

***2018 TENNESSEE STATE  
FOOTBALL***



***PRESS CLIPPINGS***

## ***Austin Peay picked second, Tennessee State sixth and Tennessee Tech last in OVC***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - July 23, 2018*

Austin Peay's football team was predicted to finish second, Tennessee State was sixth and Tennessee Tech last in the Ohio Valley Conference this season, according to a vote by the league's head coaches and sports information directors released Monday.

The predictions were released at the OVC Football Media Day at Embassy Suites at the Airport.

Austin Peay coach Will Healy, who is headed into his third season, welcomed the lofty expectations for a team that snapped a 29-game losing streak last year.

"I think it's awesome that Austin Peay has expectations," said Healy, whose team was picked to finish last in the 2017 preseason poll. "That's something that we knew would happen. I don't know if anybody would've guessed that it would happen this fast. I'm not concerned about that. I'm concerned about how this team works and are they as hungry as they were a year ago and do we pay the price to win games like we did a year ago?"

The Governors, who finished second with an 8-4 overall record and 7-1 OVC mark in 2017, received four of the 18 first-place votes.

The prediction is an improvement for TSU (6-5, 2-5), which finished seventh in 2018. Tech (1-10, 1-7) was last.

"That's just on paper," TSU coach Rod Reed said. "We've been picked sixth before and we won 10 games. We've been picked sixth before and we won six games. So (the predictions) are just for the media, and we don't take too much stock in that."

First-year Tech coach Dewayne Alexander was not surprised by his team being picked last.

"The perception of our team is that we're the ninth team in the league," Alexander said. "We should be — we were 1-10 last year. It's based off last season. The thing about our players and our coaches is that we don't see ourselves as the ninth-place team. They're confident that they

can win football games. Our coaches feel like our guys can line up and compete every week."

Jacksonville State, the 2017 champion, was picked first again.

Austin Peay also placed a program record five players on the Preseason All-OVC team. That matched Jacksonville State for the most players on the team.

Governors sophomore quarterback Jeremiah Oatsvall, a former Brentwood Academy standout, was joined on the first team by offensive tackle Kyle Anderton, a Vanderbilt transfer from Station Camp, linebacker Gunnar Scholoto from Pope John Paul II, offensive guard Ryan Rockensuess and defensive lineman Jaison Williams.

"This is humbling, this is awesome, but honestly we're just here to work, here to play and try to win the OVC championship this year," Anderton said. "Last year was great, but we still have the chance to do another great thing this year, so we're really excited about that."

Oatsvall completed 80 of 141 passes for 1,148 yards and seven touchdowns while rushing for 453 yards and six scores last season. Scholoto was third in total tackles per game (8.2) and Williams was third in sacks (9.5) in the OVC.

TSU placed three players on the team — wide receiver Steven Newbold along with defensive backs Vincent Sellers and Dajour Nesbeth.

Newbold was sixth in receiving yards per game (627 yards) and 10th in catches per game (3.1) last year. Nesbeth tied for third in passes defended (11) and Sellers (7) tied for 17th.

Tennessee Tech defensive lineman Tim Collins and punter Nick Madonia from Centennial also made the team. Collins led the conference in total tackles (8.8 per game) and Madonia was fourth in punting (40.1 yards) last year.

Also on the first team is former Rossview High running back Isaiah Johnson from Eastern Illinois.

### **PRESEASON ALL-OVC TEAM**

Offensive Player of the Year: Marquis Terry (RB), Southeast Missouri

Defensive Player of the Year: Marlon Bridges (DB), Jacksonville State

### **OFFENSE**

QB Jeremiah Oatsvall, Austin Peay  
RB Marquis Terry, Southeast Missouri  
RB Ladarius Galloway, UT Martin  
RB Isaiah Johnson, Eastern Illinois  
WR Alexander Hollins, Eastern Illinois  
WR Steven Newbold, Tennessee State  
TE Dan Paul, Eastern Kentucky  
C Tyler Scozzaro, Jacksonville State  
OG B.J. Autry, Jacksonville State  
OG Ryan Rockensuess, Austin Peay  
OG Darius Anderson, Jacksonville State  
OT Drew Forbes, Southeast Missouri  
OT Kyle Anderton, Austin Peay

### **DEFENSE**

DL Randy Robinson, Jacksonville State  
DL Jaison Williams, Austin Peay  
DL Aaron Patrick, Eastern Kentucky  
DL Kenney Wooten, Murray State  
DL Tim Collins, Tennessee Tech  
LB Zach Hall, Southeast Missouri  
LB James Gilleylen, UT Martin  
LB Gunnar Scholoto, Austin Peay  
DB Vincent Sellers, Tennessee State  
DB Marlon Bridges, Jacksonville State  
DB Mark Williams, Eastern Illinois  
DB Dajour Nesbeth, Tennessee State

### **SPECIALISTS**

K Cade Stinnett, Jacksonville State  
K Gabriel Vicente, Murray State  
P Nick Madonia, Tennessee Tech  
RS LJ Scott, Eastern Kentucky  
RS Peyton Logan, UT Martin

Preseason predictions (Voting by coaches and sports information directors)

1. Jacksonville State (14 first-place votes)
2. Austin Peay (4)
3. UT Martin
4. Eastern Illinois
5. Eastern Kentucky
6. Tennessee State
7. Southeast Missouri
8. Murray State
9. Tennessee Tech

## **5 things to know as Tennessee State football begins practice**

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - August 2, 2018*

Tennessee State will kick off its ninth football season under coach Rod Reed on Friday. The Tigers are coming off a 6-5 season overall and 2-5 in the Ohio Valley Conference.

Here are five things to keep an eye on as preseason practice gets underway:

### **Another quarterback battle**

Former Hillsboro standout Michael Hughes appeared to lock down the quarterback position last year when he unseated Treon Harris at midseason. While Hughes was able to hold onto the starting assignment for the remainder of the season, he finds himself engaged in another battle this year heading into his junior season. Minnesota transfer Demry Croft actually took more snaps with the first team in spring practice and is “dead even,” Reed said, in competition with Hughes as the starter at this point.

### **Putting the ball in Steven Newbold’s hands**

Wide receiver Steven Newbold proved to be one of the best playmakers in the FCS last year. He averaged 18.4 yards per catch, which ranked first in the OVC and 22nd nationally. The junior from Carol City, Fla., who was named to the Preseason All-OVC team, had 34 catches and has been promised by the coaching staff he will get the ball a lot more often this season.

### **Putting it on the line**

TSU has established a reputation for developing some of the best offensive linemen each year in the OVC. Many of them attract attention from NFL scouts. Two linemen to keep an eye on this year are left tackle Chidi Okeke and center Thomas Burton. Okeke, 6-foot-6, 315 pounds, is a transfer from LSU who started the last 10 games last season. Burton, 6-2, 305, is headed into his fourth year as a starter.

### **Running back shuffle**

The top three running backs — Sabree Curtis, Seth Rowland and Andrew Knox — from last season return. Earl Harrison, who rushed for 475 yards as a freshman in 2016, is also back after missing most of last season with an injury. The Tigers also signed Te’Kendrick Roberson from Ellsworth (Iowa) Community College, who went through spring practice and is actually listed as the starter heading into preseason practice.

### **New defensive leader**

Middle linebacker Chris Collins ended his career last season after starting 32 consecutive games. He led the Tigers in tackles three consecutive seasons. Replacing Collins is a tall order. The candidates include Illinois transfer Christion Abercrombie, who is currently at the top of the depth chart, senior Blair Edwards, who started on the weak side last year, along with freshmen Jahsun Bryant from Cane Ridge and Terry Straughter.

## ***How Tennessee State football ended up with six running backs who could start***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - August 7, 2018*

It helps that Tennessee State's running backs have good balance; otherwise they might be tripping over themselves.

The Tigers are loaded in the backfield.

They finished third in rushing (140.0 yards per game) in the Ohio Valley Conference last season, but that wasn't good enough for coach Rod Reed.

He told the returning players they had to be better while also adding several in the recruiting process.

Here are the six players who could end up as the starting running back:

### **DeMarco Corbin**

Corbin, who transferred from Illinois State to Pima Community College in Tucson, Ariz., in 2017, is the biggest back in the bunch at 6-foot, 225 pounds.

