MT Dismantles North Texas 76-55

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - William Pippen scored 27 points and John Humphrey added 14 as Middle Tennessee (11-11; 6-3) dismantled North Texas (7-14, 2-7) 76-55 on Thursday night.

North Texas battled early in the contest, leading the game 10-8 with 13:28 remaining the first half, but the Blue Raiders rallied to claim a 13-10 advantage behind a Pippen trey with 12:03 left in the first half. The Mean Green tied the game at 14 with 10:25 to go in the opening frame and it would prove to be as close as they would come for the remainder of the game.

The Blue Raiders slowly built their lead until they were up 39-24 at the half after Napoleon Rhodes sank a short jumper with about two seconds left in the half.

The Blue Raiders delivered the knockout blow early in the second stanza. The team opened the half with a 10-0 run capped by a Pippen bucket, forcing North Texas into a timeout.

From that point, the Blue Raiders controlled the game. Middle Tennessee would go on to lead by as many as 24 in the second frame while cruising to the win.

Chris Davis paced the Mean Green with 17 points in the game.

The Blue Raiders will travel to Denver for a Saturday evening contest while North Texas heads to Bowling Green, Ky., for a game against Western Kentucky.

NOTES AND QUOTES

.500: With tonight's win over North Texas, the Blue Raiders ran their record to 11-11 on the season to reach the .500 mark for the first time all year. Winners of three straight games, the Blue Raiders are now at .500 for the first time since March 1, 2002.

STAT SHEET STUFFER: Senior William Pippen turned in quite an all-around performance in the win over North Texas on Thursday. Pippen recorded a game-high 27 points to go along with five rebounds, four assists and a **career-high four blocked shots**. It was the seventh time in Pippen's Blue Raider career that he has topped the 20-point mark and the 14th time he has led MT in scoring over the past two years.

MT EQUALS MARK: Tonight's win over North Texas was Middle Tennessee's sixth league win of the year, which matches its most SBC victories in a single-season. The Blue Raiders ended the 2001-02 campaign with a 6-8 mark. MT has five conference games remaining to establish a new high in SBC victories.

UNDER CONTROL: Senior point guard Eric Parham has been playing some of his best basketball of the season over the teams last three games. During that span, the Nashville, TN, native has dished out 11 assists and committed only two turnovers. Parham collected five assists and had just one miscue in 32 minutes tonight against UNT.

THIS 'N' THAT: The Blue Raiders are 9-2 this year when leading at the half ... MT has hit at least one three-pointer in 209 consecutive games ... The Blue Raiders have now won two of the three all-time meetings against UNT with both victories coming at home ... MT is now 10-2 this year when holding the opposition to 70 points or less ... Tommy Gunn failed to reach double figures in points for the first time in 10 games with a season tying low of five points ... For just the second time all year, center Napolean Rhodes led the Blue Raiders in rebounding when he pulled down seven in the win over UNT ... The Blue Raiders dominated in the paint tonight by outscoring UNT down low, 38-18 ... Middle Tennessee had seven players with four or more rebounds tonight against UNT.

MT Head Coach Kermit Davis: "I thought that was one of our better overall games. I thought we defended very well for long periods of time. I thought our activity level was good. We double-teamed the post and we were very active. Tonight, with what we did, was the best we have been with creating turnovers and turning it into points. It was like what UL-Lafayette did to us. We got out into transition. With a point like Eric Parham and the decisions he is making in the open floor, the team is good. He just ran our club tonight. I thought our team, with 18 assists, just played so unselfish. I was proud of that."

MT Guard John Humphrey: "Let me start out by saying that Chris Davis is great basketball player. He can play the post or take it outside. I feel I did a pretty good job, but I have to give all of the credit to my teammates. Napoleon [Rhodes] helped me get the ball out of his hands. That is what we were trying to do, just get the ball out of his hands."

MT Forward William Pippen: "I love [playing in the post]. I don't have the privilege to sit out there and run around the perimeter like I did last year. I enjoyed that too. This year, I get in there in the mix of things. I have a chance to score points around the basket and rebound with the best players. So, I really do like my transition."