scoring run down the right sideline. Evans finished with 108 yards.

QUOTABLE

"What he has done, what he has meant to this program, what he has meant to this team, words don't do him justice," Rick Stockstill said of his quarterback son, whose college career ended with the bowl game. "He's just a phenomenal human being, fantastic player, fantastic leader. I'm just very, very humbled to be his coach -- and now I get to be his dad."

Final	1	2	3	4	T
MTSU	3	3	7	0	13
APP	0	24	14	7	45

Scoring Summary -----

	MTSU	APP
FIRST QUARTER		
MTSU FG 5:15		
Crews Holt 24 Yd Field Goal		
7 plays, 39 yards, 3:18	3	0
SECOND QUARTER		
APP FG 13:48		
Chandler Staton 22 Yd Field Goal		
10 plays, 72 yards, 4:34	3	3
APP TD 10:06		
Thomas Hennigan 30 Yd pass from Malik Williams (Chandler Staton Kick)		
3 plays, 44 yards, 1:01	3	10
APP TD 6:38		
Zac Thomas 8 Yd pass from Malik Williams (Chandler Staton Kick)		
7 plays, 41 yards, 3:02	3	17
APP TD 0:45		
Henry Pearson 1 Yd pass from Zac Thomas (Chandler Staton Kick)		
8 plays, 85 yards, 2:01	3	24
MTSU FG 0:00		
Crews Holt 33 Yd Field Goal		
6 plays, 59 yards, 0:45	6	24
THIRD QUARTER		
APP TD 11:06		
Corey Sutton 17 Yd pass from Zac Thomas (Chandler Staton Kick)		
10 plays, 75 yards, 3:54	6	31
APP TD 8:01		
Cameron Peoples 63 Yd Run (Chandler Staton Kick)		
2 plays, 64 yards, 0:46	6	38
MTSU TD 5:56		
Isiah Upton 43 Yd pass from Brent Stockstill (Crews Holt Kick)		
5 plays, 75 yards, 2:05	13	38
FOURTH QUARTER		
APP TD 13:06		
Corey Sutton 11 Yd pass from Zac Thomas (Chandler Staton Kick)		
6 plays, 66 yards, 2:11	13	45

Team Stats	MTSU	APP
First Downs	24	23
Total Yards	392	448
Total Plays	72	60
Avg Gain Per Play	5.4	7.5
Net Yards Rushing	62	233
Rushes	35	34
Yards Per Rush	1.8	6.9
Net Yards Passing	330	215
Comp-Att	25-37	17-26
Yards Per Pass	8.9	8.3
Times Sacked	6	0
Yds Lost To Sacks	-33	0
Interceptions	2	2
Punts	3	1
Punt Average	39.3	60.0
Penalties	12	8
Penalty Yards	89	50
Fumbles	0	2
Fumbles Lost	0	1
Possession	33:31	26:29

Individual Stats

RUSHING						
MTSU	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
44 Chaton Mobley	10	45	4.5	27	0	
21 Tavares Thomas	6	13	2.2	7	0	
1 Terelle West	2	10	5.0	8	0	
24 Zack Dobson	3	3	1.0	4	0	
12 Brent Stockstill	14	-9	-0.6	11	0	
APP	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
3 Darrynton Evans	14	108	7.7	62	0	
6 Cameron Peoples	3	69	23.0	63	1	
12 Zac Thomas	9	28	3.1	13	0	
26 Marcus Williams Jr.	6	25	4.2	6	0	
19 Daetrich Harrington	2	3	1.5	2	0	

PASSING							
MTSU	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
12 Brent Stockstill	25	37	330	8.9	1	2	140.6
APP	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
12 Zac Thomas	15	24	177	7.4	3	2	149.0
14 Malik Williams	2	2	38	19.0	2	0	589.6

RECEIVING						
	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
87 Gatlin Casey	6	64	10.7	20	0	
8 Ty Lee	4	55	13.8	28	0	
21 Tavares Thomas	4	51	12.8	20	0	
9 Isiah Upton	2	47	23.5	43	1	
83 Jimmy Marshall	2	39	19.5	28	0	
37 Patrick Smith	3	39	13.0	27	0	
44 Chaton Mobley	3	36	12.0	25	0	
1 Terelle West	1	-1	-1.0	0	0	
APP	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
2 Corey Sutton	8	78	9.8	17	2	
11 Jalen Virgil	2	58	29.0	35	0	
5 Thomas Hennigan	3	45	15.0	30	1	
14 Malik Williams	1	22	22.0	22	0	
12 Zac Thomas	1	8	8.0	8	1	
89 Devin Papenheim	1	3	3.0	3	0	
88 Henry Pearson	1	1	1.0	1	1	