He saw action in every game as a redshirt freshman at Illinois State and led the Redbirds with four rushing touchdowns and was second on the team with 494 yards rushing.

Reed said he wanted a big, physical back capable of gaining tough yards at key points in the game, and Corbin has been identified as that player.

### **Sabree Curtis**

The junior from Fairburn, Ga., led TSU in rushing last season with 439 yards on 91 carries, but did not score.

Curtis had more starts (6) than any other back in 2017.

Curtis' versatility is his greatest asset. He has the best hands of any of the running backs and is even capable of lining up at receiver.

### **Earl Harrison**

The Tigers lacked explosiveness last season after Harrison was injured in the fourth game.

The Memphis native is equipped with a combination of speed and power.

As a freshman in 2016, Harrison rushed for 475 yards on 73 carries. His 6.5-yards-per-carry average led the Tigers. He rushed for 168 yards against Southeast Missouri and 113 yards and a touchdown against Bethune-Cookman.

### **Shawn McColley**

McColley is a redshirt freshman from Chattanooga who will remind TSU fans of the Tigers' second-all-time leading rusher, Javarris Williams (2005-08).

He is a patient runner and tough to bring down once he gets going. He is a volume-carry back who gets better the more he gets the ball.

McColley had an outstanding spring and has continued to impress in preseason practice.

### **Te'kendrick Roberson**

Roberson, a transfer from Ellsworth Community College in Iowa Falls, Iowa, and originally from Winter Haven, Fla., is currently at the top of the depth chart. He rushed for 816 yards and scored five touchdowns at Ellsworth last season.

He provides an explosive element that was missing in TSU's backfield last season. He signed with TSU after also being recruited by Florida A&M, Florida Atlantic, Florida International, South Alabama and Western Kentucky.

### **Seth Rowland**

The former Ravenwood star burst onto the scene last year when he rushed for a total of 234 yards on just 41 carries (5.7-yard average) in the first four games. His 59-yard run in the season-opener against Georgia State was the longest of the season for the Tigers.

Rowland, a junior, replaced Curtis as the starter in three of the last four games in 2017 and finished the season as the second-leading rusher with 421 yards and two scores on 94 carries.

Rowland is currently listed No. 2 on the depth chart.

Coaches say Rowland, a star in the weight room, is the hardest working back on the roster.

## **10 local high school players who will impact Tennessee State**

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - August 13, 2018*

Tennessee State coach Rod Reed places a high priority on recruiting home-grown talent.

In his eight-year tenure, Reed has done a good job of adding Midstate-area players to the Tigers roster.

TSU currently has a total of 23 players from the Midstate.

Here are 10 former local high school players who will make an impact on TSU this season:

### **Jahsun Bryant**

More than any other position, Reed, a former TSU middle linebacker, likes to identify linebackers as potential starters early in their careers. He tends to start middle linebackers especially early so that they can lead the defense for several years.

Bryant, a former Cane Ridge star, appears to be the next player to fill that role.

The 6-foot-2, 220 pound freshman, who recorded 108 tackles and two sacks as a high school senior, already has seen time with the starters in preseason practice. Even if he's not with the first unit, he will see action in the season opener Sept. 1 against Bethune-Cookman in the John Merritt Classic.

### **Ray Coggins**

Coggins from Wilson Central caught the coaching staff's eye last season as a redshirt freshman defensive back and has been a preseason standout this season.

"Ray Coggins is going to be a stud," Reed said after the Tigers' first preseason scrimmage Saturday. "He's a football junkie. We've just got to get him lined up and going in the right direction and knowing what the defense is all about, and I think he's going to be a great one."

### **Kenyon Garlington**

The freshman defensive back from Brentwood Academy and younger brother of former TSU receiver Weldon Garlington probably will see action in the first game. He is simply too talented to keep on the sidelines. If he doesn't get any snaps in the secondary, he probably will show up on special teams as a return specialist.

### **Nick Harper Jr.**

Harper, the son of former Titans cornerback Nick Harper Sr. and a former Ravenwood standout, transferred from Missouri State last season and sat out because of NCAA transfer rules. He is listed as the starting cornerback at the position vacated by Terrell Bonds.

### **Micheal Hughes**

The former Hillsboro star is trying to hold onto the starting quarterback position he earned in the middle of last season as a sophomore.

He completed 86 of 162 passes for 1,304 yards with 15 touchdowns and six interceptions, but is fighting off Minnesota transfer Demry Croft for the starting assignment this season.

### **Khalil Jones**

The only local player in the potential starting mix on the offensive or defensive lines is Jones, a sophomore from Stratford. The 6-1, 310 pounder played in a total of four games last season and recorded a sack and forced fumble against Virginia University Lynchburg.

"He came into camp a little bit overweight, but he's very explosive," Reed said. "Once he rounds out in shape, he's going to be an impact player for us up front."

### **Chris Rowland**

The Ravenwood graduate is poised to emerge as one of the Tigers' top receivers.

He has seen plenty of action and started in a total of seven games over the past two seasons while standing out primarily as a return

specialist. At times he's been one of the best in the Ohio Valley Conference.

Rowland has a total of 33 career catches for 414 yards and 33 carries for 170 yards and will be counted on more heavily on offense this season.

"Chris Rowland is very explosive," Reed said. "He's matured in the offense, and we expect big things out of him."

### **Seth Rowland**

The former Ravenwood running back and Chris Rowland's older brother went from walking on last season to starting three of the last four games. He finished as the Tigers' second-leading rusher with 421 yards on a team-high 94 carries and scored twice. Rowland is listed as the second-team running back and is battling Te'kendrick Roberson, a junior-college transfer, for the starting assignment.

### **Lawrence Segree II**

After redshirting last season the former Brentwood Academy receiver and son of former TSU star receiver Lawrence Segree I, has been the most consistent receiver in preseason practice. His pass-catching skills will keep in him the mix of a deep talent pool of receivers. Segree has become a favorite target for both quarterbacks.

### **Josh Trueheart**

After spending last season as a redshirt freshman quarterback, the former Stratford standout has moved to tight end, where his chances of playing are much greater. At 6-5, the lanky Trueheart is a big target and already getting lots of balls thrown his way. He is one of four tight ends in the mix.

"He's a big kid that can run and has soft hands," Reed said. "He's got to improve on his run blocking a little bit and assignment knowledge, but he could be a really, really good one."

## ***How this Tennessee State QB went from being a plumber to tossing TD passes***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - August 20, 2018*

At this time last year, Cameron Rosendahl was more concerned with toilets than touchdowns and faucets than first downs.

The Acworth, Ga., native's career at Georgia Military College had ended with a severe shoulder injury. He had hung up his pads and already embarked on a career as a plumber. That came after he worked at a convenience store.

"I got an opportunity to work construction with a neighbor, and I was a plumber because it was (a) little bit more pay and I wanted to learn something because I never knew if I was going to play football again," Rosendahl said. "I wanted to learn a trade. So I was plumbing for new construction in Atlanta, Nashville and some other places."

When Rosendahl got home from work, he routinely heard from one college coach who still wanted him to play football.

It was Tennessee State assistant Antonio Bradford, who recruits the Georgia area and never gave up on trying to sign Rosendahl, who threw for 2,341 yards and 17 touchdowns with only two interceptions as a senior at Kell High School in Marietta, Ga., in 2014.

"It was nice to keep hearing from (Bradford) because I didn't have anyone that wanted me to play football because I tore both my shoulders up," Rosendahl said.

While cutting pipe at work one day, Rosendahl nearly severed a finger. It made him start thinking more seriously about accepting Bradford's offer.

"If I hadn't listened to Coach Bradford and taken a shot, 20 years from now I would've looked back on it and been upset that I didn't take this opportunity," Rosendahl said.

After accepting the scholarship offer, Rosendahl, who has two years of eligibility remaining, never asked who was starting at quarterback for the Tigers.

He was aware that Treon Harris had transferred from Florida but had no idea that Harris had earned the starting assignment only to lose it at midseason in 2017 to Michael Hughes.

He also didn't know that Demry Croft had transferred from Minnesota after the season and was locked in a battle for the starting job in the spring with Hughes. Harris moved to receiver in the spring.

"I didn't know anything about the quarterback situation," Rosendahl said. "I didn't want to know because I'm a competitor, so I'm going to compete either way."

Rosendahl is one of four former Georgia Military College players on TSU's roster. Major Bellamy Jr., one of his favorite receivers from GMC, is one of them.

