

VCU Holds Off Blue Raiders, 66-61

January 2, 2004 · MT Media Relations

RICHMOND, Va. - Middle Tennessee held homestanding VCU without a field goal over the final eight minutes but could not overcome a big second-half deficit, as the Rams defeated the Blue Raiders, 66-61, at ALLTEL Pavilion Friday night in the final nonconference road game of the season for Middle Tennessee.

The Blue Raiders fell behind by as many as 16 in the second half before making a furious comeback in the final 10 minutes, getting as close as one point after a Steven Jackson three-pointer with 2:17 to play.



VCU, who shoots just 57 percent from the foul line as a team, made 6-of-8 from the foul line the rest of the way. Middle Tennessee had two good chances to tie or go ahead, with Tommy Gunn missing a three-pointer and Marcus Robinson misfiring on a baseline jumper during the final two minutes.

Gunn kept Middle Tennessee in the contest in the first half, scoring 11 of the team's 27 points in the half. VCU took a seven-point lead to the locker room thanks to 11 points from their big man in the middle, Troy Godwin.

The Rams came out in the second half and took advantage of poor defending from the Blue Raiders, as freshman point guard B.A. Walker made a trio of three-pointers in a five-minute stretch to go along with another trifecta from Jesse Pellot-Rosa. VCU opened the lead to as many as 16 at 50-34 with 13:02 to play on Pellot-Rosa's three-pointer.

But the Blue Raiders would not go away, and defense was the key, as well as better offensive execution, especially in the paint.

Robinson and Mike Dean stepped up their play in the defensive end, while Jackson and Kyle Young began to find the bucket on offense as Middle Tennessee chipped away at the lead.

The Blue Raiders went on a 16-3 run over the next six minutes, with Jackson and Young each contributing four points during the run to cut the lead to 53-50 for the Rams. Godwin's layup with 6:49 to play was the final bucket of the contest for VCU, but their unusually good foul shooting was able to carry them through for another home victory.

Gunn had a game-high 19 points to go along with five rebounds, including two thunderous slams in the first half, the first a good catch and finish on a bad alley-oop pass from Bryan Smithson and the second an in-your-face flush over the 300-pound Godwin.

Young contributed a career-high 12 points, six in each half, with five rebounds, while Smithson added 10 and Mike Dean grabbed a game-high eight boards.

Godwin had 18 and eight rebounds for the winners, while Walker added 15, Domonic Jones had 12 and Pellot-Rosa 11.

The Blue Raiders begin a four-game homestand Tuesday, hosting IP-Fort Wayne at 7 p.m. at Murphy Center. Middle Tennessee also hosts Wyoming Thursday before beginning Sun Belt Conference play the following week at home against Arkansas-Little Rock and Arkansas State.

GAME NOTES

Tommy Gunn's three-pointer in the first half gives the Blue Raiders 228 straight games with a trifecta ... Senior Tommy Gunn scored 11 first-half points in the contest, giving him 105 for the season and 27 in the last two games. Gunn is averaging 9.5 points per game in the opening 20 minutes this season ... Freshman Kyle Young netted a career-high 12 points in the game, six in each half, setting a season-high with six field goals and tying his season-high with seven attempts ... Gunn had a season-high for shots and makes, going 8-for-16 from the field ... Mike Dean grabbed a season-high eight rebounds, besting his previous mark by two. The junior did have only five points in the contest, his season-low ... The Blue Raiders played without forward Darrio Scott in the contest after Scott was injured in the final minutes of practice Wednesday in Murfreesboro. Scott will have season-ending surgery Monday. He is the second Middle Tennessee player lost for the season, as freshman Ben Britt will be taking a medical redshirt after an injury earlier in the year.

Printed on July 22, 2014

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/2549>