

Blue Raiders suffer setback to hot-shooting Trojans

Troy uses hot hand to secure 71-57 win at Murphy Center

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn.

Middle Tennessee saw Troy get on a hot shooting streak from the perimeter midway through the second half and the flurry of 3-pointers buried the Blue Raiders in a 71-57 setback at Murphy Center Saturday afternoon.

Troy shot 67 percent (8-of-12) from 3-point range in the second half and 43 percent for the game to erase a 33-27 halftime deficit and send the Blue Raiders (6-9, 2-3) to their third straight SBC home loss.

Sophomore point guard Kevin Kanaskie continued to be a bright spot for the Blue Raiders with a game-high 17 points on 5-of-9 shooting from beyond the arc. The five 3-pointers were a career high as Kanaskie registered his team-best 10th double-figure scoring game of the season and led the Blue Raiders in scoring for the seventh time. Freshman Desmond Yates was the only other Blue Raider in double figures with 11, while Tim Blue finished with nine points and a team-best eight rebounds.



Kanaskie also matched his career high for assists with eight. He is 14th nationally in that category

with 6.0 per game.

Middle Tennessee lead 46-38 with 14:58 remaining but that's when Boos Ramsey got loose for two quick 3-pointers in transition and Justin Jonas followed with a deep trey to spark what would become a 14-0 Troy (7-9, 2-3) run. By the time the shooting display had slowed the Trojans owned a 52-46 advantage.

Kevin Kanaskie's 3-pointer trimmed the deficit to 52-49 with 9:18 remaining; however, Troy followed with an 8-0 run to stretch the advantage to 60-49 with 7:29 remaining. The decisive stretch saw the Trojans use a 22-3 run over a six-minute stretch to take control.

"It's very disappointing," Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis. "Troy has a good team, a very good team, but we just seemed to lose our way there for a stretch and we couldn't recover."

Richard Chaney led a balanced Troy scoring attack with 15 points, while Ramsey added 14. Five Trojans registered double figures.

Middle Tennessee dropped to 0-9 this season when an opponent scores 60 or more points. Offensive woes continue to hamper a Blue Raider team that has yet to score 70 points in a game this season.

"It's not against the law in college basketball to win a game when the other team scores 71," Davis said. "Our margin of error is so close. We have not won a game this year when the other team has scored 60 points, that's just where we are. Every possession defensively is big for us. As bad as we were defensively, Calvin [O'Neil] and Nigel [Johnson] were both 3-for-16. We don't have the perimeter guys that can jump up and make some shots besides Kevin [Kanaskie]."

Frustrating from the offensive standpoint is the fact the loss came in a game where the Blue Raiders set connected on a season-high 10 3-pointers to best the previous high of eight against Louisiana-Monroe. The 10 treys were the most for Middle Tennessee since it hit as many against Louisiana-Lafayette on Jan. 28, 2006 - a span of 25 games.

But the Blue Raiders did most of their damage in the first half (7-of-15 from the arc) and then they were just 3-of-10 from 3-point range and 9-of-27 from the field in the second half.

The Blue Raiders travel to Boca Raton, Fla., to face Florida Atlantic Wednesday at 6 p.m.

HOT FROM DOWNTOWN: Middle Tennessee entered play today ranked 11th in the Sun Belt in 3-point shooting percentage (.311) and last in made attempts, but you could not tell it by the way the Blue Raiders were knocking down the long ball against Troy. MT connected on a season-high 10 3-pointers to better its previous high of eight set against Louisiana-Monroe back on Dec. 17. It also went down as the most 3-pointers by a Blue Raider team since hitting 10 against Louisiana-Lafayette on Jan. 28, 2006 - a span of 25 games.

PERSONAL-BEST: Sophomore point guard Kevin Kanaskie set a new career-high in three-pointers made when he knocked down five in the loss to Troy. Kanaskie, who leads the Blue Raiders with 30 made 3-pointers, had a previous high of four from behind the arc. The five treys on Saturday was more than Kanaskie had combined in his previous four outings.

DISTRIBUTING THE ROCK: Kevin Kanaskie, Middle Tennessee's assist machine, continued his solid play against Troy. The sophomore who is second in the league and 14th in the country in assists, equaled his career-high with eight in the loss to the Trojans. Kanaskie now has 90 assists on the season and his current average of 6.0 per game would rank third on the single-season list if the season ended today.

BOARDWORK: Over the past three games, senior Tim Blue has been impressive in the rebounding department. The Palm Beach, Fla., native entered the Troy game with a career average of 4.9 caroms per game and turned in a team-best eight against the Trojans. In the last three outings, Blue is averaging 8.3 rebounds per game.