Rosendahl has jumped into the mix with Croft and Hughes for the starting job.

"All of those guys are competing every day," coach Rod Reed said. "Rosendahl came in a little behind the other guys, but he's done a good job of catching up and learning the offense. I would have no problem whatsoever putting him in a game."



## **Tennessee State vs. Bethune-Cookman: 5 things to watch**

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - August 29, 2018*

The 20th annual John Merritt Classic moved from the midseason back to its traditional date serving as Tennessee State's season opener at 6 p.m. Saturday. The Tigers, coming off a 6-5 season, host Bethune-Cookman from the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference at Nissan Stadium. TSU has won eight of the past 10 games in the series. Here are five things to watch:

### **Who will start at QB?**

Former Hillsboro standout Micheal Hughes became the starting quarterback when he replaced Treon Harris at midseason in 2017, but Demry Croft, who transferred from Minnesota in January, got more repetitions with the first team in the spring and preseason. Cameron Rosendahl, a transfer from Georgia Military College, also is in the mix and expected to backup Croft.

### **All eyes on Steven Newbold**

Whoever ends up starting at quarterback will have one of the top receivers in FCS to throw the ball to with Steven Newbold coming off a big sophomore season. Newbold had 34 catches for 627 yards. His 18.4-yards-per-catch average was the best in the OVC. The coaching staff promised Newbold he will have more balls thrown his way this season.

### **Replacing veteran defensive duo**

The defense lost a lot when middle linebacker Chris Collins and weak-side linebacker Justin North graduated. Collins started in 33 games and recorded 268 career tackles, and North started in 28 games and had 109 career tackles. The only returning starter is Blair Edwards on the strong side. Two key FBS transfers — Christion Abercrombie from Illinois in the middle and Mekhi Brown from Alabama on the outside — will be counted on to replace Collins and North.

### **Crowded backfield**

TSU finished third in the OVC in rushing (140.0 yards), and the top four running backs from last season — Sabree Curtis, Seth

Rowland, Andrew Knox and Earl Harrison — are back. Even with so much production back, the staff recruited over the returnees, bringing in Te'kendrick Roberson, a transfer from Ellsworth (Iowa) Community College, who promptly moved to the top of the depth chart.

### **Missing Lane Clark**

Over the past two seasons, crossing the opponent's 40-yard line gave the Tigers confidence that they probably would get at least a field goal out of a drive with two-time All-American Lane Clark at kicker. He was a combined 30-of-43 on field goals in his junior and season seasons with a total of five from at least 50 yards. Junior Mitchell Boudreaux will get the first shot at replacing Clark. If he struggles, Antonio Zita, a freshman from Lincoln County, and Kaleb Mosley, a freshman from Montgomery, Ala., will get their shots.

### **TENNESSEE STATE (0-0) VS. BETHUNE-COOKMAN (0-0)**

Where: Nissan Stadium

When: 6 p.m. Saturday

Radio: 102.1-FM

## ***TSU 34, Bethune-Cookman 3: 5 things we learned on Chris Rowland's big night***

*Michael Murphy - The Tennessean - September 1, 2018*

Tennessee State enjoyed an impressive start to its 2018 campaign, coasting to a lopsided season-opening win over Bethune-Cookman in the 20th annual John Merritt Classic on Saturday at Nissan Stadium.

Here are five things we learned from the Tigers' 34-3 victory:

### **Career night for Chris Rowland**

Preseason All-OVC selection Steven Newbold had a quiet night, finishing without a single catch for TSU. Junior wide receiver Chris Rowland more than made up for it, though.

Rowland isn't the Tigers' biggest target, but the 5-foot-8, 170-pounder was certainly their most effective, posting career highs in both receptions (7) and yards receiving (154).

The junior speedster also made his presence felt on special teams, returning four punts for 64 yards, including a 39-yard, third-quarter burst.

### **Micheal Hughes capitalizes**

Minnesota transfer Demry Croft may have gotten the start at quarterback, but it was junior Micheal Hughes who stole the show.

Hughes, a former Hillsboro standout, jumpstarted the Tigers' offense late in the first quarter, putting together consecutive scoring drives to spot TSU a 14-0 advantage after one.

The 6-foot-2, 230-pound Hughes fired a 20-yard touchdown pass to DeVon Johnson for the game's first points before leading the team on a four-play, 39-yard drive capped by a 1-yard touchdown run from DeMarco Corbin.

Hughes, who completed 11 of 18 passes for 170 yards, also scored on a second-quarter

touchdown run to spot the Tigers a 21-3 halftime advantage.

### **Defense dominates**

Hughes and Rowland certainly did their parts, but TSU's defense was the biggest reason why Bethune-Cookman suffered its worst FCS defeat since 2009.

In addition to holding the Wildcats to just nine first downs and 244 total yards, the Tigers also tallied five sacks and forced two turnovers on downs and hauled in a pair of interceptions — Dajour Nesbeth returned the second 39 yards for the game's final score.

TSU also forced six three-and-outs and held Bethune-Cookman to just 2 of 13 (.153) on third-down conversions.

### **Backfield by committee**

As expected, the TSU utilized a number of running backs Saturday.

Junior college transfer Ta'Kendrick Roberson led a crowded backfield with 13 carries for 67 yards, while running backs Shawn McColley, Earl Harrison, DeMarco Corbin and Seth Rowland combined to rush 16 times for 93 yards.

As a team, the Tigers finished with 201 yards on the ground — well above their 140.1-yard average from a season ago.

### **Penalty problems**

TSU was the most-penalized team in the OVC last season, averaging 9.5 for 85.3 yards. It didn't affect the outcome, but the Tigers actually eclipsed those numbers on Saturday. They finished with 11 penalties for 89 yards. Bethune-Cookman committed just three for 25 yards.



## ***Tennessee State football vs. Jackson State: 5 things to watch***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - September 5, 2018*

Tennessee State will go for its seventh consecutive win over Jackson State Saturday (6 p.m.) in the 29th annual Southern Heritage Classic at the Liberty Bowl.

TSU (1-0) held on for a 17-15 win in 2017 after a 47-yard JSU (0-1) field goal attempt veered wide left with two seconds left on the clock.

Here are five things to watch:

### **Reed going for win No. 51**

Rod Reed, TSU's third-winningest coach of all-time, picked up his 50th victory with the Tigers' 34-3 win over Bethune-Cookman last Saturday in the John Merritt Classic. It improved Reed's nine-year record to 50-42. The coaches ahead of him on the all-time list are John Merritt (1963-83) 174-35-7 and Henry Kean (1944-54) 93-15-3.

### **Rowland hopes to keep rolling**

Former Ravenwood standout Chris Rowland, the most versatile player on TSU's roster, had a career-best performance against Bethune-Cookman when he gained 226 all-purpose yards. The junior had a career-best seven catches and 154 receiving yards. He added a total of 64 yards on four punt returns and eight rushing yards on one carry.

### **Two quarterback attack**

TSU passed for more than 300 yards in only one game in 2017 when Micheal Hughes threw for 331 at Tennessee Tech. The Tigers opened this season with 324 passing yards, but Hughes needed help. The former Hillsboro standout came in off the bench and completed 11-of-18 passes for 170 yards while Minnesota transfer Demry Croft started and completed 8-of-14 passes for 154 yards. Croft played eight series and Hughes played five. Reed said they will continue to share snaps this week.

### **Newcomers already making an impact**

Croft wasn't the only new player on the roster who already has earned a starting assignment. Six other newcomers also are on the first team. Middle linebacker Christian Abercrombie, a transfer from Wisconsin, recorded five tackles against Bethune-Cookman. Defensive end Mekhi Brown, a transfer from Alabama, recorded a solo tackle. Running back Te'kendrick Roberson, a transfer from Ellsworth (Iowa) Community College, rushed for a team-high 67 yards on 13 carries. Raekwon Allen, a transfer from Georgia Military College, started at offensive guard. Kicker Antonio Zlita, a freshman from Lincoln County, was 2-for-2 on field goals and 4-for-4 on extra points and punter Kaleb Mosley averaged 39.2 yards on six punts.

