

MT Upends VASDA 86-67 in Exhibition Finale

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. --

Five Middle Tennessee players netted double figures and the Blue Raiders outrebounded their opponent for the second straight game in defeating VASDA Gold 86-67 in exhibition play.

Steven Jackson paced Middle Tennessee with 14 points and nearly missed a double-double with nine rebounds. In his first extended action of the year, Napoleon Rhodes turned in a double-double effort with 10 points and 13 boards. Keith Connor scored 13 points, Tommy Gunn added 12, and Marcus Robinson scored 10 to round out the Middle Tennessee players with 10 or more points.

VASDA was paced by Lamont Roland's 21 point, 10 rebound performance. Roland played at LSU while Davis was a member of John Brady's coaching staff in Baton Rouge.

The win was also the first for Head Coach Kermit Davis on the Blue Raider bench, although the win will not count on his official record. The Blue Raiders end the exhibition season with a 1-1 mark and will tip off the regular season at home against East Carolina on Friday, Nov. 22 at 7 PM.



NOTES AND QUOTES**Rhodes Dominates:**

Napoleon Rhodes showed why he was such a highly-

touted recruit from Central Florida Community College with his performance against VASDA.

Rhodes, who has been hampered throughout the preseason with a bad back, saw 20 minutes of action in the game and posted a double-double with 10 points and 13 rebounds. However, double-doubles are nothing new for the Ocala, Fla., native. He averaged 10 points and 11 rebounds in his final JuCo campaign.

Rebounding Still Strong: The Blue Raiders outrebounded their opposition for the second time in as many games with a 49-41 advantage on the boards against VASDA. The Blue Raiders took advantage on the glass in the exhibition opener with a 35-32 differential against Global Sports. The team ends the exhibition series with a rebounding margin of +6.0. In each of the exhibition games this year, at least one Blue Raider has grabbed eight or more boards.

Connor Shines: Junior point guard Keith Connor had an outstanding game against VASDA in all aspects of the game. Connor scored 13 points on 4-of-7 shooting, including a 4-of-6 effort from behind the arc. Connor dished out four assists against only one turnover and also added a steal in the game. However, the play that drew the most cheers for the Pflugerville, Texas, native was one that didn't garner a statistic. He tapped the ball away from a VASDA offensive player and then drove on the floor in an attempt to keep the ball in bounds. The Murphy Center crowd gave Connor a rousing ovation for his hustle on the play.

Opening Game Festivities: Several events are being planned for the Blue Raiders' season opener next Friday. The Sports Night Sports Talk Show featuring George Plaster, Blake Fulton, and Joe Biddle will broadcast live from the Murphy Center track area beginning at 4 PM on Nov. 22. The show airs in the midstate on WWTN 99.7 FM. Also, the Middle Tennessee Alumni Association is planning a basketball Tip Off Reception from 6-7 PM in Murphy Center Auxiliary Gym #2 that evening. The event is designed to support the new Blue Raider coaching staff and is free and open to the public.

Kermit's Krazies: Head Coach Kermit Davis has made no bones about his desire for increased student support this season and has devised a plan to help get students to attend games. Kermit's Krazies is the official student fan club for the Blue Raiders and are being reserved special seats at the games as long as they are sporting their Kermit's Krazies T-Shirt. The shirts are free and available at each game while supplies last. Students wishing to participate in Kermit's Krazies will be able to sign up for their shirt at each contest. Further details on the club will be given at next week's pep rally prior to the East Carolina game.

Head coach Kermit Davis:

"We had some goals - we wanted to hold this team under 40%, and we did. But the rebounding was bad. For that team to get 17 offensive rebounds is poor. But that's where we are. There were some positive things, yet we need to improve in a lot of areas and it's going to take us some time to do

that."

On Napoleon Rhodes:

"It was good that he got to play 20 minutes, but he really got tired. And this guy, when you think about it since October 3, hadn't done anything. He's done some pool work and the bike - he's not even made it to one practice, yet I really think that if he can get healthy and play, he's got a chance to be the newcomer of the year in our league."

On Keith Connor:

"I thought he was solid. He played 26 minutes with only one turnover. I know one thing he can do is shoot the ball - he can make baskets - and it makes the other team guard your point."

MT Center Napoleon Rhodes:

"I started off feeling pretty good. There wasn't any soreness or pressure in my back. I still have to go a long ways to get myself back in shape because I haven't been practicing with the team. I know the steps I have to do to get myself back there."

MT Guard Keith Connor:

"I am just out there trying to do what the coaches tell me to do. I am just trying to lead this team as best as I can. We just have to be a team and play unselfish. We played good defense in the second half but we still had breakdowns. Like coach said, in the last three minutes we gave up 14 points. We still have things to go over in practice before next Friday, but we will be ready."

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