Three reach double figures to lead Blue Raiders to win in home opener

O'Neil leads way with 14 points

November 13, 2006 · MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee overcame a sluggish first half with a strong second half to race past visiting Cumberland, 60-47, in the home opener at Murphy Center Monday night. Sophomore Calvin O'Neil scored 14 points to lead three Blue Raiders in double figures. Theryn Hudson added 12 points and five rebounds, while Kyle Young finished with 10 points and five boards. Kevin Kanaskie barely missed his reaching double figures as he tallied nine points, dished out six assists, pulled four rebounds and collected three steals. The Blue Raiders (1-1) rebounded from their season-opening loss at No. 24 Tennessee to secure victory before heading to St. Thomas, Virgin Islands for a date with No. 10 Alabama Friday. Middle Tennessee improved to 21-1 all-time against Cumberland (2-1), which is coached by former Blue Raider standout and assistant coach Lonnie Thompson.

"First, I want to give a lot of credit to Cumberland and coach Thompson," Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis said. "Lonnie Thompson has meant a great deal to Middle Tennessee basketball both as a player and coach and he's great in this community. He had his team very well-prepared for this game and they played well. I believe they will have a good season. "I don't think our team played the way they need to play, but I do think this game did make us better. This kind of game, especially in the second half, is a really good game for our young team. We had to fight

through some adversity and find a way to win." One of the keys to success was the play of Middle Tennessee slim bench, which produced 22 points and 11 rebounds. In fact, the tandem of Hudson and Young provided the damage as the big men came off the bench to supply a solid inside attack. O'Neil continued to be a spark in the early going with 14 points and he has proven to be the offensive player stepping forward in the absence of senior guard Adam Vogelsberg, who is out with a broken bone in his right foot. O'Neil is averaging 12.5 points and 7.0 rebounds through the team's first two games. The Blue Raiders were clinging to a slim 30-29 lead against the upset-minded Bulldogs at the half; however, a 10-2 run over a four-minute spurt to start the second half turned the game in the Blue Raiders' favor for good. O'Neil scored eight of his 14 points during the decisive run, while Hudson supplied three as Middle Tennessee increased its advantage to 40-31 with 16:03 remaining. Cumberland, which was led by Thomas Douglas' 18 points, wouldn't go away and trimmed the deficit to four with fewer than 13 minutes remaining. The Bulldogs trailed 51-45 with 4:42 remaining but the Blue Raiders made six straight free throws, including four in succession by Young, to pull away and secure the win. **Postgame notes:**

HOME OPENERS: Middle Tennessee ran its record to 9-2 in home openers over the past 11 years, including a 3-1 mark under Kermit Davis. The Blue Raiders are now 30-4 in home openers all-time at the "Glass House". **IN-STATE UNDER KERMIT:** With Monday's win over Cumberland, Middle Tennessee moved its record against in-state opponents under Kermit Davis to 15-6. The Blue Raiders are now 12-2 against in-state opponents in the Murphy Center. **O'NEIL HAS CAREER NIGHT:** Sophomore Calvin O'Neil turned in a career effort in the win over Cumberland on Monday night. The Newark, NJ, native scored a personal-best 14 points while equaling his career-high in rebounds with six. O'Neil is off to the best start of any Blue Raider by averaging 12.5 points and 7.0 rebounds in Middle Tennessee's first two games. **BENCH SPARK:** Sophomore Theryn Hudson added some much needed help off the bench with a solid effort against Cumberland. The La Vergne, Tenn., native equaled his career-high in points with 12 and in field goals made with five, while playing a personal-best 30 minutes. Hudson, who made 5 of 9 shots from the field, also pulled down five boards. **YOUNG BOUNCES BACK:** After a disappointing effort against Tennessee on Friday, senior Kyle Young came back in a strong way against Cumberland. The Lewisburg, Tenn., product came off the bench to score 10 points on 3-for-6 shooting to go along with five boards and a career tying two assists. Young was coming off a two-point, two-rebound game in the opener at Tennessee. **QUICK HITTERS:** The Blue Raiders are now 21-4 in non-conference games at home under Kermit Davis ... Kevin Kanaskie equaled his personal-best with six assists ...The Blue Raiders had 11 assists on 16 of their field goals ... Kyle Young recorded the 20th double figure scoring game of his career with the 10 points against Cumberland ... Calvin O'Neil entered the 2006-07 season with one double figure scoring game for his career and he already has two in as many starts this year.

Postgame Quotes:

Sophomore Guard Calvin O'Neil

On Coach Davis' advice leading to his [O'Neil's] better second half play:

"Coach told me to go out and shoot the ball with confidence." **On the team's confidence going into the Virgin Island [Paradise Jam] tournament:**

"We are going to get prepared this week for Alabama. There style of play is different from Tennessee and it should be easier for us to match up with them. We must go out and play hard and play with confidence." **Middle Tennessee Sophomore Guard Kevin Kanaskie**

On what caused the team to not be able to get into sync in the first half:

"We came out flat. We had a few turnovers in the mid-court. But I will give Cumberland credit. They played good defense. We made a few bad decisions, but we got it worked out in the second half."

On what team is looking to get out of Virgin Island [Paradise Jam] tournament:

"First of all experience, but we are looking to go down and win and compete with these teams. We have a lot of work ahead of us before we play Alabama." **Middle Tennessee Sophomore Center Theryn Hudson**

On playing well on the post every night:

"It is very important. I can create shots for the guards when I get doubled teamed and doubled down on." **On Coach Davis' speech at halftime:**

"He got on to us pretty good. He talked about controlling the ball and not turning it over as much. It was the unforced turnovers in the half court that were making the game close. When we did this in the second half we got some separation." **On establishing post in the Virgin Island [Paradise Jam] tournament:**

"It is going to be very important. Some of the teams have some really good big men and our team will have to play good defense and good offense, so we can have a chance of winning." **Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis Opening Comments:**

"I would like to give a lot of credit to Lonnie [Thompson] and Cumberland University. He had his team very well prepared tonight. I don't think our team played the way they need to play in this league. But I think this game did make us better. This kind of game, especially in the second half, is a really good game for our young team. We had to fight through some adversity and find a way to win." **On Middle Tennessee's improvement in the second half:**

"We guarded a lot better. We were never very good offensively, but we held them to 24% shooting in the second half. We out rebounded them. Give Cumberland credit, but we just didn't play well offensively. Our team can't find an offensively flow right now. Tim Blue and Kevin Kanaskie have been our two leading scorers. Kevin [Kanaskie] has been shooting the ball very well and we have to keep him shooting well." **On the team's identity:**

"We don't have one. I have been saying this for about three weeks. At Tennessee we got into some foul trouble and had problems there. We are not getting back on defense like we should. Today I saw a lot of loose balls that we didn't get." **On the play of the post:**

"I thought Theryn [Hudson] and Kyle [Young] gave us a nice lift tonight on the post. That is why they started the second half. They were our two best scorers. We have got to get Tim Blue, Desmond Yates, and Calvin O'Neil on track because we don't have a lot of perimeter guys right now."

Printed on May 25, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/22428