

# Blue Raiders continue winning ways with 76-67 victory at New Orleans

## Notch fourth win in five games

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**NEW ORLEANS** - There's something about the road that seems to bring out the best in Middle Tennessee. Perhaps it is not as much the road as it is signs of intense progress from the youngest team in the Sun Belt. Whatever the reason Middle Tennessee has put itself in the thick of the SBC race following a hard-earned 76-67 win against New Orleans at the Human Performance Center Saturday. The Blue Raiders (8-9, 4-3) moved within one-half game of second-place South Alabama in the East as freshman Desmond Yates led four players in double figures with 21 points. Kevin Kanaskie scored 13 points, Kyle Young added 12, and Calvin O'Neil tallied 10 as Middle Tennessee put up a season-high 76 points to win for the fourth time in five games. Middle Tennessee improved to 4-0 on the road in the SBC, marking the first time a Blue Raider team has started 4-0 away from home in league play since the 1986-87 season. "This is a big win for



us because we are trying to get in the race for the Sun Belt," Yates said. "We needed this. It's a big win for us and continues to build our confidence. We are making a lot of progress. We talk a lot amongst ourselves and we have stressed playing with greater toughness and we have dedicated ourselves to practice even better because we know we have to get better and make progress

because we are a young team. All of us want to win and in order to win you have to dedicate yourself to doing the little things that make big differences." Of the nine players who have seen action for the Blue Raiders this season, seven are either freshmen or sophomores and three of them had never logged minutes in a Division I game until this season. Their continued development has generated a fervor that grows with each win. "I look at there today at different points and there are three freshmen and two sophomores on the court and playing well and that was really good to see," said Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis, who earned his 76th win leading the Blue Raiders to move into a tie with Charles Greer for fourth on the career wins list. "I think our guys are starting to get confidence and they are playing well." Strong team defense has become a staple this season and it was on display again Saturday as the Blue Raiders' various zone defenses stymied the Privateers (8-10, 4-3) throughout. New Orleans was 19-of-52 from the field and although Bo McCalebb - the nation's fourth-leading scorer at 26.5 points per game - tallied 19 points, his day was not an easy one. The 19 points were the third fewest for McCalebb this season and he was 5-of-18 from the field. The five field goals were tied for the fewest this season as he was 5-of-27 against Mississippi State. "All we were trying to do today is limit (McCalebb) to 30-to-32 percent field goal shooting," said Davis, whose defense limited McCalebb to 27 percent shooting. "I thought our zone was good and Calvin O'Neil and Darren Avery did a good job in that area. Anytime you have as good of guards as (James) Parlow, McCalebb, (Jamie) McNeilly, and (Shaun) Reynolds it puts a lot of pressure on you. I really thought we took advantage of what should have been our strengths and that was our size. We outrebounded them and I thought we changed a lot of shots around the goal, especially McCalebb. I'm proud of our guys." The Blue Raiders won the battle of the boards 39-27 with Theryn Hudson leading the charge with a game-high eight caroms - to go with seven points - in 13 minutes of action. Yates added seven rebounds. Middle Tennessee, which secured its 19th SBC road win under Davis, established itself early by jumping out to a 7-1 lead. The Blue Raiders were not able to pull away but they did control the game and owned a 36-31 lead at the half. New Orleans' largest lead was one - 8-7 with 14:11 in the first half. In a game that provided several big moments and key plays, the biggest may have been turned in by Kanaskie. New Orleans had cut a 51-43 Blue Raider lead to 51-50 when Kanaskie went to the line for a pair of free throws. He missed both but Hudson pulled the rebound, kicked the ball out to Kanaskie on the wing and the sophomore point guard stuck a dagger with a clutch 3-pointer - his third of the game - with 8:21 remaining. New Orleans would not get closer than three points the remainder of the way. Middle Tennessee will face Arkansas State at the Murphy Center Wednesday at 7 p.m. **NOTES:** Sophomore center Theryn Hudson celebrated his 20th birthday Saturday. He celebrated by tying his career high with eight rebounds ... Middle Tennessee started conference play with four straight road wins for the first time since 1986-87 ... The Blue Raiders earned their 19th SBC road win under Head Coach Kermit Davis which is the most of any league member since the start of the 2002-03 season ... The win against New Orleans was Middle Tennessee's 40th SBC triumph under Davis (including SBC Tournaments), making the Blue Raiders one of three league members with 40 or more conference wins during that stretch. The other two are Western Kentucky (52) and Louisiana-Lafayette (51) ... Davis earned his 76th win at Middle Tennessee to tie Charles Greer for fourth on the all-time wins list ... Desmond Yates was 16-of-17 from the free-throw line which are the third most in a single game. The single-game record is 18 ... Kyle Young, who leads the SBC in field goal percentage, was 12-of-17 from the field on the two-game road swing ... After failing to score 70 points or more in their first 15 games the Blue Raiders topped 70 in both games on the road trip, including a season-high 76 Saturday. They are 44-10 under Davis when scoring 70 or more points ... Middle Tennessee improved to 8-2 this season and 63-4 under Davis when outshooting the opposition ... The Blue Raiders are 3-1 in January ... The Blue Raiders have hit at least one 3-pointer in 322 consecutive games.

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