

Yates' 23 not enough as Blue Raiders fall

ASU escapes with 54-51 road win

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Desmond Yates tied his career high of 23 points on 9-of-14 shooting from the field but it wasn't enough as Middle Tennessee dropped a 54-51 setback to Arkansas State at Murphy Center Wednesday night. The Blue Raiders (8-10, 4-4) failed in their second straight chance to climb back to .500 and were unable to come through on the home floor in order to do so. Middle Tennessee is 4-0 on the road in Sun Belt Conference play; however, the Blue Raiders are 0-4 at home in league play. "Our team was 43-18 at home going into tonight's game," Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis said. "This season we have beat Belmont, Tennessee State, Indiana State here and those are teams doing very well. It's hard to explain. You've got to look at the stats. We gave up 47 percent tonight, on the road trip we gave up 34 percent. We've always been a pretty good offensive team at home.



We've tried to do some things different. Our team met extra at Kyle's (Young) apartment, watched extra tape, we've done it all. We've just got to win a game at home. We've got to get better guard play, and we'll start winning at home again." Guard play, which had been a strength on Middle Tennessee's recent two-game road sweep of Florida Atlantic and New Orleans, was a weakness against Arkansas State (10-10, 5-3). Middle Tennessee's starting trio of guards combined to shoot 2-of-22 from the field, 1-of-9 from 3-point range, and scored just six points. Sophomore point guard Kevin Kanaskie, who leads the team in scoring at 12.4 points per game and is among SBC leaders in 3-point field goal percentage (41 percent), was 1-of-13 from the field and 1-of-9 from 3-point

range. Calvin O'Neil and Nigel Johnson combined to go 1-of-9 from the field. Kanaskie did continue his fine work leading the offense in terms of getting the ball into scorer's hands as evidenced by another strong assist/turnover performance. He dished out nine assists and had just one turnover in 39 minutes of action. Yates was Middle Tennessee's offense. The 23 points tied his career high and gave him back-to-back games of 20-plus points for the first time in his career. Yates was 9-of-14 from the field and connected on a career-high four 3-pointers (in five attempts). The impact freshman also tied his career high with six rebounds to tie Theryn Hudson for the team lead in that category. Hudson continued to play well inside as he gained his third straight start. Hudson scored nine points and had six rebounds and was 4-of-6 from the field as he battled foul trouble and played 20 minutes. Kyle Young also tallied nine points for the Blue Raiders. Arkansas State was led by Adrian Banks' 17 points, while Isaac Wells finished with 16. **Postgame Notes**

YATES IN A GROOVE: Freshman Desmond Yates came off the bench for the third straight game to lead the Blue Raiders with 23 points in 29 minutes. It matched Yates' career-high in points and marked the first time he has tallied back-to-back 20-point games (had 21 against UNO). Along with making 9 of 14 shots from the field, the Somerville, Tenn., native connected on a career-best four three-pointers in five attempts. **ASSIST MACHINE:** Point guard Kevin Kanaskie came into the Arkansas State contest ranked eighth nationally in assists with 6.1 per game. The State College, Pa., product did not hurt his ranking against ASU as he dished out a game-high nine to run his season average to 6.27. Over the past three games, Kanaskie has collected 23 assists for an average of 7.7 per game. The sophomore has registered eight or more assists six times this season and all have occurred over the past 11 games. **SOLID IN THE MIDDLE:** Since entering the starting lineup against Florida Atlantic on January 10, sophomore Theryn Hudson has made a solid impact. Against ASU, Hudson added nine points, six boards, three steals, and made 4-of-6 shots from the field in 20 minutes. In his last three games (all starts), Hudson is averaging 8.7 points, 6.0 rebounds, and has hit 11 of 16 shots from the field in an average of 16.7 minutes per contest. **QUICK HITTERS:** Blue Raiders are now 6-1 when holding the opposition to under 58 points this season ... Kermit Davis dropped to 7-2 all-time against ASU ... The Blue Raiders have now hit at least one 3-pointer in 323 straight games ... The loss kept the Blue Raiders winless at home in league play (0-4) ... MT's starters scored just 24 points against ASU. **Postgame Quotes**

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis

On his thoughts after the loss to Arkansas State:

"When you get that kind of guard play in college basketball you can't beat anybody. You can't beat anybody in the country when you have that poor guard play offensively. Maybe they (the point guards) shot a couple of forced shots. We had great looks and couldn't make good shots. We were immature. Our practice yesterday was average. I don't know what it is with our approach. We've had some success at home. I'm really disappointed. I apologize to the fans because we are not playing like an effective offensive team at home as we are on the road. When your point guard goes one for 13, it's tough to recover." **On holding Arkansas State to 54 points:**

