

# Blue Raiders Whip ASU 79-55

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## **MURFREESBORO, Tenn. --**

William Pippen recorded his fifth career double-double by scoring 19 points and grabbing 10 rebounds in Middle Tennessee's 79-55 win over Arkansas State.

The win was the fifth straight win for the Blue Raiders (13-11; 8-3) and keeps the team one-half game behind East Division leading Western Kentucky. The Indians (11-12; 4-6) saw a three-game win streak snapped with the loss.

The Indians came out hot in the first half, shooting around 60 percent through the first 10 minutes of the opening frame. However, the Blue Raiders turned on the defensive pressure after finding themselves in a hole as big as six points.

The Blue Raiders put together a 7-2 run in the last 1:29 of the first half to take a 41-34 lead to intermission. It would prove to be the closest that the Indians would come for the remainder of the game.

MT opened the second half with an 11-2 run and never looked back, building a lead as many as 26 before settling in for the 24-point victory.

Aside from Pippen's big night, Tommy Gunn netted 16 points, while John Humphrey and Napoleon Rhodes added 10 each.

Antonio Rambo's 13 points paced the Indians while Odie Williams chipped in with 11. Kim Adams led all rebounders with 11.

Middle Tennessee will play its final home game of the season on Saturday night against Arkansas-



Little Rock while ASU heads to Bowling Green, Ky, to face Western Kentucky.

**FIRST SWEEP:** With Middle Tennessee's win over ASU tonight, it marked the first time in school history that the Blue Raiders have swept a season series from an SBC opponent. MT won earlier this season at Jonesboro, then came back to complete the sweep tonight in Murfreesboro.

**PERFECT IN FEBRUARY:** The Blue Raiders remained perfect in the month of February with tonight's win over ASU. MT, which has now won five in a row overall, is 4-0 in February. The last time Middle Tennessee won its first four contests in February was 1991 when it was victorious in the first five games of the month.

**DOUBLE-DOUBLE:** Senior William Pippen, who is averaging 19.3 points over his last three games, recorded his fifth career double-double tonight in the win over Arkansas State. Pippen had 19 points and 10 rebounds (all defensive) in registering his fourth double-double of the year.

**OVER 50 PERCENT:** Middle Tennessee shot over 50 percent from the field for the eighth time this season by connecting on 25 of 49 shots (51.0 percent). Hitting over half their shots has been a good sign for the Blue Raiders as they have posted a 7-1 mark in those contests. Overall this season, Middle Tennessee is 12-1 when shooting better from the field than the opposition (ASU shot just 38 percent tonight).

**3PTERS, FREE THROWS THE DIFFERENCE:** The difference in tonight's win over Arkansas State came at the free throw line and from behind the arc. The Blue Raiders made 14 more charity tosses and hit four more trifecta's for a 26-point difference. MT connected on 10 of 20 shots from three-point range, while ASU hit just 6 of 18. It marked the fourth time this year Middle Tennessee has hit 10 or more three-pointers in a game.

**THIS 'N' THAT:** Middle Tennessee has outrebounded the opposition in six straight games ... The Blue Raiders are 11-2 this year when leading at the half ... MT has hit at least one three-pointer in 211 consecutive games ... MT is now 12-2 this year when holding the opposition to 70 points or less ... Tommy Gunn matched his career-high with two blocks tonight vs ASU ... Guard John Humphrey is averaging 7.0 rebounds over his last four games ... Middle Tennessee's average margin of victory over its past three games has been 19.0 points ... MT is now 13-11 overall making it the latest in a season it has been two games over .500 since having a 15-12 mark on Feb. 29, 2000.

**MT Head Coach Kermit Davis:** "I really thought that Arkansas State was a much improved team over the first team that we played. I thought they came out and had a good game plan. They were very assertive offensively in the first half. They were a very aggressive team rebounding the ball. We had to play really well offensively to match baskets. I thought the key to the game was how we ended the first half. In the last three minutes, we made some big shots. John Humphrey made a real tough three, and it carried the momentum to the locker room. The first 15 minutes of the second half was as good as we have been all year."

**MT Guard Tommy Gunn:** "We knew they were good team. We knew they were going to make a run, and they did early in the game. We kept our composure this game. At halftime, Coach [Davis] talked about their percentages. We really pride ourselves on how well we defend, and how we hold teams to 39 percent on the year. We just wanted to come out, get after them, and contest their shots because that is what we weren't doing at the beginning of the game. So, we just came out and

contested their shots in the second half."

**MT Forward William Pippen:** "I felt like I had a frustrating first half. My team was playing well without me, and I am proud of that. I just wanted to come out in the second half, assert myself, and help this team make a run."

**ASU Head Coach Dickey Nutt:** "Starting from the first half, we didn't hit free throws. When you shoot 40 percent from the free throw line and 30 percent for the game, things will go bad in a hurry. We have to do a better job than that. We shoot one million free throws a day, and then we come out here and have one of those nights. When you go on the road, you have to do a lot of things well. I give them credit. They played well and hit a lot of incredible shots."

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