South Alabama turns back Blue Raiders

Sain scores career-high 13 in SBC road loss

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MOBILE, Ala. - South Alabama remained unbeaten at home by turning away a hard-nosed Middle Tennessee team, 75-61, in front of 2,660 at the Mitchell Center in Mobile, Ala., here Saturday. The Jaguars (9-3, 2-0) won their fifth straight as they were able to seize control of the game in the final five minutes of the first half. Middle Tennessee (4-7, 1-1) trailed 16-15 when Ronald Douglas connected on a layup with 5:16 remaining to ignite a 14-5 run and send South Alabama into the half with a 30-20 advantage. Seldom are games won or lost in the first half but those final five minutes proved to be the difference as Middle Tennessee was pretty much even with the Jags throughout the second half. Freshman Josh Sain came off the bench to score a career-high 13 points on 5-of-8 shooting and equal Desmond Yates for team-high honors for the Blue Raiders, while Nigel Johnson scored 10 and Demetrius Green finished with nine. South Alabama was led by Demetric Bennett's game-high 24 points and Brandon Davis finished with 20. "The game was disappointing from the standpoint that I didn't think we played with the same physicalness we have been in our last four games," Middle Tennessee coach Kermit Davis said. "South Alabama beat us on the boards and they seemed to get to most every loose ball and those are things we generally do well when we compete in basketball games." South Alabama dominated the glass, getting 39 boards to Middle Tennessee's 21 but even more frustrating for the Blue Raiders was the 14 offensive rebounds allowed. Of those 14 offensive rebounds, 11 came in the second half and curtailed each opportunity Middle Tennessee had to make runs and get back into the game. The Jaguars outscored Middle Tennessee 12-0 on second-chance points in the second half after the Blue Raiders had surrendered just three second-chance points in the first 20 minutes. Nine of the 12 second-half field goals South Alabama scored were within five feet of the basket, further indicating their ability to cash in on second and third-chance opportunities. As a result, Middle Tennessee consistently climbed to within eight in the second half and came up

with key stops only to see the Jags pull away offensive rebounds or get to loose balls and keep their possessions alive. Middle Tennessee will return to action against Austin Peay Saturday in the final non-conference game of the season.

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