### **Mumme's offense fails to meet expectations**

When former Kentucky coach Hal Mumme was hired as Jackson State's offensive coordinator at the end of last season, expectations were raised for the Tigers' attack. Mumme, who also had head coaching stints at Iowa Wesleyan, Valdosta State, Southeastern Louisiana, New Mexico State, McMurry and most recently Belhaven, was once considered an offensive genius. JSU's offense, however, never got going against Southern Miss. Mumme used two quarterbacks — Derrick Ponder, a transfer from Navarro College (Texas) who started, and Jarrad Hayes, a backup last year. Ponder was 12-of-29 passing for 62 yards and Hayes was 7-of-8 for 56 yards and a TD.

## ***Tennessee State football game at Hampton canceled because of Hurricane Florence***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - September 11, 2018*

For the second consecutive week Tennessee State's football game has been canceled due to inclement weather.

The Tigers will not play Saturday at Hampton in Virginia due to Hurricane Florence, which is headed for the Eastern seaboard.

TSU's game last Saturday against Jackson State in the Southern Heritage Classic in Memphis was canceled because of lightning strikes in the area.

"We are very disappointed that this has happened back-to-back weeks, but you can't control Mother Nature and we're just prayerful for the areas that are going to be hit by what seems like is going to be a humdinger of a storm," said TSU athletics director Teresa Phillips.

Phillips said the game will not be rescheduled.

She did say, however, that an effort is being made to find an opponent to play on Oct. 27, which is listed as a bye on the Tigers' schedule.

"We're scrambling to look and see if we can get another game," Phillips said. "Because that's disheartening for your staff and especially for those young men on the team. It's tough to practice and not have an opportunity to play a game. We're trying to be creative and try to find something to fill our schedule."

Coach Rod Reed said earlier in the day that he did not expect the game to be played.

"I've been looking more at the Weather Channel than I have at film," Reed said.

TSU opened the season on Sept. 1 with a 34-3 win over Bethune-Cookman in the John Merritt Classic at Nissan Stadium.

"It's frustrating because you come off of your

home opener and you feel like you played decently," Reed said. "There were some things definitely we were looking forward to seeing if we could clean up against Jackson State, but that didn't unfold. Now we've still got to keep our physicality, so we're going to go out in practice, put the pads on and do a little work on the fundamentals."

TSU is scheduled to open OVC play at Eastern Illinois on Sept. 22 at 2 p.m.

## ***Tennessee State football at Eastern Illinois: 5 things to watch after 20-day layoff***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - September 18, 2018*

After a 20-day layoff, Tennessee State returns to the football field Saturday to open the Ohio Valley Conference portion of the season at Eastern Illinois (2 p.m.).

The Tigers (1-0) second scheduled game on Sept. 8 in the Southern Heritage Classic in Memphis against Jackson State was canceled due to lightning in the area.

Then the third game scheduled for Sept. 15 at Hampton was canceled because of the threat of Hurricane Florence.

Here are five things to watch:

### **Tigers time off**

Having a week off is usually welcomed by most college football programs. But not at the second week of the season. Having two weeks off wouldn't be welcomed by any team. TSU coach Rod Reed said even though the Tigers opened the season with a 34-3 win over Bethune-Cookman, there were problems that needed correcting. He was looking forward to doing that in the second game. At this point after these extremely unusual circumstances, Reed's biggest problem will be finding a way to get his players to snap back into playing condition after such a long layoff. On the other hand, the players may be so eager to play again that they will be champing at the bit.

### **Injury report looks good**

TSU came out of the season-opener with only a few minor injuries. Most of the Tigers were expected to be able to play in the Jackson State game. Even those with minor bumps and bruises have healed at this point and the Tigers are as healthy as they have been since the spring.

### **No quarterback controversy**

Quarterback Demry Croft, a transfer from Minnesota, played in eight series against Bethune-Cookman and former Hillsboro standout Michael Hughes played in five. But Reed insists there is no controversy at the position. The plan is to continue to use both quarterbacks. Croft started against Jackson State. A decision on who will start this week, Reed said, has not yet been made.

### **Slow start for EIU**

While TSU has regretted not getting to play its last two games, Eastern Illinois probably wouldn't mind a reset on the entire season. The Panthers are 0-3, which is their worst start since going 0-3 in 2015. Two of their losses came against FBS opponents — Arkansas (55-20) and Illinois State (48-10). EIU bounced back in 2015 by winning their next five games, which included a 51-20 route over TSU. EIU has claimed six straight wins over TSU. The Tigers' last win in the series came in 2011 (18-17) at the Panthers' O'Brien Field.

### **Looking for another game**

As a result of the two cancellations, TSU athletics director Teresa Phillips confirmed Tuesday she is still trying to come up with an opponent for the Tigers to add to their schedule. TSU has a scheduled bye on Oct. 27. If Phillips is unable to find another opponent, the Tigers will play only nine regular season games.

## ***Tennessee State football 41, Eastern Illinois 40: 5 things we learned in Tigers' comeback win***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - September 22, 2018*

Tennessee State overcame a 21-point deficit at Eastern Illinois on Saturday to win its Ohio Valley Conference opener 41-40.

Earl Harrison scored the winning touchdown on a 4-yard run with 3:06 remaining.

The Tigers' Justin Cullpepper then blocked a 48-yard EIU field goal attempt with 1:39 left to secure the victory.

Here's what we learned:

### **TSU shook off the rust**

The Tigers (2-0, 1-0) were obviously rusty and out of sync after having not played in three weeks. Their second scheduled game against Jackson State in Memphis and third game at Hampton were canceled because of inclement weather.

After falling behind 24-3 early in the second quarter Saturday, TSU outscored EIU 38-16 the rest of the way.

The Tigers committed three turnovers in the first two quarters and were extremely sloppy on special teams.

The offense kept it from being any worse than it was. Former quarterback Treon Harris, now a wide receiver, took a pitch on the final play of the first half and tossed an 18-yard TD to Chris Rowland to keep the Tigers in it and trailing 24-13 at intermission.

Rowland finished with a team-high eight catches for 82 yards along with a 42-yard punt return, but left the game with an injury and was taken to the hospital.

### **Two-quarterback attack working**

TSU, which opened with a 34-3 win over Bethune-Cookman, has relied on two quarterbacks — Demry Croft and Michael Hughes.

Croft has started both games. After getting off to a slow start, he completed 14 of 20 passes for 217 yards and two TDs Saturday.

Hughes provided the offense with a needed spark when he came in late in the first quarter. He engineered an 82-yard scoring drive that resulted in TSU's first points — a 37-yard field goal by Antonio Zita.

Hughes finished 13-of-21 for 114 yards.

### **Everyone lends a hand**

Not only did three different players — Croft, Hughes and Harris — throw passes for TSU, the Tigers involved a lot of other players in the passing game.

A total of nine receivers — Rowland, Harris, DeVon Johnson, Steven Newbold, Te'kendrick Roberson, Aaron Cauthen, Mile Cavitt, Al-Malik Moore and Major Bellamy — had catches.

### **Zita is perfect in two games**

There naturally was some concern in the kicking game with All-America place kicker Lane Clark having graduated. But Zita, a freshman from Lincoln County, is 5-of-5 on field goal attempts so far.

### **Snapping EIU's streak**

TSU had lost six consecutive games to the Panthers. It was the Tigers' first win in the series since 2011.

## ***Tennessee State at Vanderbilt football: Five things to watch***

*Adam Sparks and Mike Organ - The Tennessean - September 27, 2018*

Tennessee State and Vanderbilt meet for the third time, needing a win for different reasons.

TSU (2-0) is coming off a dramatic 41-40 comeback win over Eastern Illinois and looking for a signature victory over its neighboring SEC foe. The Tigers have nothing to lose.

Vanderbilt (2-2) lost 37-14 to South Carolina in its SEC opener, and it needs to beat TSU to stay on schedule for a possible bowl bid. The Commodores need a rebound win before heading to No. 3 Georgia next week.

Here are five things to watch:

### **Take the ball away from Tigers**

Vanderbilt ranks second in the SEC and seventh nationally in takeaways, including five fumble recoveries and four interceptions. That trend must continue if Vanderbilt is going to win SEC games, so it needs to be upheld against TSU. Brothers Dare and Dayo Odeyingbo have made takeaways their specialty, combining for one interception, one forced fumble, two fumble recoveries and one defensive TD.

