

# Hollis: Indians must be physical against MTSU

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Coming on the heels of that dramatic victory, the Indians face the Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders, who lead the Sun Belt with a 6-2 record overall and a 4-1 record against conference foes.

The Indians are overflowing with confidence following their win over Idaho and will head into Murfreesboro with a new starting quarterback, a hard-hitting defense that is just beginning to come together, and a winning attitude.

Junior quarterback Tommy Miller, who engineered a 98-yard scoring drive late in the fourth quarter Saturday and went from third-string to hero, will start for the first time in his career against Middle Tennessee. Miller's four of five passing, 20 yards rushing and touchdown in relief of the ineffective freshman starter Elliot Jacobs changed last week's game entirely.

In his press conference Monday, Indians Head Coach Joe Hollis said that the ASU game plan would not change because of Miller's presence under center.

"We're not going to handicap Tommy in any way," Hollis said. "He demonstrated to me that he can run the play action pass, he can get us into the right runs. He can throw the ball accurately."

Arkansas State wide receiver James Hickenbotham earned Sun Belt Conference Special Teams Player of the Week honors for his 93 yard kickoff return for a touchdown, which is tied for seventh in school history. Hickenbotham also caught passes for 47 yards and a touchdown against Idaho, finishing the day with 250 all-purpose yards.

The Indian defense took a big step



PHOTO BY JOSEPH MIDKIFF

**Junior wide receiver and kick return specialist James Hickenbotham is brought down by Vandal linebacker Patrick Libey (40). Hickenbotham pulled in five catches for 47 yards and a touchdown. He also had 146 return yards including a 93-yard kickoff return for a touchdown. The Indians travel to Murfreesboro, Tn. to take on the Sun Belt Conference leaders Middle Tennessee State.**

forward last week, hitting harder and playing more inspired than they have all season, but this Saturday they will face a significant challenge.

The Blue Raiders possess the top-rated offense in the conference, averaging 494.4 total yards and 37.8 points per game.

After holding Idaho to 125 yards rushing, the Tribe will try to slow down Doak Walker candidate Dwone Hicks, who has piled up 799 yards on the ground this season.

Hicks is 26th in the nation in rushing, averaging 6.0 yards per rush on the season, and is also the Sun Belt leader in scoring with 12.2 points per game.

The Blue Raiders' have another potent scoring threat in All-America candidate wide receiver Kendall

Newson.

Newson is 35th in the nation with 78.2 receiving yards per game and 23rd in the nation with 6.38 catches per game. He caught 12 passes for 181 yards and a touchdown against New Mexico State last week and was named the Sun Belt Offensive Player of the Week.

Middle Tennessee's formidable offense will be meeting an ASU defense that is just beginning to peak.

Sophomore Indian linebacker Les Echols was named the Sun Belt Conference Defensive Player of the Week after totaling 11 tackles with an interception and a fumble recovery against the Vandals. Echols leads the team in tackles and interceptions and is eighth in the conference in tackles.

Along with cornerback Chris Jones, Echols makes up one half of a dynamic sophomore duo who will lead the Indian defense for the next several years.

Jones ranks fourth on the team in tackles with 41 and is tied with Echols for the interception lead.

"We feel good about the way we are playing defensively, and, more important that that, I think our players feel good about the way they are playing," Hollis said. "I would venture to say that contact on the defensive side of the ball was as good as it's been since I've been here. We were pretty physical. We put our hat on people Saturday."

Despite the struggles earlier in the season, the Indians have begun to turn things around and find their rhythm.

## Miller to start Saturday

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Oh! How 12 plays and 98 yards can change things.

For junior quarterback Tommy Miller it took that plus three years to hit the spotlight.

With just over seven minutes to play in the game Saturday, Miller trounced onto the Indian Stadium turf to take command under center. This was the first time Miller had actual game experience. He threw 4-5 for 5 yards and ran for six yards one of which included the game winning option keeper that put the ball in the endzone.

"I wasn't thinking how long it was. I came out on that first play, I looked down, and I noticed that I was in my own endzone. I was thinking, 'Be smart with the football,'"

Offensive coordinator Phil Davis saw the team as a whole find a second wind when Miller stepped in for the inconsistent Elliott Jacobs at quarterback.

