# 1982 Blue Raiders provide inspiration as Middle Tennessee rolls

## Kanaskie, O'Neil enjoy career night in 71-59 triumph vs. Louisiana-Lafayette

January 28, 2007 · MT Media Relations

**MURFREESBORO, Tenn.** - On a night when Middle Tennessee honored former greats and celebrated the 25th anniversary of the school's 1982 upset of SEC champion Kentucky in the NCAA Tournament, current Blue Raiders turned a few heads in a 71-59 triumph against Louisiana-Lafayette in front of 4,982 at the Murphy Center. Edward "Pancakes" Perry was the point guard that generated Middle Tennessee's 50-44 upset of the Wildcats in 1982. Saturday night it was sophomore Kevin Kanaskie who produced an inspiring performance with his second career double double, dishing out a career-high 13 assists and pouring in a game-high 18 points - all in the second half. The 13 assists are tied for seventh on the single-game list and are the fifth-most in a game by a Blue Raider all-time. Kanaskie, who had 12 assists at Florida Atlantic earlier this season, also became only the fourth player in program history to have two double-figure assist games in the same season. His outstanding performance was highlighted by a career night from sophomore guard Calvin O'Neil. The Newark, N.J., native scored a career-high 17 points and knocked down a career-high six field goals. Freshman standout Desmond Yates added 13 points, and senior Kyle Young narrowly missed a

double double with 10 points and nine rebounds. He led the Blue Raiders in rebounding for the 31st time in his career. Middle Tennessee head men's coach Kermit Davis said the winning performance capped a great day for the current Blue Raiders and the returning standouts that represent the program's past. "It was a great night. It's great when you can bring your former players, coaches, trainers, managers and wives back to campus," said Davis, who notched his 215th career win as a head coach. "It was great to see Betty Jean Simpson come back. 'Ramrod' Simpson meant a lot to basketball here as a head coach and as an assistant to coach Jimmy Earle. That's what it's all about. There are a lot of highs and lows when it comes to coaching, but the best thing to see are former players come back on campus. "Players from the 1982 team came to our practice today. Usually we don't allow any talking during the shoot-around. Those guys were laughing and having more fun than anyone on the court. They gave a testimony about the 1982 season. It was a great message sent to our players. They did a great job telling them about the tradition here at Middle Tennessee." The Blue Raiders (10-11, 6-5) used a scintillating eight-minute run, sparked by Kanaskie, to turn the game in its favor for good and seal the first SBC home win of the season after winning five league games away from home. The Blue Raiders owned a modest 27-26 halftime lead and the Ragin' Cajuns (5-17, 3-9) rallied to take a 31-29 lead early in the second half. That's when Kanaskie put one of the greatest stretches of the season as he accounted for 18 of the team's 20 points over the next 8:11 (from the 16:02 mark to the 8:51 mark). He scored 12 of the 20 points, including seven straight during one stretch, and he assisted the remaining six. Kanaskie was responsible for 28 of the team's 44 second-half points and 44 of the 71 points in the game. O'Neil was steady throughout, supplying 10 first-half points and coming back with seven more in the second half. The Blue Raiders also won the battle of the boards, 34-32, and shot 51 percent for the game, including a sizzling 61 percent (14-of-23) in the decisive second half. Middle Tennessee plays its third game in five days when it faces South Dakota State in Brookings, S.D., Monday at 7 p.m.

**Middle Tennessee Postgame Notes**

**CONFINES FRIENDLY AGAIN:** After dropping its first conference road game of the year on Thursday, Middle Tennessee bounced back on Saturday night to come away with its first home Sun Belt win of the season. It marked the Blue Raiders' first victory in the Glass House since beating Tennessee State back on December 4. The Blue Raiders downed Louisiana-Lafayette, 71-59, to record just their second win in the last seven meetings against the Ragin' Cajuns. Overall, the Blue Raiders improved to 5-4 at home this season. **TEAM BALL:** A key to the Blue Raiders' win over ULL on Saturday was the way they shared the basketball. The team had an impressive 18 assists on 25 field goals for a percentage of .720. In the first half, Middle Tennessee hit 11 field goals and 10 of those were accompanied by an assist. **O'NEIL HAS CAREER NIGHT:** Sophomore Calvin O'Neil turned in a career performance in the win over Louisiana-Lafayette. O'Neil poured in a personal-best 17 points while hitting a career-high six field goals to key Middle Tennessee's first conference home win of the year. Overall, it was O'Neil's sixth career double figure scoring game and the fifth this season. **DOUBLE-DOUBLE:** Sophomore point guard Kevin Kanaskie registered the Blue Raiders' third double-double of the season and the second of his career in the win over Louisiana-Lafayette. Kanaskie scored 18 points, all in the second half, and dished out a career-high 13 assists. Kanaskie also had a double-double earlier this year against Florida Atlantic, while Tim Blue owns the other Blue Raider double-double with 14 points and 11 boards against Indiana State. **ASSIST MACHINE:** Kevin Kanaskie is turning out to be a solid floor general for the Blue Raiders. The sophomore entered the Louisiana-Lafayette game ranked eighth nationally and first in the Sun Belt in assists with 6.1 per game, but that total improved to 6.4 following the win over the Ragin' Cajuns. Kanaskie turned in a personal-best 13 assists against ULL which went down tied for seventh all-time and the most by a Blue Raider since Greg Christian handed out 14 against Kennesaw in 1990. Kanaskie,