### **Vanderbilt needs to regain ground game**

Running the ball against an FCS foe won't solve the Commodores' offensive issues, but it should help boost confidence in the ground attack. Vanderbilt averaged 187 rushing yards against MTSU and Nevada but only 93 against No. 8 Notre Dame and South Carolina. This should be a 200-yard performance, regardless of who's carrying the ball. If Vanderbilt pulls away, Jamauri Wakefield, Ke'Shawn Vaughn and Khari Blasingame each will get their chance.

### **TSU loaded with FBS transfers**

TSU won't likely be intimidated facing the Commodores because there are 11 FBS transfers on the Tigers' roster. They include former Alabama defensive end Mekhi Brown,

who played in the 2017 national championship game, quarterback Demry Croft, who started the final six games at Minnesota last season, middle linebacker Christion Abercrombie, who played in 11 games at Illinois last year, and offensive tackle Chidi Okeke, who spent his first two seasons at LSU.

### **Target Kalija Lipscomb over and over**

In 2015, Trent Sherfield had 16 receptions for a school-record 240 yards against OVC member Austin Peay. Don't expect Kalija Lipscomb to approach those numbers, especially against the TSU secondary. However, Kyle Shurmur can target Lipscomb as many times as needed, which should help him retain the top spot in the SEC in receptions. Lipscomb's 34 catches rank No. 1 in the conference, and his 306 receiving yards are No. 5.

### **Size-wise, the lines match up**

The biggest challenge many FCS teams face in matching up with FBS opponents comes across the offensive front. Lower division teams are usually much smaller and lighter. TSU is an exception. The Tigers are nearly as big as Vanderbilt. TSU's starting five linemen average 301.6 pounds while Vanderbilt averages 309.4.

## ***Tennessee State falls to Vanderbilt: 5 things we learned***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - September 29, 2018*

Tennessee State came close to claiming another win over an FBS opponent on Saturday, but fell short when Vanderbilt scored on a long touchdown pass late.

Vandy's Kalija Lipscomb beat TSU cornerback Dajour Nesbeth 68 yards down the left sideline for the go-ahead TD with 6:20 remaining, and the Commodores held on for 31-27 victory.

TSU beat Georgia State (17-10), an FBS team, in its 2017 season opener.

Here are five things we learned from Saturday's game:

### **Tigers threatened again late**

TSU took a 27-24 lead when Demry Croft threw his third TD pass with 8:02 left to Andrew Knox from 1 yard out. It capped a 10-play, 72-yard drive.

After Vandy moved back in front 31-27, Croft got TSU all the way back down to the Commodores' 15. The Tigers' offense stalled at that point and turned the ball over on downs.

### **Harris enjoys return to Vanderbilt Stadium**

TSU's versatile Treon Harris has a knack for playing well at Vanderbilt. In 2014 he was a freshman quarterback for Florida when he threw for 215 yards, rushed for 49 and ran for two TDs in a 34-10 win.

Harris is now a wide receiver at TSU and had another big game Saturday. His 31-yard TD catch from Croft late in the second quarter gave the Tigers a 13-7 lead. He finished with a team-high eight catches for 109 yards.

### **Croft ends QB shuffle**

In TSU's previous two games, Croft shared series at quarterback with former Hillsboro standout Micheal Hughes. Hughes had relieved Croft in the first quarter in each game.

On Saturday, however, Croft played so well that he stayed in the entire game. He completed 11 of 15 passes for 125 yards and two TDs to lead the Tigers to a 13-10 halftime lead.

Croft finished 22-of-31 for 269 yards and was TSU's leading rusher with 41 yards on nine carries.

"We normally roll two quarterbacks in there, but (Croft) had the hot hand and we thought that his escapability was a little better and gave us a better chance today," coach Rod Reed said.

### **Tigers came up with big picks**

While Croft played well, TSU's defense gave Vanderbilt quarterback Kyle Shurmur fits early. The Tigers picked Shurmur off twice in the first quarter. That matched the total number of interceptions Shurmur had thrown in his previous four games.

Freshman linebacker Terry Straughter picked off the first pass, which ended a Vanderbilt drive at the Tigers' 33.



# ***How will TSU football replace injured Christion Abercrombie on Saturday at Austin Peay?***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - October 5, 2018*

Tennessee State and Austin Peay are coming off tough losses. It should make for an interesting match-up when the two rivals meet in Clarksville on Saturday (6 p.m.).

The Tigers (2-1, 1-0 OVC) came close to upsetting Vanderbilt before losing 31-27 last Saturday. Austin Peay (2-3, 0-2) put up a good fight against OVC power Jacksonville State before allowing the Gamecocks to pull away late for a 48-32 victory.

Here are five things to watch:

## **Tigers missing Christion Abercrombie**

TSU will be without its defensive leader Christion Abercrombie, a middle linebacker who suffered a serious head injury at Vanderbilt.

Abercrombie, a transfer from Illinois, has been listed in critical condition since undergoing emergency surgery at Vanderbilt University Medical Center on Saturday night. He has shown some slight signs of improvement.

Abercrombie recorded five tackles in the first half of the Vandy game and is the Tigers' second-leading tackler with 18 on the season..

Freshman Terry Straughter from Opa-locka, Florida, will replace Abercrombie in the lineup.

TSU coach Rod Reed said Abercrombie, a sophomore, had been mentoring Straughter. Still, replacing Abercrombie won't be easy.

"We depended on (Abercrombie) to make all the checks and do a lot of things and we were a little sloppy (Tuesday). It may have been the worst defensive practice that we've had all year. But I think those guys are going to come around. We met a little bit and they understand the gravity of what's going on."

Slaughter's first action came last week when he replaced Abercrombie after the injury. On his first play Straughter intercepted a pass, which stopped a Vandy drive deep in Tigers' territory. He went on to record three assisted tackles, including one for a loss.

"Terry was one of the guys that Christion had talked to a lot about playing that position," Reed said. "That's the kind of guy (Abercrombie) was; he always shared information with the guy behind him and wanted everyone to excel."

## **Governors' rushing attack**

Austin Peay led the OVC in rushing last season and is still near the top of the league. The Governors are ranked second in the OVC and 15th nationally (241.8 yards per game).

After serving a two-game suspension, Kentel Williams has rushed for an average of 108.7 yards in last three games. Dual-threat quarterbacks Jeremiah Oatsvall (51.0 yards) and JaVaughn Craig (37.0) are the next two leading rushers.

## **A heated rivalry**

The series between the schools located less than 50 miles apart has become among the most intense on both team's schedules.

Many of the players know each other. There are 29 players from the Midstate on Austin Peay's roster and 22 on TSU's.

The Governors snapped the Tigers' five-game win streak in the series last season and spoiled their homecoming by claiming a 21-17 victory.

## **Rowland returns**

TSU's second-leading receiver Chris Rowland (15 catches, 236 yards, 1 TD) will be back in the lineup after missing last week's game with a bruised chest he suffered late in the game against EIU. Rowland has been the Tigers' most explosive offensive player. He is also the leading punt returner (21.2 yards).

## **Governors are hungry**

Austin Peay is coming off back-to-back losses for the first time since opening the 2017 season with a 26-14 loss to Cincinnati and a 31-10 loss to Miami (Oho). Before last week's loss to Jacksonville State the Governors fell to UT Martin 37-7.

## ***Austin Peay 49, Tennessee State 34: 5 things we learned from Austin Peay's first OVC win***

*Michael Curtis - Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle - October 6, 2018*

CLARKSVILLE — After dropping two straight games against OVC opponents, Austin Peay (3-3, 1-2) is officially in the Ohio Valley Conference win column. APSU found its groove on Saturday with a 49-34 win over Tennessee State (2-2, 1-1) in Fortera Stadium.

The Governors' 49 points are a school record for the most points scored in a game against TSU. The previous record was 40, set the last time they met at Fortera on Nov. 5, 2016.

"We know how talented TSU is and how well-coached they are, and we knew it would be a battle," Austin Peay coach Will Healy said. "I thought our kids responded. 49 points against a great defense and 6-for-6 in the red zone with no turnovers is a big deal."

Here are five things we learned:

### **Govs get first OVC win**

Offense came early and often for Austin Peay, and Jeremiah Oatsvall led the way. The sophomore quarterback was 7-for-15 passing, throwing for 189 yards and one touchdown. He added 76 rushing yards on nine carries and two touchdowns on the ground. The Govs forced TSU to fumble six times — recovering four — although most of those turnovers appeared to be caused by mishandled snaps. TSU quarterback Demry Croft fumbled three times.