"When he went in the whole football team, not just the offensive guys the defensive guys too, thought we really had a chance," Davis said. "He went in and they really encouraged him to go on in the game and we felt it was kind of gave us a lift which we needed at that time."

Fifth-year Head Coach Joe Hollis wasted no time at the end of ASU's 34-31 victory over Idaho to announce that Miller was going to call the signals for the Tribe the following weekend against Sun Belt Conference favorite Middle Tennessee State.

Hollis wants Miller to know that he is doing a fine job but not to let all of the recognition go to his head.

"When people put their arm around you and tell you how good you are, kick them in the shins. Because, those are the same people that will be getting on you when you don't play well," Hollis said.

After spring practice Miller was slated as the Indians' # 1 quarterback and was quickly bumped down to # 3 when freshmen Josh Driscoll and Jacobs stepped on campus.

"As a player you always feel you need to be in. It's Coach Hollis' decision and I respect that. It's his job. He's the one making a living doing this," Miller said.

Driscoll went down in the game against North Texas with a broken collar bone and will be out for the remainder of the season.

Miller has spent all of his playing time on special teams mostly holding field goals and extra points. He started all 11 games last season and five in 1999.

Coming from Mountain Home where he was coached by his father in high school, Miller is now bright-eyed and bushy-tailed as he will make the first start in his college football career.

"This is why everybody plays. They want to be here. I like the attention. You can't let it go too far though. You try to be focused and know what your goal is.

# Lady Indians roll to easy win in exhibition home opener



Photo by Brian Rodriguez  
**Chiquita Tucker blocks out as Casie Lowman guards against a Williams Baptist Eagle in yesterday's exhibition game held in the Convocation Center. The Lady Indians will face the Houston Flight Monday night at the Convo.**

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ASU's game plan is to jam it down their opponent's throat inside. They executed well but often could not finish.

"I thought our positioning was good. I thought our shot selection was good. I think the thing that was most disappointing was we just didn't finish a lot of shots," Head Coach Brian Boyer said.

The game plan still managed to work against Williams Baptist Wednesday night at the Convocation Center in an exhibition contest.

The Lady Indians won 80-38 and scored as many points inside as Williams did from the whole floor.

Williams' front court was no match for the outstanding play of junior forward Jolie McKeirman.

McKeirman led the team in rebounding last year with 8.8 rebounds per game and was second on the team in points per game with 11.4.

In the game, McKeirman went 6-14 from the field with 19 points and 12 rebounds.

In the first half, the rest of the Lady Indians, led by Rae-Anne Smith who was 5-9 from the field and 2-3 behind the arc, scored 33 points to build a commanding 47-18 lead at halftime.

McKeirman led the Indians, who dominated the boards, with eight of the Tribe's 30 first half rebounds.

The Indians complimented their inside game nicely by shooting 50 percent from three-point range in the first half and 41.7 percent for the entire game behind the arc.

In the second half the Indians cruised, and added 33 more points to end the game with the 42 point win over Williams Baptist.

McKeirman cooled off in the second half going 2-6 from the field and added another free throw.

The Lady Indians did a good job defensively forcing Williams Baptist to shoot just 17.9 percent from the field.

Boyer was pleased with his play but says his team has a lot to work

on.  
"We certainly did a lot of positives, but by no means are we perfect. There is a lot of things that we can now go back and show on tape and correct and keeping getting better," Boyer said.

## Game Stats

ASU VS. WILLIAMS BAPTIST

### Assists:

Casie Lowman ASU-----4  
Amy Dixon-Pratt WBC---3  
Amber Abraham ASU---3  
Agne Sagaikaite ASU---3

### Shooting Percentage:

ASU-----28-71 39.4%  
WBC-----10-56 17.9%



### Points:

Jolie McKeirman ASU---19  
Rae-Anne Smith ASU---18  
Z Humphries ASU---11  
Casie Lowman ASU---10  
Chiquita Tucker ASU---9  
Amber Abraham ASU---7  
Ashley Hardin WBC---7

### Rebounds:

Jolie McKeirman ASU---12  
Chiquita Tucker ASU---9  
Z Humphries ASU---8  
Brooke Benson WBC---7

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