MT Rips IPFW 71-52

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Murfreesboro, Tenn. -- William Pippen recorded his fourth career double-double with 23 points and 12 boards against IPFW, helping jump start the Blue Raiders' three-game home stand with a 71-52 win.

Pippen's rebounding tally sets a new career mark for the Hamburg, Ark., native.

The Blue Raiders got out to an explosive start, netting the game's first 11 points and eventually owning a 14-2 lead in the first half.

The Mastodons roared back with a 10-0 run of their own, keyed by back-to-back treys from Ric Wyand and Brad Noll. It would, however, prove to be as close as the visitors would come in the contest.

The Blue Raiders righted the ship and took a 35-23 lead to the locker room at intermission.

The team continued its hot streak to open the second stanza, stretching the lead to as many as 22 points late in the second half. When the smoke cleared, Middle Tennessee had turned in its best defensive effort of the season by holding the visitors to 29.7 percent shooting.

Tommy Gunn complemented Pippen's excellent night with 17 points of his own.

Wyand led the Mastodons with 14 points.

The Blue Raiders return to conference play on Saturday night with an 8:05 PM tip-off against Florida International. The game is slated to be televised on ESPN Regional, seen locally on Comcast Sports Southeast on channel 27.

PIPPEN SETS CAREER MARK: Senior William Pippen turned in his fourth career double-double by registering 23 points and a career-high 12 rebounds. Both totals were game highs. Pippen, who made 10 of 18 shots from the field, has scored in double figures in six straight games, while shooting

55.7 percent from the field during that span (44-79).

PARHAM STEADY AGAIN: After struggling with turnovers the past two games, point guard Eric Parham responded with a very solid outing in the win over IP-Fort Wayne. The senior had three assists and only one turnover in 31 minutes of action. Parham also added two steals.

HOT FROM ARC: Middle Tennessee shot a season-high 52.6 percent from behind the three-point line on 10-for-19 shooting. The Blue Raiders scorched the nets in the first half to the tune of 62.5 percent (5-8), then hit on 45.5 percent (5-11) in the second half. It was the Blue Raiders' best three-point shooting night since connecting on 64.7 percent against Arkansas State in 2002 - a span of 31 games.

FG DEFENSE SOLID AGAIN: Middle Tennessee has enjoyed some solid defensive efforts this season, but Tuesday night was one of the best. The Blue Raiders held IP-Fort Wayne to 29.7 percent shooting, which is the lowest percentage of the year for MT. Over Middle Tennessee's last four home games, it has held the opposition to a combined 36.9 percent shooting during that span (81-220).

THIS 'N' THAT: MT improved to 6-4 at home ... The Blue Raiders are now 7-2 when leading at the half this year ... The Blue Raiders have now hit at least one three-pointer in 207 straight games ... William Pippen has now led the Blue Raiders in scoring a team-best nine times this year and has paced MT in rebounding on 12 occasions ... Middle Tennessee collected a season-high 47 rebounds ... After scoring just five points in the second half on 2-for-5 shooting, MT leading scorer Tommy Gunn responded in the second half with 12 points on 5-for-7 shooting to finish with 17 points.

UP NEXT: The Blue Raiders will jump back into conference play as they host Florida International on Saturday night in the Murphy Center. The game will be televised by ESPN Regional and will tip-off at 8:05 PM CST. Sam Smith and Murray Bartow will call the action for ESPN Regional.

QUOTES

Head Coach Kermit Davis: "I was pleased with our team's effort. You're always kind of scared of these kinds of games. I want to commend IPFW. They have played a tough schedule and have played 14 of their games on the road, but they have played very well in stretches and it showed tonight.

Forward William Pippen: "People always say that the toughest home games you play are the ones right after a tough two-game road swing and we just wanted to come out strong tonight."

Guard John Humphrey: "They're a good offensive team and they've played a tough schedule against teams like UNLV and Wyoming. Watching them on tape, we knew we needed to play good defense. Our wings played good defense tonight and forced them into bad shots."

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