"We want to be ball hawks," middle linebacker Gunnar Scholato said. "We want to win the turnover battle and it starts with practice. This week, I think we had six or seven balls in the turnover can, which is a lot, and I think it translated to the game very well."

Scholato finished with a game-high 17 total tackles, including seven solo tackles.

### **Bigger than football**

Before the game began, Austin Peay and Tennessee State met at midfield for a brief moment of silence to honor Tigers' linebacker Christian Abercrombie, who suffered a severe head injury last week against Vanderbilt.

"After practices Coach Healy always says, 'There's more to life than football,'" Oatsvall said. "He (Abercrombie) was just going out there and playing his heart out and tragically that happened to him. Knowing that at any given time it can be your last play and you have no idea just makes it more important to go out every day and give it your all."

### **Attendance Record Set**

Saturday's matchup against TSU marked the first game off a three-game road trip and Austin Peay fans showed up in bunches to welcome the Govs back. Combined with the huge crowd TSU brought, an attendance record of 12,201 was set at Fortera Stadium. The previous record was 9,428 against Southeast Missouri on Oct. 21, 2017.

### **Kentel Williams returns, again**

Austin Peay star running back Kentel Williams went down with an injury in the third quarter of last week's game against Jacksonville State, but the junior returned on Saturday. His impact on the ground was felt immediately as he gave the Govs their first touchdown with a 15-yard run. He followed that up with a 3-yard touchdown run in the second quarter. Williams finished with 74 rushing yards on nine carries.

### **Chris Rowland's career night**

Tennessee State wide receiver Chris Rowland made his return after missing last week's game against Vanderbilt. At the end of the first quarter, Rowland caught a 23-yard touchdown reception from Croft to give the Tigers their first score. Toward the end of the second quarter, he caught a 65-yard pass from Croft to give him his second 100-yard receiving game of his career. He finished with 11 receptions for a career-high 179 receiving yards, and three touchdowns.

## ***Christion Abercrombie injury: TSU players honor teammate with tribute before & during game***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - October 6, 2018*

Tennessee State's football players included their injured teammate Christion Abercrombie in their thoughts and prayers throughout the week and on Saturday night carried his jersey onto the field with them.

Team captains Michael Hughes and LaQuaris Cook brought Abercrombie's blue No. 6 jersey to midfield for the coin toss for the game at Austin Peay's Fortera Stadium, which the Governors won 49-34.

It was their way of paying tribute to Abercrombie, a transfer from Illinois who suffered a severe head injury in last week's game at Vanderbilt.

Coach Rod Reed waited to tell his players about the tribute until just before the captains left the sideline for the coin toss.

The two teams and coaching staffs then came together at midfield to pray for Abercrombie's recovery.

"The prayer meant a lot because we see Christion as our brother," TSU linebacker Dante' Ferguson said. "We might not be blood, but we built a bond over the summer as teammates. We feel like we're losing a part of our team; our brother. My message to him is, 'I love you and just keep fighting bro; we're all here for you.'"

The prayer was Austin Peay coach Will Healy's idea.

"Will texted me earlier in the day and said that they would like to do it and I thought it was a great gesture," Reed said. "You never can have too many prayers for a situation like that."

After the coin toss Abercrombie's jersey was draped over his shoulder pads and placed on top of an equipment trunk on the sideline at the 50-yard line.

### **Big crowd for a big game**

The largest crowd (12,201) to ever see a game at Austin Peay showed up. The previous record was 9,428 last year against Southeast Missouri.

Some TSU fans wore white T-shirts with No. 6 in blue and "We Love Our Tiger Boys And Family — Forever (with praying hands)" printed on the back.

Several TSU's players had "6" written on the tape on their wrists.

Helmet decals honoring Abercrombie have been ordered and will be worn by TSU's players for the remainder of the season. The decal with a blue background and white lettering includes Abercrombie's No. 6 and "AB," which is his nickname.

Abercrombie, a sophomore middle linebacker from Atlanta, remains in critical condition at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. He was rushed there during the first half of the Vanderbilt game and underwent emergency surgery.

### **Aristocrats play tune for Abercrombie**

At halftime the TSU Aristocrat of Bands paused during a raucous performance to play "Jesus Loves You" in Abercrombie's honor.

It was fitting. Abercrombie's mother, Staci, said earlier in the week that Christion loves music, especially gospel. He has responded, she said, since the surgery while listening to some of his favorite songs.

The band's master of ceremonies Jerry Davis said on the public address system, "If you believe prayer changes things, make some holy noise!"

After the performance Davis asked fans to keep Abercrombie and his family in their prayers.

The band then cranked up the volume again for its final number.

### **Defense struggles without Abercrombie**

There was no denying the defense was hobbled without its leader, especially early. Abercrombie was TSU's second-leading tackler (18) after the first three games.

"It was kind of hard out there without (Abercrombie)," safety Vincent Sellers said. "He makes all the calls, gets us lined up right. We tried to go out there and fight as hard as we could for him and I just feel bad that we couldn't come up with the W for him."

The 49 points scored by Austin Peay were the most the Governors have ever scored against TSU and the most they've scored in an OVC game since scoring 55 in a win over UT-Martin in 1996.

TSU's offense didn't do the defense any favors. The Tigers had five turnovers (four fumbles, one interception) mostly deep in their own territory, three of which led to Austin Peay touchdowns.

Three of the Tigers' top four tacklers — Sellers, Cook and Dajour Nesbeth — in the first half are defensive backs.

Sellers (8) and Cook (8) finished as the leading tacklers with many of their stops coming downfield.

Austin Peay piled up 447 total yards, including 258 rushing.

Even under the difficult circumstances, Reed was disappointed after the loss.

"I did a poor job of getting this team prepared to play," he said. "We had too many turnovers. We didn't play Tennessee State defense, gave up too many yards in the rush game."

***Chrision Abercrombie injury: TSU players honor teammate with tribute before & during game (CONTINUED)*** Mike Organ - *The Tennessean* - October 6, 2018

**Replacement plays well**

Freshman Terry Straughter from Opa-Locka, Fla., made his first start Saturday, replacing Abercrombie.

He began a bit slow, recording three assisted tackles in the first half, but played better as the game went on. He finished with seven total tackles, including three solos and one for a loss.

"With the incident (to Abercrombie), everything came fast for me," Straughter said. "I had to get in the playbook a little more. I always try to stay ready, so I had to step up. I feel like from the mistakes, we're going to learn. Me being a first-time starter, I feel like I'll be more comfortable next week."

Straughter played for the first time in his career against Vanderbilt. He had an interception deep in TSU territory when he was sent in as a fourth linebacker on third down.

After Abercrombie left the game, Straughter moved to middle linebacker where he played the entire second half.

## ***TSU vs. Murray St.: 5 things to watch including the FCS' top receiver Chris Rowland***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - October 9, 2018*

After suffering back-to-back heartbreaking losses, Tennessee State will try to bounce back Saturday (1 p.m.) in a key Ohio Valley Conference match-up at Murray State.

The Racers (2-3, 2-0 OVC) are in second place in the league while TSU (2-2, 1-1) is locked in a four-way tie for third.

Here are five things to watch:

### **Rowland is the FCS' top receiver**

TSU junior Chris Rowland leads the FCS in receiving yards per game (138.3). The dynamic receiver from Ravenwood moved to No. 1 after recording 11 catches for 179 yards and three touchdowns against Austin Peay. That was the most receiving yards for a TSU player since Patrick Smith had 248 on nine catches against Murray State on Nov. 7, 2015. Rowland also is sixth nationally in punt returns (17.5 yards).

### **Taking care of the ball**

The Tigers have fumbled 12 times in the last three games. They have lost six of them. TSU had five turnovers (four fumbles, one interception) against Austin Peay. The Tigers have dropped to sixth in the OVC in turnover margin at minus-3.

### **Defense struggles without Abercrombie**

The Tigers did not play well defensively at Austin Peay (gave up 447 total offensive yards) without Christian Abercrombie. The sophomore middle linebacker suffered a severe head injury the week before against Vanderbilt, underwent emergency surgery at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and has been in critical condition since then. Abercrombie was the unit's second-leading tackler and made all the calls on the field. Freshman Terry Straughter got his first start replacing Abercrombie. He struggled early, but played better as the game went on and finished with seven tackles, including one for a loss.

