

Middle Tennessee Swats Hornets 71-48

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

The Blue Raiders (2-1) got back to the formula that made them successful last season, throwing up a tough defense combined with strong work on the boards to topple Alabama State (1-3) 71-48.

The Blue Raiders seemed to put the game away in the early going. The team opened the game with a 21-0 run, holding Alabama State without a field goal for the first 12:45 in the opening period.

After the Hornets got some offense going in the period, the Blue Raiders took a 22-point advantage into the intermission.

The Blue Raiders kept the pressure up in the second period. Middle Tennessee continued to press the issue on defense while shooting a stronger percentage in the half. The Blue Raiders would lead by as many as 37 before cruising to the 23-point win.

The Blue Raiders shot a solid 51 percent from the floor in the game, while limiting ASU to 33.3 percent. Middle Tennessee also turned in strong effort on the rebounding front, outpacing the visitors 41-31 on the boards.

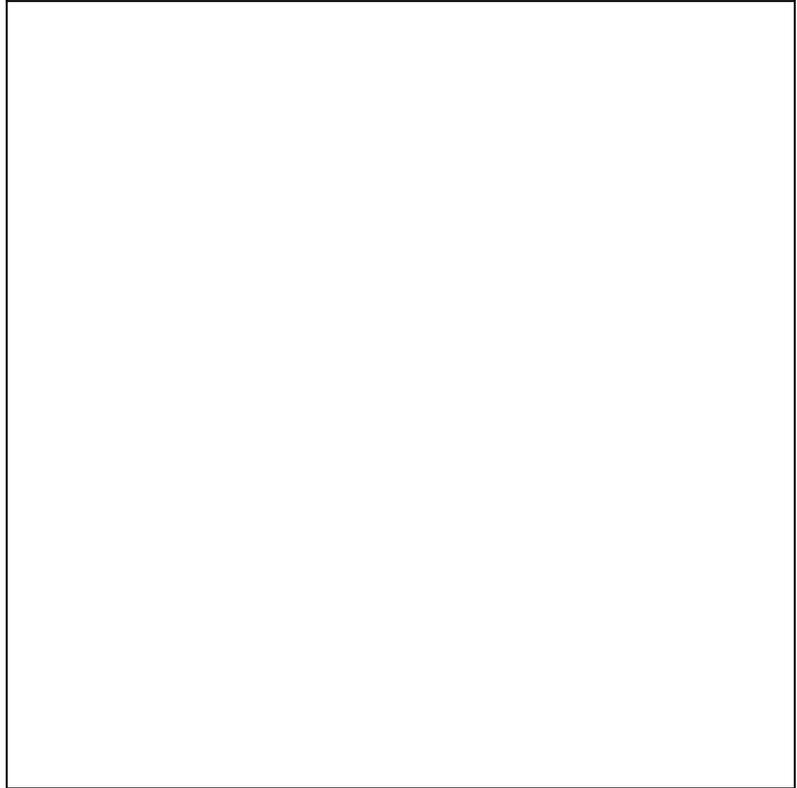
Tommy Gunn led the Blue Raiders in scoring with 16 and Steven Jackson, Bryan Smithson, and Marcus Robinson each turned in double-figure scoring tallies. Ackson led the team on the boards with seven.

Antquon James led Alabama State with 13 points.

The Blue Raiders will travel to Cookeville to play Tennessee Tech on Saturday night.

NOTES

DEFENSIVE STAND: Middle Tennessee had one of its best defensive runs in recent memory when it did not allow a single point by Alabama State for the first 12:47 of the game. With Middle



Tennessee up 21-0, ASU's Malcolm Campbell canned a three-pointer at the 7:13 mark to put the Hornets on the scoreboard for the first time.

SMITHSON TABBED PLAYER OF GAME: Members of the media voted freshman Bryan Smithson the Alexander Automotive Player of the Game following his effort in Middle Tennessee's win over Alabama State. Smithson scored a career-high 13 points, dished out five assists and recorded his first career blocked shot.

GUNN PASSES ALLEN: With 16 points tonight, senior Tommy Gunn surpassed Fred Allen for 16th place on Middle Tennessee's all-time scoring list. Gunn now has 1,121 career points and needs five more to take over 15th place from Tyrus Baynham (1,125).

ROBINSON HAS CAREER GAME: Senior Marcus Robinson netted a career-high 14 points on 6 of 9 shooting to go along with a personal-best three steals. The Newnan, Ga., native also had five rebounds in his 28 minutes.

JACKSON NETS CAREER-BEST: Senior Steven Jackson collected a personal-best seven rebounds in Middle Tennessee's win over ASU. Jackson, who also tallied 11 points, has scored in double figures in back-to-back games for the first time in his career.

STRUGGLING AT THE LINE: The Blue Raiders had a lot of positives in their win over Alabama State, but free throw shooting was not one of them. MT, which entered the game shooting 68.6 percent from the line, shot a season-low 41.9 percent from the charity stripe, going 13-for-31. Only one Blue Raider shot better than 50 percent from the line and that was senior Steven Jackson who went 3-for-4. The 41.9 percent also rates as the lowest mark under Kermit Davis.

TIDBITS: The Blue Raiders moved their home record to 11-5 under Kermit Davis with the victory tonight and a perfect 2-0 this season ... MT has now hit at least one three-pointer in 220 consecutive games ... The Blue Raiders have now won four straight home games ... Alex Weekes rejected a personal-best four shots ... Tommy Gunn equaled his career-high with five steals against Alabama State ... MT forced a season-high 26 turnovers ... In two home games this season, the Blue Raiders are averaging 41.5 rebounds a contest ... MT blocked a season-high six shots tonight after recording only two in the previous two games combined ... The Blue Raiders are averaging 2,940 fans through their first two contests.

NEXT UP: The Blue Raiders will hit the road to take on Tennessee Tech this Saturday. Tipoff is scheduled for 7 PM in Cookeville.

QUOTES

Head Coach Kermit Davis: We were pleased with our defense. We held them for about 12 minutes without scoring. That's what we worked on for the last three days. It makes you feel good as a staff for that to happen.

This is probably Steven Jackson's best back-to-back games. He only played about 16 minutes, or he could have really had a big night.

Steven Jackson: We've got to give credit to the coaching staff. They did a great job scouting and we worked on our post defense all week in practice and we got it into the game tonight.

Our offense gives you a great deal of freedom. I have to give a lot of credit to the offensive system that our coaches have put in.

Marcus Robinson: It was important for me to come out and have a good game. The first thing I focused on was defense and the second was offense, because [Michael] Cuffee was out and Ben [Britt] was out. I thought everyone came out with a great effort. Our defense showed up tonight. We weren't making shots in the beginning of the game, so we knew it was important to get it done on defense.

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