who had 12 assists earlier this year against FAU, became just the fourth player in school history to notch two double-digit assist games in a single-season and the first since Eric Parham in 2001-02. **215 AND COUNTING:** Middle Tennessee's win over Louisiana-Lafayette went down as victory number 215 for Head Coach Kermit Davis during his coaching career. Davis owns 149 wins in his nine years at the Division I level and 66 in three years in junior college. Davis is now 78-61 in five years at Middle Tennessee. **WHAT A RUN:** The Blue Raiders started slow in the second half by hitting just two free throws in the first four minutes and falling behind for just the second time in the game. At that point, sophomore Kevin Kanaskie put it on his shoulders to take over the basketball game. From the 16:02 mark to the 8:51 mark, Kanaskie was responsible for 18 of the team's 20 points. The State College, Pa., native scored 12 of the points, including seven straight during one stretch to put MT up by five, and assisted on the other six. In the second half overall, Kanaskie was responsible for 28 of the team's 44 points. **SOLID EFFORT BY YOUNG:** Senior Kyle Young turned in his best game of 2007 in the win over Louisiana-Lafayette by scoring 10 points, ripping down a game-high nine rebounds, and equaling his career-high in assists with two. Young's nine boards went down as his most in a game since collecting nine against FIU on December 31 and marked the 31st time in his career he has paced the Blue Raiders in rebounding. **QUICK HITTERS:** Kevin Kanaskie now has 208 career assists which puts him one back of Bryan Smithson for 15th on the all-time list ... Desmond Yates responded to his 3-point outing against North Texas by pumping in 13 off the bench against the Ragin' Cajuns for his 13th double-digit game of the year ... Darren Avery made his second start of the season tonight ... MT is now 7-1 this year when holding the opposition to 59 points or less. **Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes**

**Middle Tennessee Men's Basketball Coach Kermit Davis**

**On the 1982 NCAA Tournament team returning to Murphy Center:**

"It was a great night. It's great when you can bring your former players, coaches, trainers, managers and wives back to campus. It was great to see Betty Jean Simpson come back. 'Ramrod' Simpson meant a lot to basketball here as an assistant to coach Jimmy Earle. That's what it's all about. There are a lot of highs and lows when it comes to coaching, but the best thing to see is former players come back on campus." **On the 1982 team talking to the players before the game:**

"They came to our practice today. Usually we don't allow any talking during the shoot-around. Those guys were laughing and having more fun than anyone on the court. They gave a testimony about the 1982 season. It was a great message sent to our players. They did a great job telling them about the tradition here at Middle Tennessee." **On Middle Tennessee's effort offensively:**

"We finally got into transition. Kevin Kansakie was outstanding. He had 18 points in the second half. Calvin O'Neil really got us off to a quick start in the first half." **On guarding Lousiana-Lafayette's Ross Mouton:**

"We were very physical. I thought we did a great job on him. He got some late. I thought in the heat of the game when we made our run we did a nice job covering him. We did a good job with our press tonight. We've got to start using it more at home and on the road. Kyle and Dino they both got a couple of steals. I was real proud of our press." **On getting some breakaway points:**

"We had two dunks out of it. Late in the game sometimes, we'll try to get Kevin [Kanaskie] to shoot free throws. It feels good to get the ball inbounds and find some open space." **On the play of senior forward Kyle Young:**

"Kyle Young sits there and makes two free throws then air balls the third one. I love Kyle to death, but I expect so much from him. I thought he really ran the floor and guarded better tonight." **On the play of Louisiana-Lafayette:**

"They have a good team. They have good guards and [Elijah] Millsap is a really good player." **Middle Tennessee Sophomore Guard Kevin Kanaskie On Middle Tennessee's win:** "We definitely

needed to win at home. [Former players] were talking to us in the locker room this morning after practice and that helped. They were trying to motivate us and I think that just adds to it." **After getting eight assists in the first half where you looking to score more in the second half when you got your 18 points?** "I think it just worked out that way. One time I think I should have shot at the end of the first-half and I threw it to [Theryn Hudson]. I think we were running the floor and were wide open." **On the first conference home win of the season:** "Now [the media] can stop asking us why we aren't winning at home. I don't think about [being over '.500'] too much. We need to take it one game at a time." **Middle Tennessee Sophomore Guard Calvin O'Neil On his career-high scoring night:** "At first I lost my confidence and wasn't shooting well but Coach [Kermit Davis] told me to keep shooting and keep my hand up high. It just came through today. When I start off it depends on how my first shot is and then my confidence goes from there." **On how his injury affected his performance:** "[The injury] is on my left-hand anyways so all I have to do is hold the ball straight and my right hand just shoots." **On what Head Coach Kermit Davis said during half-time:** "[Coach Davis] told us we played good defense for the first 14 minutes and that we needed to pick it up and not let [Ross] Mouton score. We knew he was going to look to score and they were only down by one."

---

*Printed on May 21, 2013*
*Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/23673*