Dean Debuts With 21 in 94-51 Win

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Mike Dean scored 21 points in his Blue Raider debut and led Middle Tennessee to a 94-51 blowout of Tennessee Wesleyan.

Dean, who sat out a year after transferring from Georgia, connected on 8-of-14 shots, including three treys. He also dished out four assists while playing a team-high 29 minutes.

However, Dean was not the only Blue Raider to set himself apart in the game. Tommy Gunn continued his excellent season with 21 points of his own on 7-of-13 shooting. Gunn also swished 3-of-4 shots from behind the arc to boost his season trey percentage to 56.0.

The Blue Raiders jumped out to a 12-2 lead after Gunn drilled two of his three-pointers within the first 3:12 of the game. The team would lead by as many as 23 in the half in cruising to a 50-32 advantage at intermission.

The second half saw the Blue Raiders limit the Bulldogs to only five field goals and a field goal percentage of 22.7. The team used its outstanding defense to bolster its already sizeable lead. The Blue Raiders would lead by as many as 48 before settling in for a 43-point win.

Darrio Scott came off the bench to score 17 while Michael Cuffee, playing in his first game since the opener after sustaining an injury, chipped in 10. Kyle Young posted the team's first double-double of the year with 10 points and 11 boards.

Middle Tennessee was very active on both ends of the floor, recording season-highs with 45 rebounds, 15 steals, and 23 assists.

Middle Tennessee now embarks on perhaps the most grueling portion of its schedule with a game at Alabama State on Wednesday night. The contest will mark the first of two straight road games and will see the team play five of its next six away from the Murphy Center.

NOTES

FULL FORCE: For the first time this year, Middle Tennessee played with its full compliment of players. Junior Mike Dean, who transferred from the University of Georgia last year, became eligible today and was in the starting lineup. The Blue Raiders also welcomed back junior Michael Cuffee who missed the last three games with an injury.

PLAYER OF THE GAME: Members of the media voted Mike Dean as the Alexander Automotive Family Player of the Game. Dean, in his first game as a Blue Raider, scored 21 points to go along with four assists and five steals.

NOT A BAD DEBUT: Blue Raider basketball fans have been waiting a long time to see Mike Dean play and when the junior got his chance he did not disappoint. The University of Georgia transfer scored 21 points on 8 of 14 shooting, grabbed four rebounds and registered four assists and five steals in 29 minutes of action. Dean's previous best point total as a collegian was a nine-point performance against Arkansas as a freshman at Georgia.

BREAKOUT FOR SCOTT: Sophomore Darrio Scott had a breakout game in the win over Tennessee Wesleyan Saturday night. The George Washington transfer poured in a career-high 17 points on 8 of 11 shooting. Scott, who also hauled in a personal-best four boards, had a previous scoring high of six points set on three different occasions.

SCORING OUTBURST: Middle Tennessee rang up the scoreboard tonight with 94 points against Tennessee Wesleyan to mark the most points ever scored under Kermit Davis. The 94 points are the most scored by any Blue Raider team since Nov. 17, 2001 when Middle Tennessee defeated Bryan College 115-59 - a span of 63 games.

DOUBLE-DOUBLE: Freshman Kyle Young recorded the team's first double-double of the year when he grabbed a game-high 11 rebounds to go with 10 points. Both totals are personal bests for the Lewisburg, Tenn., native.

POINT GUARDS SHINE: Starting point guard Bryan Smithson and backup Keith Conner turned in another solid effort in the win over Tennessee Wesleyan by combining for 14 assists against only one turnover. Smithson dished out a career-best nine assists, while Conner added five. The lone turnover belonged to Smithson who played 25 minutes.

TIDBITS: The 50 points scored by the Blue Raiders in the first half against Tennessee Wesleyan went down as the most ever in a half of play under Kermit Davis ... In his return to the floor tonight, junior Michael Cuffee had personal bests in points (10) and rebounds (6) ... The Blue Raiders forced 28 turnovers which is also the most since forcing 30 against Erskine on Nov. 21, 1998 ... The Blue Raiders ripped down a season-high 45 rebounds.

NEXT UP: The Blue Raiders will hit the road to take on Alabama State on Wednesday at 7 PM. This will be a rematch from Middle Tennessee's Dec. 4 win at home over ASU, 71-48.

QUOTES

MT Head Coach Kermit Davis: "[Mike Dean] just brings a skill level to our team. He brings another offensive threat, which is going to make Tommy Gunn so much better because you can't just key on Tommy. He also just brings a real unselfishness. It was good to get Michael Cuffee back. You could

tell he is at 80 percent right now. He still had 10 points and six rebounds in 24 minutes. It was good to have both of those guys out there."

"We almost had three guys off the bench in double figures. I was really pleased with 23 assists to nine turnovers. From the point guard spot, we had 14 assists and one turnover which was real good."

MT Guard Mike Dean: "I just really wanted to come out and play hard. When you play hard, good things are going to happen. It was totally different from practice. I got a little winded real quick. It was totally different, but everything will be all right."

MT Forward Darrio Scott: "We have been practicing and practicing getting the ball to the posts. We practiced it and it came out in the game. Get the practice in the game is what Coach Davis always says. This game was very important, especially as a confidence booster. The next two games are on the road, so we won't have the home court advantage."

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