"They still shot 48 percent from the floor, which is way too much. When you hold them to 54, you expect to win at home by 10 or 15. I thought Theryn Hudson had some energy tonight. I thought Desmond Yates played good for a freshman. He struggled trying to find someone to guard late in the game. He was the only guy to score for us tonight, so we had to leave him in." **On having a chance to win the game late:**

"We were trying to play. Offensively, we were so poor. At the end, we kept trying to fight it. We set it up where Kevin (Kanaskie) was suppose to make the first free throw and then we had a set play to miss the second shot. It typified Kevin's night tonight. As good as he had been, he couldn't make the free throw. It was very disappointing." **On the play of Kyle Young:**

"As good as I thought Kyle Young was on the road trip, he wasn't very good tonight. I think he didn't guard very well. We had a few excuses coming off the floor. That usually happens when things go bad. When it goes bad that's when you're team has to have leadership. We didn't have that tonight."

On if Tim Blue's injury affected his play:

"Tim Blue was no factor in that game. He missed practice two days ago. I guess the injury was pretty severe. It affected him more than it should have. He has gone through a lot of stuff with his knee. His approach was there tonight." **On the overall play of Arkansas State:**

"I think Dickey (Nutt) does a good job. I think this is Arkansas State's best team. I think it's their best chemistry team. They played really hard. Their team was together. They withstood a couple of rallies. They haven't been very good on the road. When you can't shoot the ball. When you shoot the ball like that tonight in perimeter. It's difficult to win games." **On the disparity between home and road conference records**

"Our team was 43-18 at home going into tonight's game, beat Belmont, Tennessee State, Indiana State. You've got to look at the stats. We gave up 47 percent tonight, on the road trip we gave up 34 percent. We've always been a pretty good offensive team at home. We've tried to do some things different. Our team met extra at Kyle's (Young) apartment, watched extra tape, we've done it all. We've just got to win a game at home. We've got to get better guard play, and we'll start winning at home again." **PG Kevin Kanaskie**

On his performance:

"I just didn't feel it. I thought I got good shots, I thought I was open for the most part." **Desmond Yates**

On the 0-4 Sun Belt record at home

"There's no excuse for it. We play tough on the road. We've got to get tougher all around." **On his role as a scorer**

"Coach started me off on the bench in the second half, then he put me in and told me to go score. We had gone three or four minutes without a basket, so I needed to score." **Theryn Hudson**

On struggles at home

"We've got to stop them on defense. We're scoring the same amount of points (as on the road), we've just got to stop our opponents." **ASU Coach Dickey Nutt**

On tonight's victory over Middle Tennessee

"From a fan's standpoint that probably wasn't the prettiest game in the world. There were a lot of balls being thrown around and a lot of turnovers. I am really proud of my team and the way we played and stayed tough. We had a true test of character at halftime to really find a way to win. We haven't had much success or any at all on the road here and I am really proud of our effort tonight. We had some big plays." **On the standout players for Arkansas State**

"I thought Isaac Wells after a shaky start really got on the block and did some good things in the second half. I can't say enough about our freshman, Ryan Wedel, who made big, big shots late in the second half. You can't say enough about the play of Arian Banks. [Kewain Gant] played very well tonight." **On the play of Middle Tennessee**

"They are a really solid defensive team and they are hard to play. We don't have much success down here: little or none since in the many years I have been in the Sun Belt. It is a very tough place to play. **On what he told his team in pre-game**

"I wrote on the board before we came out: Experts say we can not win in Murfreesboro at Middle Tennessee. I thought that was a bunch of bologna. It was ours to be taken. I am really proud of our players for hanging in there." **On Arkansas State's defensive game plan**

"[Keven Kanaskie] makes [Middle Tennessee's] engine run. He is the head of that machine and I have a lot of respect for his game. We felt like if we could shake him with no open looks we would

have a chance. Our game plan really was to wear him down and put fresh people on him when he brought the ball up the floor. We did a good job of everyone finding out where he was [on the floor]."

On the decision to foul at the end of the game

"We are going to foul and take our chances rebounding the basketball. Then, a lot of things have to go perfect for them to beat you or tie you when you are on the free throw line five seconds and under. The first thing you have to do is hit the first shot. Luckily they missed it, we had a good rebound and that was it. We didn't want overtime or any more play."

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