Hudson, Yates pack powerful punch as Blue Raiders win Sun Belt opener

Inside duo combine for 39 points in win vs. Florida International

December 18, 2007 · MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee needed a big lift in its Sun Belt Conference opener if the Blue Raiders were to contend with Florida International's potent inside punch. As it turned out, Middle Tennessee's inside duo of Theryn Hudson and Desmond Yates packed more than enough punch to lift the Blue Raiders to a 72-63 win at Murphy Center. The Blue Raiders (4-6, 1-0) improved to 5-1 in conference home openers under Head Coach Kermit Davis as Hudson and Yates supplied career performances. Yates tied his career high with a game-high 23 points and Hudson equaled his career high with 16 points and a game-high eight rebounds on 6-of-7 shooting from the field as the Blue Raiders started league play on a positive note. "All that really matters is league play," said Hudson, who is shooting 63 percent (44-of-70) on the season. "We're trying to win the East side, and all the stuff before that, all the games before, they were just preparing us for the Sun Belt Conference." Middle

Tennessee continued to show improvement and everyone who played provided quality minutes. In addition to the outstanding play of Hudson and Yates, Demetrius Green had his best all-around game as a Blue Raider with 11 points, five rebounds and four assists, while Kevin Kanaskie added nine points and six rebounds. Nigel Johnson matched his career high with seven assists and had just one turnover, while Josh Sain came off the bench with eight points in 14 minutes. Florida International (3-6, 0-2) was led by their 7-foot center Russell Hicks, who contributed 20 points and power forward Alex Galindo tallied 14. No other Golden Panther reached double figures. The Blue Raiders came out with a high energy level and established themselves from the outset as they jumped out to a 23-4 lead eight minutes into the game. Outstanding defense, superb execution of the halfcourt offense and strong play in transition was key for Middle Tennessee as it established itself from the opening tip. "I thought the first 10 minutes of that game was the best we've played this year combining both ends. Defending we came out with a lot of energy and I thought on offense we really got out in transition and shot the ball. Just like league games do, Florida International really showed some toughness and grit. They may have the best 4 and 5 in the league; I thought (Alex) Galindo and (Russell) Hicks were just terrific. But I was really proud of our team. I thought we got good bench play, and our 4 and 5 are playing really good right now, too." Middle Tennessee controlled the game throughout but Florida International would not quit. The Golden Panthers trimmed the lead to 67-63 with 1:14 remaining but Yates got behind the defense for a dunk with 1:07 remaining on a nice pass from Sain, and Middle Tennessee hit three-of-four free throws down the stretch to solidify victory in the conference opener. Middle Tennessee will face another big challenge when it faces South Alabama in Mobile, Ala., Saturday at 7 p.m. **Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes**

Head Coach Kermit Davis

On tonight's win

"I thought the first 10 minutes of that game was the best we've played this year combining both ends. Defending we came out with a lot of energy and I thought on offense we really got out in transition and shot the ball. Just like league games do, Florida International really showed some toughness and grit. They may have the best 4 and 5 in the league; I thought (Alex) Galindo and (Russell) Hicks were just terrific. But I was really proud of our team. I thought we got good bench play, and our 4 and 5 are playing really good right now, too." **On matching FIU's post play**

"We did challenge them. I don't know if there's any two better offensive 4 and 5 (than Galindo and Hicks), and there's a lot of good big guys in our league. Hicks is one of the best centers to come in our league in a long time. We all know what Galindo can do. He can make them from anywhere. I was proud of them (Desmond Yates and Theryn Hudson), I thought they competed. That was two good 4s and 5s for both teams offensively all night." **On a fresh start in conference play**

"The nine games are so important leading up to conference play. Sometimes you can play schedules that are beneficial for more confidence and more wins. The two losses (I think were tough) were San Jose and Appalachian State at home, and I think we were just trying to find our way without Calvin (O' Neil). But we've played a really difficult nonconference schedule. The records on the other side matter in our league, so hopefully we're prepared to go play our first league game on the road (at South Alabama)." **On Theryn Hudson and regaining momentum**

"We ran a set play for Theryn and they shut it off, and then we made a great play to the corner and cleared the backside. Nigel made a really nice pass to 'T' (Hudson), and so he made a real physical post play. He kind of got us going back offensively. We were up 51-35, almost the game in hand, and then we couldn't get stops and missed some shots we normally make. T was really good down the stretch." **On the play of Desmond Yates**

"What I'm excited about with Boogie (Yates), he's really starting to play in the perimeter a lot better.

He's a good low-post scorer, but when you can start moving a 4-man around like they do, Galindo and he can make a 3-pointer, now you have to guard him at the three. Those are the four-men that we've envisioned for Desmond; that he's hard to guard." **On making a season-high eight 3-pointers**

"(Josh) Sain made a couple of big 3s. I thought that we were kind of unselfish with the ball. Some of that was ball-screens, we pick and pop, and sometimes off dribble penetration (Yates) got in the perimeter and we made some nice passes to him. If we can get Kevin (Kanaskie) and Nigel (Johnson) to start shooting the ball like we know they're going to in time, then I really think we can be a hard team to defend. When they get on track our team can really take shape offensively." **Junior center Theryn Hudson**

On giving the team a lift late in the second half

"That's why coach put me in. We weren't really going through the offense. I tried to get angles on Hicks and I got an angle in the corner and the pass from Nigel and I got the dunk." **On the first conference game**

"All that really matters is league play. We're trying to win the East side, and all the stuff before that, all the games before, were just preparing us for the Sun Belt Conference." **Sophomore forward Desmond Yates**

On getting free for the breakaway vs. FIU's press in the final minute

"Nobody was guarding me the whole time. I couldn't believe it. I thought Kevin (Kanaskie) was going to give it to me at first, but no one was guarding me, so I just kind of faded into the backcourt. I started throwing my hands up so someone could see me. Luckily Josh (Sain) got me the ball at the right time." **On the matchups in the post**

"Since we've been preparing for them (FIU), Coach has been telling us that all the coaches around the league believe that Galindo and Hicks are the best four and five tandem in our league. Coach has been beating that into our head the last couple of days. I know I took it kind of personally, to come out and play good, and I guess Theryn did to. We came out with a lot of intensity and both of us played well tonight."

Printed on March 10, 2014
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/29211