

# Blueprint for upset works for awhile vs. No. 2 Memphis

## Record crowd of 18,000-plus watch Tigers pull away from Middle Tennessee in second half

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**NASHVILLE** - Middle Tennessee had the perfect plan to put a major scare into No. 2-ranked Memphis in the Sun Belt Classic but the Tigers were too tough in the second half and escaped with a 65-41 win in front of a sellout crowd of 18,071 at the Sommet Center Saturday night. The 18,071 established a new Sommet Center attendance record for a regular-season game and it also set a new Middle Tennessee home attendance standard. "I am just excited that we were able at Middle Tennessee to initiate this (Sun Belt Classic)," Middle Tennessee coach Kermit Davis said. "Western Kentucky did a great job but we initiated it and it is nice to be a part of that. For us at Middle Tennessee to put something together like this with 18,000 people and a national television game is amazing. Our administration should be commended for game operations, game management, how they sold the games. I have to give a



great thank you for Memphis and Tennessee for participating in it. It is definitely something we are looking to continue in the future." The record crowd was treated to a competitive game, particularly in the first half when the Blue Raiders used a variety of defenses and worked the shot clock on offense

and the plan worked for the most part but Middle Tennessee's inability to finish field goal attempts at the end of the shot clock inevitably proved to be the difference. "I think we had the plan right," Davis said. "We wanted to play a game in the 60s and we did that. I've always said that Memphis is the most underrated defensive team in America. We were really intimidated around the goal. They blocked eight shots and probably changed 10 or 12 shots. I know we are making progress defensively but they are the No. 2 team in the country." Memphis coach John Calipari agreed with Davis as far as Middle Tennessee's approach to the high-profile game that was played before a national television audience on ESPN2. "My hat is off to Middle Tennessee," Calipari said. "They did what a lot of teams will do to us - pack it in defensively, try to make shots at the buzzer and try to keep it close. Kermit came in with a great game plan. There were times tonight that we just swarmed them defensively and played with incredible intensity." The Blue Raiders held Memphis (8-0) to almost 20 points below their 82 points per game average and the Tigers two leading scorers - Chris Douglas-Roberts and Derrick Rose - were a combined 4-of-10 from the field for nine points. The talented duo came in averaging 36 points per game between them. Although Middle Tennessee (3-6) was able to successfully defend the high-octane Tigers it was unable to execute offensively and shot just 27 percent (13-of-48) from the field. Worse for the Blue Raiders was the fact so many of their misfires were on shot-range shots were they had successfully executed their offensive but failed to finish shots. "I thought we guarded very well but our offense struggled," said point guard Kevin Kanaskie. "We guarded well tonight but we just couldn't finish our shots." Demetrius Green, Theryn Hudson and Dino Hair each scored eight points for the Blue Raiders, while Kanaskie pulled a career-high seven rebounds and collected four steals. The Tigers got 11 each from Robert Dozier, Joey Dorsey and Shawn Taggart. Middle Tennessee stayed in the game early and brought the battle to the Tigers. The score was tied 16-16 with 9:33 remaining in the first half and the Blue Raiders were within four with under four minutes remaining before the half only to see the Tigers use a 10-2 run to finish the half and take a 35-22 lead into the intermission. The Blue Raiders continued to struggle offensively in the second half as Memphis slowly pulled away to secure the victory. Middle Tennessee will begin Sun Belt Conference play at home against Florida International Tuesday.

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