

**June 7, 2010**

# **A “HUCKLEBERRY” NO MORE- NASHVILLE STORM 15- KENTUCKY WOLVERINES 7**



**NASHVILLE STORM CHEERLEADERS “SHOW THE COLORS”  
WITH STORM FB BLAKE HARRIS (TSU) IN HOT PURSUIT- PHOTO  
BY DONNIE BEAUCHAMP**



**ROOKIE STORM CB JEREMY WARE (CENTRE COLLEGE) TAKES DOWN WOLVERINE RB "MOONIE" CUNNINGHAM- PHOTO BY DONNIE BEAUCHAMP**



**“SUPER MARIO” MERRIWETHER (BETHEL COLLEGE) ROCKETS THRU THE WOLVERINES TO THE END ZONE ON A PUNT RETURN. THE RETURN, HOWEVER, WAS CALLED BACK ON A BLOCKING INFRACTION ON THE STORM- PHOTO BY DONNIE BEAUCHAMP**



**ROOKIE STORM QB CHRIS NICKSON (VANDERBILT) RUNS FOR A SHORT GAIN AGAINST THE WOVERINES- PHOTO BY DONNIE BEAUCHAMP**



**TOUCHDOWN!!!! ROOKIE STORM WR VONCE HENDERSON (OVERTON/TSU) SCORES THE NASHVILLE STORM'S 1<sup>ST</sup> TD OF 2010 ON THIS PASS FROM PHELLEPE HALL (MAPLEWOOD/TSU)- PHOTO BY DONNIE BEAUCHAMP**

## **SPECIAL TEAMS AND DEFENSE ARE THE KEY IN THE NASHVILLE STORM'S FIRST VICTORY IN 3 TRIES AGAINST THE KENTUCKY WOLVERINES**

**In both 2006 and 2007, the Nashville Storm had opened their season against the Kentucky Wolverines with similar unsuccessful results- in 2006, the Storm lost to the Wolverines 28-24 as the Wolverines went on to an undefeated regular season and a berth in the Minor League Football News' National Championship Game in Homestead, FL, and then in 2007, the Storm lost their season-opener again to the Wolverines 10-7 in**

**the Storm's first-ever game at Stratford High School's Buster Boguskie Stadium.**

**In both of those games, the Nashville Storm was playing their season-opener against a Wolverine team that had already played (and won) at least 2 games prior to their meeting with the Storm. So when the Storm booked a June 5 season-opening game (on just 2 weeks notice) against a Wolverine team that was already 3-0 in 2010 (and ranked as the #26 team in the nation by Semiprobs.com), there was a very good reason for Nashville Storm fans to be apprehensive.**

**On June 5, 2010, the Kentucky Wolverines would come to Nashville and be as good as advertised---- but this time the outcome of the game would be different. Behind a stifling Storm defense and some great special teams play, the Nashville Storm opened the 2010 season with a 15-7 victory over the Kentucky Wolverines.**

**The Storm won the opening coin-toss and immediately proceeded to drive 85 yards in 8 plays to take a 7-0 lead on a 35-yard TD pass from QB Phelepe Hall (Maplewood/TSU) to rookie Storm WR Vonce Henderson (Overton/TSU). No one knew it at the time, but that would be the Storm's only TD of the game.**

**Early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, the Wolverines drove to the Nashville Storm 15 before the Storm defense throttled the Wolverines on 3 straight plays before Wolverine K Casey Clark missed a 32-yard FG attempt, ending the scoring threat. But on the Wolverines' next possession, Wolverine RB "Moonie" Cunningham scored the Wolverine's only TD of the game on a spectacular 49-yard run on which Cunningham broke at least 4 Storm**

**tackles to tie the score at 7-7. The Storm would launch one more serious drive at the end of the first half as Phellepe Hall completed a 34-yard strike to Ivan Burley (TSU) followed by a 20 yard completion to Vonce Henderson, but a 15-yard penalty would take the Storm out of FG range, and Hall's deep ball into the end zone on the last play of the half fell incomplete.**

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter opened with the Storm throttling the Wolverines on their first possession and the Wolverines returning the favor by stopping the Storm offense after Phellepe Hall's 26-yard strike to TE Lloyd Washington (Allen University) got the Storm away from the shadow of their own end zone. Storm K/P Garrett Morgan's 46-yard punt, though, pinned the Wolverine offense back at the Wolverine 13-yard line. After the Storm defense held the Wolverines to 3 yards in 3 plays, Storm rookie Robert Lee blasted through the Wolverine line and blocked the Wolverine punt attempt through the back of the end zone, giving the Storm a Safety and a 9-7 lead at 4:20 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.**

**Then, on the ensuing free kick, Storm S Danarius Fowler (Pearl-Cohn/TSU) returned the ball 46 yards to the Wolverine 36-yard line. The Wolverine defense held the Storm, but Storm K/P Garrett Morgan (Central Arkansas) trotted back out on the field and nailed a spectacular 50-yard FG (that would have been good from 60) to raise the Storm lead to 12-7.**

**On the Wolverines' next possession, the Storm Defense held the Wolverines to 5 yards in 3 plays, forcing another punt---- into the waiting arms of speedy "Super Mario" Merriwether (Clarksville HS/Bethel College), who rocketed with the ball 67 yards to the end zone on probably the most**

