

Blue Raider win streak ends in loss to South Alabama

Hudson continues to shine in setback

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's defense has been its staple all season but even the league's top scoring defense couldn't overcome one of the worst offensive outputs in recent years as the Blue Raiders suffered a 61-38 setback to South Alabama in front of 4,598 at the Murphy Center Saturday night. Sophomore Theryn Hudson was the only Blue Raider to score double figures, contributing 10 on 5-of-6 shooting from the field; while Kevin Kanaskie finished with eight points. South Alabama's Ernest Little was dominant with a double double with a game-high 23 points (on 9-of-13 shooting) and 13 rebounds as the Jags ended Middle Tennessee's three-game winning streak while extending their mark to 10 straight triumphs. Middle Tennessee (12-12, 7-6) led 28-27 at the half despite not connecting from the field for the final 4:47 of the first half and the scoring drought continued into the second half of play. The Blue Raiders



didn't score their first field goal of the second half until Tim Blue's layup with 16:28 remaining as they eventually went through a 9:29 stretch without scoring. Despite the long scoring drought, Middle Tennessee trailed 31-30 following Blue's layup and it regained the lead, 32-31, on Hudson's jumper with 15:26 remaining. The Blue Raiders; however, were just 3-of-16 from the field the remainder of

the half. The 38 points were the fewest in a game since the Blue Raiders scored 37 against Morehead State, Feb. 6, 1978. The Blue Raiders were 2-of-15 from 3-point range and Kanaskie knocked down both of those. The sophomore point guard connected on his first two 3-point attempts and Middle Tennessee converted two of its first three long-range shots but the Blue Raiders were 0-of-12 from beyond the arc the remainder of the game. South Alabama shot just 42.3 percent but it managed to force 20 Blue Raider turnovers and collected 13 steals. The Jaguars (17-7, 11-2) scored 19 points off of Middle Tennessee's 20 turnovers. Middle Tennessee returns to action when it plays at Louisiana-Monroe Thursday at 7 p.m. **Postgame Notes:**

OFFENSE FIZZLES: Middle Tennessee's 38 points against South Alabama were the fewest by the Blue Raiders since they scored 37 against Morehead State, Feb. 6, 1978. The Blue Raiders managed just five second-half field goals and were 2-of-15 from 3-point range in the game.

KANASKIE MOVES UP: With three assists against South Alabama, point guard Kevin Kanaskie now has 150 for the season and moved into fifth on the single-season assists list. **HUDSON**

CONTINUES TO SHINE: Sophomore center Theryn Hudson continued to be a bright spot for the Blue Raiders with a team-high 10 points against South Alabama. Hudson has scored double figures in three straight games for the first time in his Blue Raider career. He was 5-of-6 from the field against the Jaguars and has 13-of-18 from the field in his last three games for 72 percent. **Middle Tennessee Coach Kermit Davis**

On the loss to South Alabama:

"It's hard to describe. We ended the first half on a bad note. We are only down 41-34 with about seven to go and we let our offensive ineptness affect us on the other end. We didn't finish the game with much energy. It was poor performance on our part. I apologize to our fans for that display of basketball in the last 10 minutes of the game." **On Middle Tennessee's turnovers:**

"It was just loose turnovers. South Alabama is a good team. It was loose turnovers. We were not very strong with the ball. How many times did we have the ball fumble out of our hands? We weren't very strong with the ball. We couldn't make any plays at all." **On the offensive play by Middle Tennessee:**

"We held them to 42 percent. We shot 39 percent. The key was the 20 turnovers to their 11. Kevin [Kanaskie] was the only player on our team to make a three. The rest of the team was shutout and we only went to the line twice. That shows you that you weren't very aggressive around the goal and post and we weren't very aggressive off the dribble. That's what happens when they go to the line 18 times and you go to the line two times." **On the play of South Alabama junior forward Ernest Little:**

"Ernest had his complete way with our entire front line. We tried to double team him. We tried it all. He was too much. He's the best big we have played against in our league." **On overall play by Middle Tennessee:**

"I can walk off the floor and take a tough loss if your guys had really played hard. Sometimes, not making baskets can really affect a team. It really affected us tonight. We hung in there for awhile. It just got to a point where we couldn't make any shots and couldn't get any looks. Give South Alabama a lot of credit. We have to get our team's head up and get ready to go to two other tough places (Louisiana-Monroe, Western Kentucky)." **Middle Tennessee Guard Kevin Kanaskie**

On Middle's Tennessee's play in the second-half:

"We really didn't execute or hit shots. We settled too much for 3-point shots and didn't get it inside. Yes, they trapped us and went from zone [defense] to man [defense] but we have to score more than 10 points or whatever we scored in the second-half." **On his thoughts at halftime:**

"We didn't play good even then and we were lucky to be up one [point] at half-time. We just couldn't get out of it. They did a good job on me." **On where the team goes from here:**

"We need to work on our defense in practice. We go to [Louisiana] Monroe and they are first on their side of the league. It doesn't get any easier: we play Monroe and then Western [Kentucky]. We need to work on what we did poorly tonight." **Middle Tennessee Forward Theryn Hudson**

On South Alabama's defense:

'They were doing a good job at trapping our guards and we had too many turnovers in the half-court." **On the team's disappointment with losing tonight:**

"We could have swept the defending champions from our league last year. That would have made a big statement but we couldn't finish on our home court."

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