

TENNESSEE TOPPLES TOPPERS, 52-20

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The Tennessee Volunteers capitalized on six first half turnovers to top the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers 52-20 on Saturday at Neyland Stadium, making new head coach Butch Jones the first to start his Volunteer tenure 2-0 since Phillip Fulmer in 1992.

The Vol defense finished the game with seven turnovers and proved instrumental in staking them an early 31-3 lead as Tennessee was able to hold on from there, defeating the potent offense of Western Kentucky's new coach, Bobby Petrino.

Saturday marked the first time since the Nov. 10, 1984 game against Memphis that the Vols recorded seven turnovers in a game. Jones cited the architect of the Tennessee football to start his press conference.

"General Neyland Maxim Two: Play for and make the breaks and when one comes your way, score," said Jones. "I thought we were opportunistic in the first half. I was really proud of our kids, the coaching staff. Our kids were ready to play, but we still have a lot of work to do. I think it was a tremendous teaching opportunity for this football team, showing resilience, emotion of a game, the momentum, the back-and-forth and I thought our kids handled it well."

Justin Worley finished the game 11-of-19 with one touchdown and one interception while senior running back Rajion Neal led the way with 74 yards rushing and three touchdowns. Also leading the charge for the Volunteers on the ground was Marlin Lane who scampered for 97 yards on 16 carries and an additional touchdown. Johnathon Johnson reeled in a team-high 57 yards on two catches for the Vols while Josh Smith had three grabs for 36 yards.

Leading Western Kentucky were running backs Antonio Andrews and Leon Allen. Andrews rushed for 111 yards after coughing up a fumble in the first quarter. Allen combined a 54-yard rushing performance with 35 yards receiving and a touchdown to keep the Volunteer defense on it's heels at times in the game.

After a drive by Western Kentucky to start the game which only netted the Hilltoppers three points, junior Justin Coleman took advantage of a deflected ball and returned his interception 23 yards for the Vols first score of the game.

When it rained, it poured for Western Kentucky's offensive woes. On their next possession's second play, freshmen defensive back Cameron Sutton stepped in front of a Brandon Doughty pass for a 36-yard interception return for a touchdown, his first career interception and pick-six. Western Kentucky was unable to stop the bleeding when each of their following three possessions resulted in turnovers. The Volunteers capitalized on their shortened field position, scoring two more touchdowns and a field goal, resulting in a commanding 31-3 lead.

The Hilltoppers threatened that lead late in the second quarter, closing the gap to 31-17. A dropped pass on third down by Jason Croom and a blocked punt on the Volunteers resulted in a Western Kentucky touchdown just before the half.

A motivated Volunteer offense entered the third quarter and promptly marched down the field. Worley connected with Johnathon Johnson for 37 yards to put Tennessee in position for a Rajion Neal 1-yard touchdown run, giving the Vols a 38-17 lead.

Tennessee let up a field goal midway through the third quarter before Neal punched in his third TD of the game, a career best, to cap an eight play, 75 yard drive.

Neal's three touchdowns were most since Monterio Hardesty rushed for three against Kentucky in 2009.