**spectacular play of the night. However, the play was called back on a blocking infraction, giving the Storm the ball at the Storm 44. QB Phellepe Hall went to work, hitting Ivan Burley for 12 yards and then hitting Roger Moore (Glenclyff/Missouri Western) with a spectacular 40-yard strike down to the Wolverine 4-yard line on the first play of the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.**

**Then disaster struck---- Hall's next pass was intercepted by Wolverine S Michael Skees (Western Kentucky), and Skees returned the pick 93 yards before the Storm's Monroe Simmons and Phellepe Hall brought him down at the Storm 5-yard line. Then, though, would come the Storm D's finest hour of the night, as they held the Wolverines to just 3 yards on 4 running plays. Phellepe Hall trotted back onto the field and led the Storm on a 10-play, 96-yard drive down to the Wolverine 3-yard line, where Storm K John Gorecki nailed a 21-yard FG to raise the Storm lead to 15-7 with 4:57 left in the game.**

**On the Wolverines' next possession, Storm S DeQuinn Watford (THE St Ambrose University) intercepted a pass from Wolverine QB Brian Miller (Campbellsville University) to give the Storm back the ball. However, the Storm wasn't out of the woods yet. With less than a minute to play, the Wolverines recovered a Storm fumble at the Wolverine 32-yard line, and the Storm was hit with a double penalty after the play, giving the Wolverines the ball at the Storm 39. Wolverine QB Miller completed a 21-yard pass to give the Wolverines first down at the Storm 18, but Storm DT Danny Roberson sacked Miller on the very next play, forcing Miller to spike the football to stop the clock on the next play with 1.1 seconds left. Miller's last- chance throw was incomplete,**

**though--- ending the game with a 15-7 Nashville Storm victory.**

## **NOTES ON THE GAME:**

- **Going into the 2009 NAFL playoffs, there were 3 teams that the Nashville Storm had played at least twice in their history without gaining a victory: the Central Penn Piranha, the Kentucky Wolverines, and the Pensacola Lightning. That list is now down to one "Huckleberry" (The Pensacola Lightning). The Storm now have a 1-0 record to open the 2010 campaign, while the Kentucky Wolverines are now 3-1.**
- **The victory over the Wolverines was the 99<sup>th</sup> victory in the Nashville Storm's history (starting in 2002) against 17 losses. The Storm's first opportunity to gain their 100<sup>th</sup> lifetime win will come on Saturday night, June 26 at Stratford High School against another nationally-elite team---- the St Charles Cyclones. Nashville Storm Head Coach Charles Hunter is now 33-4 as the Nashville Storm Head Coach.**
- **While each team only scored one TD, the Nashville Storm outgained the Wolverines 331-178 in total offense and recorded 16 first downs to only 6 for the Wolverines. However, the Wolverines had just 1 turnover against 3 for the Storm.**
- **Nashville Storm K/P Garrett Morgan (Central Arkansas) started the 2010 season like a player who wants more All-American awards, nailing a 50-yard FG into the wind, booming one kickoff into the end zone and his other 2 well inside the 10, and punting 4 times for a 44.5 average (with none under 40 yards). Storm**

- backup K John Gorecki was also very good, hitting his first FG since the 2008 NAFL playoffs, kicking the Storm's only extra point, and showing increased range from past efforts on his one kickoff. The Storm snapper/holder tandem of Snapper Ben Brazzell (Riverdale/MTSU) and Holder Matt Overton (Gallatin/APSU), both rookies, was flawless.**
- **Kentucky Wolverine QB Brian Miller (Campbellsville) is a superb passer--- just the kind of QB that gave the Nashville Storm secondary fits in 2009. But in this game, the Storm secondary held Miller to 9 completions in 24 attempts for 105 yards, with 1 INT, no TDs, and a 34.2 passer rating. Storm CBs Cromwell Stewart (Father Ryan/UT Martin) and Jeremy Ware (Centre College) and Safeties Rod Higgins (MTSU) and DeQuinn "Charlie Wilson" Watford (THE St Ambrose University) all performed superbly.**
  - **The Storm used all 3 of their QBs in the game: Phellepe Hall (112.4 passer rating and 37 TD passes in 2009), Chris Nickson (Vanderbilt), and Matt Overton (Gallatin HS/APSU), but Hall, the incumbent All-American, took about 75% of the snaps. On the good side, Hall torched the Wolverines for 319 passing yards in just 27 pass attempts (15 completions); on the bad side, Hall threw 2 INTs, one of which was almost returned for a TD. The leading Storm receivers were WR Ivan Burley (TSU) with 5 catches for 115 yards, Roger Moore (Glenclyff/Missouri Western) with 4 catches for 73 yards, and Vonce Henderson with 3 catches for 75 yards and the game's only TD catch.**
  - **The Nashville Storm Defense had a superb night against a very offensively potent Wolverine team, especially in the second half, where the Wolverines recorded just 31 of their**

**178 yards of total offense (in fact, 98 of the Wolverines' 178 yards came on 2 plays, both in the first half). The Storm D racked up 10 TFLs including 4 QB sacks, 2 by Storm DT Danny Roberson. One of Roberson's sacks was a spectacular WWE-style "body slam" late in the first half, but the second sack, in the Wolverines last possession, was more crucial, as it ate up all but one of the seconds left on the clock in the game.**

- **The Wolverines played superb run defense throughout the night. The Storm's runners were led by Marcellus Tibbs (Hillsboro/Dodge CC) with 11 carries for 35 yards and Batman Martin (Hillwood/Mesa CC) with 4 carries for 15 yards.**