GAME TIME CHANGE: Middle Tennessee's road conference game against New Orleans next Saturday (Jan. 13) has been moved to an 1:30 PM tipoff.

KERMIT DAVIS LIVE: "Kermit Davis Live," the weekly radio show featuring Middle Tennessee Head Men's Basketball Coach Kermit Davis will debut Monday at 7 p.m. at Bluesboro. If you can't attend the show it can be heard on WNFN 106.7 The Fan and WGNS 1450-AM. The number to call with questions for Davis is 1-888-MID-TENN. Dick Palmer is the host.

QUICK HITTERS: The 71 points allowed today were the most given up by the Blue Raiders since WKU tallied 73 on Dec. 28 ... Calvin O'Neil hit his first three-pointers since connecting on his only attempt against Indiana State on Nov. 30 ... Kevin Kanaskie ran his streak to 23 consecutive made free throws.

POSTGAME QUOTES:

MT Head Coach Kermit Davis:

On the similar outcome from last season's loss to Troy:

"I thought we had a lot better command of the game today. We were up eight and we let them get back in it. You can't let them get going. All of a sudden they hit two or three [baskets]. Kyle [Young] couldn't get to [Justin] Jonus in the zone. We gave up 54 [shooting] percent in the second half. We go to the line five times, they go to the line 18 times. It's not against the law in college basketball to win a game when the other team scores 71. Our margin of error is so close. We have not won a game this year when the other team has scored 60 points, that's just where we are. Every possession defensively is big for us. As bad as we were defensively, Calvin [O'Neil] and Nigel [Johnson] were both 3 for 16 [in the second half]. We don't have the perimeter guys that can jump up and make some shots besides Kevin [Kanaskie]."

On the lack of perimeter play by Troy in the first half:

"That's why they only had 29 points [in the first half]. We were trying to play fast and push the ball in transition. We were trying to get cheap baskets. We just don't have perimeter players that can make a couple of threes in a row and separate a game or help us get back in it. I thought we lost our way defensively. We didn't get to their shooters. [O' Darrien] Bassett really took over the game in the second half."

On Troy shooting 54 percent in the second half:

"They started making shots and their energy level went really high. We were down seven with 4:30 to go. With that team, there all kinds of possessions left. It's almost like we were just defeated. We were trying to press about five or six occasions and guys wouldn't get into our press. I started

subbing so guys would get into our press. We got this defeated look which has not been the makeup of our team the last couple of weeks. We have to try to get better the next couple of days before we get on the road."

On the play perimeter play in the second half:

"They have good perimeter players. [O' Darien] Bassett is good. Nigel [Johnson] is going to be a good player before he leaves here. Bassett just had his way today. He got Nigel on his heels. Nigel has good quickness, but he started back peddling. He got backed on his heels the second half and Bassett and [Boo] Ramsey took over the game."

"On the team's upcoming road trip:

"I think it's a totally different team than last year. Last year, we had more offensive weapons. We've got to hold people down so low. Florida Atlantic is a really good offensive team. You've got to hold them to 60 in order to have a chance to win, that's difficult. We've got to keep trying to develop guys. We are trying to get guys confidence. We are doing more extra shooting than we have done with any other team. We got to continue to try to defend and rebound until we get better offensively."

Troy Head Coach Don Maestri

On the play of Troy

"We played pretty well most of the season. Tonight we played good basketball and you don't know when that is going to happen. I had no idea that [Boo] Ramsey and [Justin] Jonas would come off the bench and hit some big (3-pointers)."

On the play of Middle Tennessee

"Middle [Tennessee] was playing very well. I thought they defended us well. We were fortunate to hit those (3-pointers). It turned the game around and you never know when that is going to happen."

On Troy's defense

"They had some good looking shots that just did not fall. You don't know when a team is going to have a not-so-good shooting night. I credit a lot of that to good fortune. They got some good shots. We did a decent job battling on the boards tonight. I don't consider that one of our strengths. I consider Middle [Tennessee] one of the better, if not the best, offensive rebounding team in the league."

On Middle Tennessee's season thus far

"I was worried because I think Middle [Tennessee] had been playing with a lot of confidence coming into this game. They won at South Alabama and not a lot of people are winning at South Alabama. They have one senior who got hurt and that changes your chemistry so much when you have a leader get hurt like that."

On Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis

"I have known Kermit [Davis] for a long time and I think he is not only one of the top coaches in the conference, but one of the top coaches in the country because of his terminology, demonstrations and how he teaches. I don't like playing people I know because after this game someone is going to feel bad. It's one of those tough situations when you're playing someone you have known for a long time."

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