

Kanaskie shines as Blue Raiders turn back Indiana State

Davis moves into tie for fifth on all-time wins list

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Kevin Kanaskie grew up watching Missouri Valley Conference basketball when his dad, Kurt, was head coach at Drake University.

The Middle Tennessee sophomore point guard helped do in a team from the well-respected conference with a career performance to help lead the Blue Raiders (3-4) to a 65-58 win against Indiana State (4-2) in front of 3,798 at Murphy Center Thursday night.

Kanaskie poured in a game-high 17 points, dished out five assists and established career highs for points and 3-point field goals (3-of-5) as Middle Tennessee improved to 2-0 on its current five-game homestand. He led four players in double figures.

"I know his dad has got to be proud," Middle Tennessee

Head Coach Kermit Davis said. "Kurt [Kanaskie], his father (currently the top assistant at Penn State), is a heck of a coach and coached in the Missouri Valley. Kevin grew up watching those games all his life as a young kid. For him to play that well against a Missouri Valley team that he has probably followed and watched his dad's team play, probably meant a lot to him and his family."

Davis moved into a tie with Stan Simpson for fifth on the all-time wins list at Middle Tennessee with 71 victories as four Blue Raiders scored double figures. In addition to Kanaskie's 17 points, Tim Blue became the first Blue Raider this season to register a double double with 14 points and 11 rebounds,



while Desmond Yates finished with 11, and Kyle Young continued to play like a man in the paint with 10 points on the strength of 5-of-7 shooting to go with his six caroms.

The Blue Raiders had their best shooting night of the season, connecting on 50 percent (25-of-50) from the field, including 45.5 percent (5-of-11) from 3-point range. For the second straight game, Middle Tennessee was even stronger in the second half when it shot 68 percent (15-of-22). The Blue Raiders connected on seven of their first 10 field goal attempts to start the second half and turned a 23-22 halftime deficit into a 37-28 advantage with 12:44 remaining.

Second-half superlatives were huge for Middle Tennessee as several players came through in a major way during the game's final 20 minutes. Young carried the load in the first half when he scored all 10 of his points on 5-of-6 shooting. The senior forward is shooting 69 percent (25-of-36 from the field over the past five games.

The second-half; however, was a different story as the Blue Raider offense kicked into gear and several players got into the winning act. Kanaskie's superlatives were among the biggest as he scored 15 of his 17 in the final 20 minutes, including all three of his 3-pointers. Blue also was a major factor in the final half when he scored 12 of his 14 points and grabbed seven boards. Blue was 6-of-8 from the field in the second half, while Yates scored eight of his 11 after intermission.

While the Blue Raiders were firing on all cylinders their defense continued to be strong, holding the Sycamores to 40 percent for the game, including 36 percent in the decisive second half. Middle Tennessee also won the battle of the boards, 34-30, against an Indiana State team that had been dominating the rebounding battles against previous competition.

Indiana State owned a 23-22 lead at the half but the Blue Raiders quickly erased the slim deficit with a fast start to the second half. Kanaskie's jumper with 17:56 remaining established a 28-23 cushion, Middle Tennessee's largest of the game to that point.

The Sycamores tied the score at 28-28 with 16:03 remaining but Blue came back with a runner in the lane, followed that with a 5-footer and then Kanaskie drained his first 3-pointer to put the Blue Raiders on top, 35-28, and seize control with 14:08 remaining.

Middle Tennessee returns to action when it plays host to in-state rival Tennessee State Monday at 7:30 p.m.

Postgame Quotes

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis

On defeating Indiana State:

"We are getting better. We made a little progress in the Virgin Islands. I thought the last 20 minutes against Belmont [on Monday] was good. (Indiana State) is a good offensive team. We had the right game preparation for them. When you play Indiana State, baskets are hard to come by because they play really solid position defense. They don't beat themselves and don't make silly turnovers that turn into your baskets - you have to earn them. I felt really good about this win; that was a quality win."

On shooting more effectively:

"We shot 50 percent for the game and shot [over] 50 percent from the three. It was a good win for us; I thought our team showed a lot of maturity. Kevin Kanaskie made some great plays in the end.

He played with such confidence. He shot the ball today like he shoots in practice. I thought Tim [Blue] showed some toughness. In the first half when Tim tries to get his game going to the perimeter, it's always bad. Finally, when he gets some balls going near the goal he can start making 17 or 18 footers. As soon as you can get some things going near the rim your perimeter game gets a lot better."

On the play of Kyle Young:

"Kyle Young continues to play really well. He is playing with a lot of maturity and giving us some great leadership."

On the play of sophomore center Theryn Hudson:

"I thought Theryn Hudson did a great job by getting six rebounds, which was great for him. We have to get the ball to him more around the goal."