### **Murray's record-setting rushing attack**

The Racers set a school-record single-game rushing record with 418 yards against TSU in 2000. Last week they broke that mark with 449 yards in a 48-41 win over Eastern Illinois. D.J. Pinick led the way with 180 yards on 22 carries and three TDs and wide receiver Rodney Castille added 142 yards on 13 carries and one TD.

### **Back to two QBs**

TSU is expected to go back to rotating quarterbacks after Demry Croft struggled against Austin Peay. Croft and Michael Hughes alternated through the first three games, but Croft played the entire way against Vanderbilt when he passed for 269 yards and three TDs in a 31-27 loss. Croft came unraveled, however, against Austin Peay when he lost a fumble, threw an interception in the end zone and was sacked three times in the fourth quarter.

## ***Murray St. 45, Tennessee State football 21: 5 things we learned***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - October 13, 2018*

After jumping out to a an 11-point lead Saturday, Tennessee State came completely unraveled at Murray State and lost 45-21.

It was the Tigers' (2-3, 1-2 OVC) third consecutive loss and the Racers' (3-3, 3-0) third consecutive win. The last time TSU lost three straight games was in 2015.

Here are five things we learned:

### **The defense collapsed, again**

Last week at Austin Peay, TSU had the game tied 21-all late in the first half. The Tigers' defense, however, disappeared at that point and gave up four touchdowns the rest of the way en route to a 49-34 loss.

Saturday's game unfolded much the same way.

TSU took a 14-3 lead late in the first quarter before Murray State came roaring back by scoring 35 unanswered points.

TSU's defense, which allowed 447 yards against Austin Peay, gave up 550 against Murray. The Racers had 38 first downs.

"They didn't do anything we hadn't prepared for and hadn't seen," TSU defensive back John Robinson IV said. "I just think as a defense, we have to be mentally tougher. We have to trust each other."

### **TSU has crucial penalties**

Adding to the defense's struggles were two pass interference penalties, which set up two of the three TDs Murray State scored in the second quarter.

The first was on Ronnie Killings and gave Murray a first down on the Tigers' 2. Murray scored two plays later to cut TSU's lead to 14-10.

The second was on Nick Harper Jr. and moved

Murray to the Tigers' 9. On the next play Drew Anderson tossed a TD pass to Armani Hayes to give the Racers a 24-14 lead.

"We had a lot of penalties that really hurt us, put us behind the chains," coach Rod Reed said. "We've got to get these guys coached up and we've got to fix the season."

### **Micheal Hughes gets first start at QB**

TSU's offense was riddled with injuries, which included starting quarterback Demry Croft (shoulder).

The Tigers also were without center Thomas Burton, tackle Justin Brooks and fullback Andrew Knox.

Former Hillsboro standout Micheal Hughes got his first start of the season at quarterback. Hughes started the last six games of last season.

Hughes completed a career-high 30-of-45 passes for 307 yards and two TDs. But he also threw interceptions on back-to-back possessions in the fourth quarter.

Chris Rowland, the top receiver in the FCS, was a bright spot again. He had 13 catches for 128 yards and one TD.

### **Third-down conversions**

TSU came into the game ranked 14th nationally in third-down conversion percentage at 46.9 percent.

The Tigers did well again on third downs converting on 6 of 12. But Murray State was even better.

The Racers, who were tied for 52nd nationally (38 percent), converted on 10 of 15.

### **Honoring Abercrombie**

Players from both teams paid tributes to injured TSU player Christion Abercrombie by wearing decals on their helmets. Abercrombie suffered a head injury in a game on Sept. 29 against Vanderbilt and is listed in critical condition at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

TSU's decal was a blue No. 6, his number, and "AB," which is Abercrombie's nickname. Murray's decal was a red No. 6 trimmed in blue.

Abercrombie's jersey was draped over his shoulder pads and placed on TSU's sideline.

Freshman Terry Straughter got his second consecutive start replacing Abercrombie. He recorded five tackles, including one for a loss. He also broke up a pass.



## ***Tenn. Tech at TSU football: 5 things to watch including new starting QB Micheal Hughes***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - October 17, 2018*

A couple of teams headed in the wrong direction will cross paths at 4:30 p.m. Saturday at Nissan Stadium when Tennessee Tech visits Tennessee State for the Tigers' homecoming.

TSU (2-3, 1-2 Ohio Valley Conference) lost its third straight game last week at Murray State 45-21.

Tech (0-6, 0-3) has lost its past nine games dating to last season. The Golden Eagles' last win came on Oct. 28, 2017 – against TSU, 30-26.

Here are five things to watch:

### **TSU riddled with injuries**

The Tigers have 17 injured players. They were missing six starters on offense and six on defense last week against Murray State.

Coach Rod Reed said he'd never had that many players hurt at one time.

The most significant injury is to starting quarterback Demry Croft, who will miss the remainder of the season after undergoing shoulder surgery.

It helps that Croft's backup, Micheal Hughes, has played a lot in the past, including starting six games last season.

"We feel good with Mike back there; we'll be OK," Reed said.

Hughes replaced Croft last week and threw for a career-high 30 completions on 45 attempts for 307 yards and two touchdowns. He also, however, threw interceptions on consecutive possessions in the fourth quarter.

On the season, Hughes has completed 61 of 99 passes for 668 yards with four touchdowns and two interceptions.

### **Disastrous defenses**

TSU's defense has been horrendous the past two games. The Tigers gave up a total of 997 offensive yards against Murray State (550) and Austin Peay (447). They also allowed Murray to convert on 10 of 15 third downs.

Tech ranks last in the FCS in scoring defense (54.3 points) and 122nd out of 124 FCS teams in total defense (557.2 yards).

The Golden Eagles have given up at least 70 points in two games, including last week's 70-38 beatdown at home to Southeast Missouri.

### **Unbalanced offense**

Reed said in the preseason he wanted TSU's offense to be balanced. He always has wanted a strong rushing attack complimented by a solid passing game.

The passing attack at the midpoint of the season is doing well, thanks in large part to receiver Chris Rowland, who leads the nation in receptions per game (9.8) and is second in receiving yards per game (135.8).

The rushing game, however, has fallen on hard times. The Tigers had just 63 rushing yards last week. They dropped to seventh in the OVC, averaging 147.4 rushing yards per game.

Leading rusher Te'kendrick Roberson averages only 45.8 yards per game.

"We've got to be more deliberate about running the football," Reed said.

### **Tech's winning streak**

The Golden Eagles have the longest losing streak in the OVC, but they also have a winning streak going, which they hope to extend Saturday. Tech has claimed three consecutive wins over TSU. Along with last year's victory, the Golden Eagles beat TSU 44-16 in 2016 and 30-24 in 2015.

### **Local kicker has been a bright spot**

While Tech fans haven't had much to cheer about, the play of former Centennial kicker Nick Madonia has been the exception. The senior leads the OVC in field-goal kicking, having connected on 10 of 13 attempts. He has kicked three field goals from at least 52 yards, including a 54-yarder at Utah State. Madonia also has made each of his 14 extra-point kicks.

## ***Mom of injured TSU player Christion Abercrombie sends message to team***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - October 20, 2018*

A special message was delivered to the Tennessee State football team from the mother of injured linebacker Christion Abercrombie before Saturday's homecoming game against Tennessee Tech at Nissan Stadium.

"We are sending our prayers of support to the TSU family at this homecoming game," Stacie Abercrombie said from the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, where her son is undergoing rehabilitation for a brain injury he sustained Sept. 29 in a game against Vanderbilt.

"I pray that the team has the confidence and level of play it needs in knowing that Christion is OK and they can go out and be victorious. We pray for the players, the coaches, the administrative team and we would just like for them to know that we stand with them. They stood with us while Christion was (at Vanderbilt University Medical Center) and we're standing with them in this homecoming game."

The Tigers responded by crushing Tech 41-14 in front of a crowd of 17,283.

It snapped a three-game TSU (3-3, 2-2 OVC) losing streak. Tech (0-7, 0-3) has now lost its last 10 games dating back to Oct. 28 of last season,

TSU players visited Abercrombie, a sophomore linebacker, regularly while he was at VUMC.

Quarterback Michael Hughes, who threw three touchdown passes Saturday, said the team was energized by the news that Abercrombie was continuing to improve.

