Blue Raiders capture seventh win in 10 outings

Turn back South Dakota State, 57-56

January 30, 2007 · MT Media Relations

BROOKINGS, S.D. - Middle Tennessee took its longest road trek of the season to get back to the .500 mark and the Blue Raiders came away successfully after turning back South Dakota State, 57-56, here Monday night. The Blue Raiders, who were last at the .500 mark when they were 4-4 on Dec. 4, used a 16-8 run over the last 11:08 of the game to come from behind and win for the seventh time in 10 games to even their record at 11-11 entering the final stretch of the regular season. Freshman Desmond Yates led Middle Tennessee with 14 points, while sophomore center Theryn Hudson contributed 11 points - all in the second half - to lead the comeback. Senior Kyle Young finished with 11 points and Tim Blue tallied seven in the Blue Raiders' balanced scoring attack. Sophomore point Kevin Kanaskie continued to demonstrate why he's one of the best in the nation at dishing assists with nine in his 34 minutes of action. "This was not a pretty game but it's a good win against a well-coached team," said Middle Tennessee coach Kermit Davis, who notched his 150th career win as a Division I head coach, including his 79th with the Blue Raiders. "We've worked hard to get back to .500 and now we have to keep building on this as we head into the biggest stretch of our season. I'm proud of the way the guys battled here tonight." There's good cause for Davis to be proud of his troops, which represent the youngest team in the Sun Belt Conference. The Blue Raiders, who have played this season without their top returning scorer in Adam Vogelsberg, started 1-4 and then won three straight to battle back to 4-4. That run was followed by a four-game losing streak; however, the Blue

Raiders turned in their winningest January since 1998 with six victories in nine games to climb back to the .500 mark. Kanaskie may be racking up the assists for Middle Tennessee during what is materializing into a record-breaking season for the sophomore point, but the Blue Raiders' leading scorer's long 3-pointer with 4:03 remaining erased a 52-52 tie and gave the Blue Raiders the lead for good. The Jackrabbits pulled to within 55-54 on Garrett Callahan's layup in the paint with 2:52 remaining but the Blue Raiders extended the lead to 57-54 on Young's layup with 2:14 remaining. South Dakota State came right back on Michael Loney's tip-in with 1:52 remaining to set up the final frantic seconds. Middle Tennessee actually maintained possession for the final 1:22. One errant field goal was followed by an offensive rebound and another went off a Jackrabbit out of bounds to keep possession with the Blue Raiders. It wasn't until Calvin O'Neil's miss with almost 30 seconds remaining that South Dakota State finally regained possession for what would be a potential game-winning field goal. Following a timeout, Kai Williams' driving layup with two seconds remaining was blocked by Tim Blue to seal the Blue Raiders' seventh win in 10 games. "We've worked hard to get back to .500 and that's not what we strive for because we expect more but we had to get back to even before we can start taking the next step," Young said. "Now that we are back to .500 we need to keep the momentum going and finish this season strong. There's still a lot of basketball left and we are playing are best when it matters most." Middle Tennessee shot 52.3 percent (23-44) from the field, marking just the second time this season it has shot 50 percent or better in consecutive games, and the Blue Raiders won the battle of the boards, 30-22. If not for outscoring the Blue Raiders 20-8 at the charity stripe South Dakota State would have had a difficult time staying in the game as Middle Tennessee limited the opposition to 40.5 percent from the field and 25 percent from 3-point range. The Blue Raiders trailed 31-29 at the half and the Jackrabbits built the lead to 45-37 with 13:29 remaining. That's when Hudson put together one of his best stretches of the season, scoring nine straight points and 11 of the next 16 to rally Middle Tennessee. From there it was a tightly-contested contest eventually won by a band of Blue Raiders who refused to let a win slip away in the final minutes. Middle Tennessee will return to action Thursday when it plays host to Denver in a key Sun Belt Conference game. Tipoff at Murphy Center is 7 p.m. **NOTES:** Sophomore guard Kevin Kanaskie dished out nine assists, giving him 22 in the last two games. He has 143 for the season, which is tied with Gerald Harris for seventh on the single-season list, and 217 for his career, which is good for 13th on the career list ... Kermit Davis earned his 150th career win as a Division I head coach with 79 of those coming at Middle Tennessee. He is five wins shy of third on the Blue Raiders' all-time wins list ... Middle Tennessee improved to 6-3 in January, which is the most wins in the month since the Blue Raiders won nine during the 1997-98 season ... Middle Tennessee's strength of schedule was ranked sixth nationally entering play this week ... Middle Tennessee improved to 65-4 under Davis when outshooting the opposition and it has won 39 of the last 41 games when it has had a higher shooting percentage than the opposition ... The Blue Raiders have held nine of its 22 opponents to 59 points or less this season and the team is 8-1 in those games ... Middle Tennessee has hit at least one 3-point field goal in 327 straight games.

Printed on April 21, 2014
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/23737