On the play of Indiana State:

"Royce [Waltman] does a really good job with his team. [Trent] Wurtz is a really good four man; he can drive the ball, but sometimes struggles from the three. I thought we really guarded him well. The guy they rely on heavily is (Gabe) Moore and the way he plays is the direction their team will go. He had 16 points, but I think he had about eight of them late. I thought Kevin did a really good job guarding him."

On Sycamore freshman guard Marico Stinson:

"We recruited him hard, but we got Nigel Johnson. Our scholarships were filled and he chose Indiana State. He is going to be a really good player."

On sophomore guard Kevin Kanaskie's career high 17 points:

"I know his dad has got to be proud. Kurt [Kanaskie], his father, is a heck of a coach and coached in the Missouri Valley. Kevin grew up watching those games all his life as a young kid. For him to play that well against a Missouri Valley team that he has probably followed and watched his dad's team play, it probably meant a lot to him and his family."

Senior Center Kyle Young

On Middle Tennessee's more physical play in the second half:

"Coach challenged the big guys and guards to play more physical because they were getting to many easy buckets around the paint. At halftime, he talked to us about being more physical in the paint. [Tim] Blue and [Desmond] Yates came out and did a good job on the offensive end as well as the defensive end."

On keeping the momentum up late in the second half:

"Tim [Blue] got a few big rebounds that we could have lost. This would have been a huge turnaround had we not gotten those rebounds."

Senior Forward Tim Blue

On his improved shooting from in the second half over the first half:

"Coach preached to me at halftime that when I got to the hole I was falling back. In the second half, he wanted me to be stronger with my drive to the basket and not fall back."

Sophomore Guard Kevin Kanaskie

On his improved shooting confidence this season:

"I think I am more confident this season shooting the ball. It helps when Tim, Desmond and Kyle are scoring down low. This helps open things up for me."

On the importance of the play of the team's big men [Kyle Young, Desmond Yates, Tim Blue]:

"It definitely helps. In the past we have settled with jump shots. Today, we tried to get in inside and it worked." **On the Middle Tennessee's fast start in the first half:**

"In the two days we had to prepare for Indiana State, we talked about coming fast. Indiana State is a good team and we knew if we came out flat, they would put us away. We knew we had to play hard from the beginning."

On holding Indiana State to 37 percent shooting in the second half:

"This is where we won the game. We got huge stops when we needed it and rebounded well. I think is why we won."

POSTGAME NOTES

KANASKIE HAS CAREER NIGHT: Sophomore point guard Kevin Kanaskie turned in his best offensive game of his career in the win over Indiana State. Kanaskie knocked in a personal-best 17 points on 6-for-10 shooting and keyed the Blue Raiders' strong second half with 15 points. The State College, Pa., product also connected on a career-high six field goals, while adding five assists.

125 AND COUNTING: Tonight's contest against Indiana State marked the 125th game coached by Kermit Davis at Middle Tennessee. The fifth-year coach has a Blue Raider record of 71-54 and is the second-winningest coach in school history at the 125-game mark behind Bruce Stewart.

DOUBLE-DOUBLE: Senior Tim Blue notched just his second career double-double in the Blue Raiders' home win against Indiana State. The Palm Beach, Fla., native had 14 points to go along with 11 rebounds in just 27 minutes of action. Blue's other double-double came last year against South Dakota State when he tallied 20 points and 11 boards. In the second half against ISU, Blue pumped in 12 points and had seven boards.

HOT SHOOTING BLUE RAIDERS: Middle Tennessee turned in its second-best shooting effort of the year in the win over Indiana State by connecting on 50.0 percent of its shots. Even more impressive was the Blue Raiders' second half fireworks when they hit 68.2 percent of its shots in the final 20 minutes, including seven of the first 10 to begin the second period.

YOUNG STAYS HOT: Senior Kyle Young continued his hot shooting on Thursday night by making 5-of-7 shots from the field and scoring in double figures for the 23rd time in his career. Over the last five games, Young has made 25 of 36 shots from the field for a shooting percentage of 69.4

AT THE MURPH: Middle Tennessee is now 352-121 at the Murphy Center all-time and 42-15 under Kermit Davis.

QUICK HITTERS: MT is now 58-3 when shooting better than its opponent under Kermit Davis and 61-10 when leading with five minutes to play ... The Blue Raiders are now 23-4 in non-conference games at home under Kermit Davis ... MT is now 3-1 this season with Desmond Yates in the starting lineup ... MT is now 3-0 this year when outrebounding the opposition ... After scoring a second half season-high of 40 points in their last outing against Belmont, the Blue Raiders bettered that mark with 43 points in the final 20 minutes against Indiana State ... Middle Tennessee has now made a three-pointer in 312 straight games.

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