

# Furious second-half rally falls short at Troy

## Kanaskie scores career-high 26 setback

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**TROY, Ala.** - Middle

Tennessee's furious second-half rally fell short here Thursday night as the Blue Raiders came up on the short end of a 73-70 decision in at Trojan Arena. Troy went on a 21-6 run to start the game and led 38-25 at the half but the Blue Raiders had the strong run in the second half and the game wasn't decided until Kevin Kanaskie's 3-pointer came up just short at the end. Middle Tennessee (12-16, 7-10) almost rallied behind lights out shooting from Kanaskie, but the early deficit proved too much to overcome. Kanaskie did all he could to rally the Blue Raiders with a career-high 26 points on the strength of 10-of-20 shooting from the field, while senior Tim Blue also came up big with 15 points and a game-high nine rebounds for Middle Tennessee. Kanaskie, who scored 21 of his 26 in the second half, knocked down six consecutive field goals during one stretch and accounted for 21 of the Blue Raiders' 45 second-half points, while Blue added eight of his 15 in the final 20 minutes. The 26 points by Kanaskie were the most by a Blue Raider this season and the largest output individually since Mike Dean scored 30



against Arkansas State, Jan. 15, 2004. Middle Tennessee trailed 38-25 at the half but the furious rally and key baskets turned in by Kanaskie and Blue enabled the Blue Raiders to close the gap to 62-58 with 6:48 remaining. Troy (12-16, 7-10) followed the run with a 7-1 run to stretch the lead back to 69-59 with 4:22 remaining. The Blue Raiders wouldn't go quietly, though, and used the shooting of Nigel Johnson to make a final run of it down the stretch. Johnson's second consecutive trey cut the deficit to 71-67 with 1:33 remaining before Middle Tennessee came up with a key stop. Kanaskie again came up big with his career-high tying fifth 3-pointer of the game to make it a 71-70 game with 46 seconds remaining. The Blue Raiders, once again, came up with a huge stop on the defensive end; however, Troy pulled the offensive rebound with 10 seconds remaining. O'Darien Bassett was fouled on the inbound play and nailed both free throws to extend the lead to 73-70 with nine seconds remaining and leaving the Blue Raiders with a final chance to force overtime. Kanaskie's deep 3-pointer with two seconds remaining went off the rim and then his desperation shot with six-tenths of a second remaining ended the riveting comeback attempts. Interestingly, Bassett's free throws not only proved to be monumental in stretching the lead to three and forcing the Blue Raiders to go for a trey in the final seconds, but free throws were the difference at the end. Troy managed just 12 second-half field goals but it was 8-of-12 from the charity stripe in the second half and 14-of-18 for the game while Middle Tennessee found its way to the line just six times, hitting five, and never reached the bonus the entire game as the Trojans were whistled for just nine fouls to the Blue Raiders' 19. The Blue Raiders shot 50 percent in the game, including 59 percent (17-of-29) in the second half. They also shot 47 percent from beyond the 3-point line, including 62 percent from 3-point range in the second half. Middle Tennessee will conclude the regular season at home against Florida Atlantic Saturday. Tipoff is set for 7 p.m.

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