"It's great to hear that he is still coming back along slowly and making a lot of progress," Hughes said. "It definitely motivates us to keep working. We'd had a rough last couple of weeks, but we're still working and pushing to get better. And today was great day to get headed back in the right direction."

Abercrombie was moved earlier this week to the intensive care unit at the Shepherd Center.

His move to Atlanta was a welcome transition because it showed he was improving. His condition had been upgraded from critical to stable and he had begun breathing on his own without the assistance of a ventilator.

Doctors at the Shepherd Center said Christion Abercrombie was "minimally conscious," which means he occasionally is able to follow a command and has some awareness of his environment.

Abercrombie's uncle Kevin Richardson and aunt Shawn Neason attended Saturday's game. Neason wore one of Abercrombie's No. 6 jerseys, and Richardson carried another one of his jerseys to midfield for the pregame coin toss.

TSU President Glenda Glover accompanied them.

Richardson then walked up and down TSU's sidelines holding the jersey up, encouraging the Tigers to play well.

TSU wore helmet decals with "AB," which is Abercrombie's nickname, and his number "6" on them.

Tennessee Tech's players wore No. 6 decals on their helmets.

### **Hughes hot from the start**

Hughes wasted no time punishing Tech's defense, which is among the worst in the FCS — ranked 110th against the pass (286.3 yards) and 124th in scoring (54.3 points).

He completed 22 of 27 passes for 318 yards with no interceptions and was not sacked.

Hughes' last TD pass, which went 20 yards to Treon Harris, put the Tigers up 34-0 early in the third quarter.

Cameron Rosenthal replaced Hughes late in the third quarter with TSU up 41-0.

### **TSU players return after losing parents**

Two of TSU's players — fullback Andrew Knox from Siegel and linebacker Ronnie Killings from Blackman — played despite having lost parents recently.

Knox's father died Oct. 12 and Killings' mother died Oct. 13.

"After the Vanderbilt game, emotionally we've had a lot of stuff going on," coach Rod Reed said. "Andrew Knox has got to bury his dad this week. Ronnie Killings has got to bury his mom this week. There are a lot of things that have been going on emotionally, tugging at this team."

Knox did not have a carry. Killings was the third-leading tackler with five stops and a sack.

### **Avoiding the shutout**

Tech avoided suffering its first shutout against an OVC opponent since 2007 by scoring two fourth-quarter TDs.

The first came when, after taking a pitch, running back Andrew Goldsmith threw a 12-yard TD pass to Melvin Holland Jr. with 8:54 left to play.

The second was 1-yard TD run by quarterback Bailey Fisher with 4:01 remaining.

## ***Tennessee State football at Southeast Missouri: 5 things to watch***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - October 31, 2018*

A win over Southeast Missouri last season assured Tennessee State of a winning record.

The Tigers (3-3, 2-2 OVC) are in a similar position again this season as they prepare to visit SEMO (6-2, 4-1) at 1 p.m. Saturday. TSU must win two of its last three games to secure another winning mark.

Here are five things to watch:

### **SEMO is soaring**

For the first time since 2014, SEMO is ranked nationally. The Redhawks cracked the Top 25 this week at No. 24 in the FCS Coaches poll and 25th in the STATS poll. SEMO is riding a four-game win streak, having beaten Tennessee Tech (70-38), Austin Peay (31-27), Jacksonville State (37-14) and UT Martin (56-33).

### **Running game needs work**

Coach Rod Reed is still disappointed about TSU's rushing attack. It has not lived up to his expectations. The Tigers are fifth in the OVC, averaging 147.7 yards per game, and do not have a running back ranked in the top 10 in the league. The Tigers are still waiting on a running back to step up and get the rushing attack going. The four they have relied on primarily have been less than impressive. That includes Te'kendrick Roberson (59 carriers, 287 yards, 0 TDs), Shawn McColley (27-167, 0), Earl Harrison (33-153, 2) and DeMarco Corbin (26-91, 5).

### **Brooks could be back**

The running game could get a boost if starting right tackle Justin Brooks is able to play. The 6-foot-5, 300-pound senior, who has started 25 games in his career, missed the last game with a leg injury. He has been able to practice this week but still is listed as questionable for Saturday's game.

### **Wide receiver tandem**

While TSU's running game has struggled, its receiving corps has taken off thanks to former Ravenwood standout Chris Rowland and Treon Harris. Rowland leads the FCS, averaging 9.2 catches per game, and Harris is sixth in the OVC, averaging 5.2 catches. They've both come a long way. At this point last season, Rowland had 11 total catches and Harris was playing quarterback.

### **Redhawks takeaways**

SEMO is second in the FCS in turnover margin at plus 1.9. The Redhawks have come up with 22 turnovers (14 interceptions, eight fumbles) while giving up only seven (one fumble, six interceptions). This could mean trouble for TSU, which has not done a good job of holding onto the ball. The Tigers are ranked 81st at minus-.33. They have lost seven fumbles and thrown four interceptions.

## ***Tennessee State football loses to Southeast Missouri 38-21: 5 things we learned***

*Mike Organ - The Tennessean - November 3, 2018*

Tennessee State lost for the fourth time in the last five games Saturday when the Tigers fell to No. 24 Southeast Missouri 38-21 in Cape Girardeau, Mo.

The Tigers (3-4, 2-3 OVC), who were coming off a bye week, lost to Vanderbilt, Austin Peay and Murray State in that stretch. They beaten Tennessee Tech in their last game.

SEMO (7-2, 5-1), meanwhile, stretched its winning streak to five games.

Here are five things we learned:

### **An uphill challenge**

The Tigers now must win their last two games — vs. No. 10 Jacksonville State (Nov. 10) and UT Martin (Nov. 17) — to avoid posting their second losing record in the last seven seasons. The last losing record (4-6) came in 2015.

TSU will only play nine games after having two cancellations due to inclement weather.

SEMO clinched its first winning record since 2010.

### **It happened in a hurry**

The Redhawks, who eased to a 3-0 lead after the first quarter, scored three touchdowns in less than eight minutes in the second quarter. Two of their TDs came on their first four offensive plays of the quarter. The third TD — an 8-yard pass from Daniel Santacaterina to Marquis Terry — put SEMO up 24-7 with 6:25 left in the first half.

“We came out ready to play and matched some of the things they were doing, which we thought that they would do,” TSU coach Rod Reed said. “Then we had a couple of misfits with the linebackers and gave up a couple of big plays.”

### **TSU blows chance to rally**

The Tigers, trailing 24-14, opened the second half with a 69-yard run by Te’kendrick Roberson, which was TSU’s longest run of the season and put the ball on the SEMO 6.

Three plays later, however, Micheal Hughes tossed an ill-advised pass into the flat that was picked off by Justin Swift and returned 44 yards. It was only Hughes’ third interception this season.

SEMO went up 31-14 seven plays later when Santacaterina tossed his third TD pass.

TSU managed get the ball deep into SEMO territory two more times and failed to score. A second interception by Hughes ended another one of those drives as well.

“We always talk about turning the ball over; that was one of the keys to game, don’t turn the ball over,” Reed said. “They got 14 points off of turnovers. Anytime you do that on the road, you aren’t going to be very successful. Especially when you’re playing the No. 24 team in the country.”

### **Special teams breakdowns**

Poor play on special teams cost TSU early, including:

- A muffed punt return by Chris Rowland, which backed the Tigers up to their own 10.
- A blocked 51-yard Antonio Zita field goal attempt on TSU’s first drive.
- Kaleb Mosely’s 19- and 27-yard punts, which both set up TD scoring drives for SEMO.
- A holding penalty on Blair Edwards that wiped out a 37-yard kickoff return by DeVon Johnson.

The special teams finally recovered when 6-foot-6 Malik Abdul-Haqq blocked a 40-yard SEMO field goal attempt late in the first half.

### **At least the rushing game came to life**

TSU’s offense has struggled. The running game, in particular, has been anemic.

That changed Saturday when Roberson and Earl Harrison provided the rushing attack with a boost.

Roberson rushed for a 137 yards on just 13 carries and Harrison had 105 yards on 11 carries. The last time TSU had two backs finish with 100 rushing yards in the same game was Oct. 2, 2010 against North Carolina A&T (Dante’ Thomas 186 yards, Preston Brown 145).

The Tigers finished with a season-high 253 rushing yards.