

# Valiant Blue Raider comeback bid falls short against Govs

## Green's 24 not enough in 78-75 setback

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### **MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -**

Middle Tennessee junior guard Demetrius Green scored a career-high 24 points to lead a furious Blue Raider comeback in the second half, but his heroics were not enough as Austin Peay held on for a 78-75 win at Murphy Center Saturday night.

The second of two made free throws by Green had given Middle Tennessee a 70-69 lead with 2:05 remaining but the Governors outscored the Blue Raiders 9-5 down the stretch to avoid what would have been a tremendous comeback for the home team.

In addition to Green's game-high 24 points, Theryn Hudson finished with 11 points and Josh Sain finished with 10.

Middle Tennessee took a 37-35 lead into the half when Green knocked down a 24-foot 3-pointer at the buzzer but Austin Peay started the second half on a 10-0 run and took a 45-37 lead on Derek Wright's jumper with 17:19 remaining.

The Governors would stretch their lead to 12, 60-48, with 10:20 remaining on two Wright free throws but the Blue Raiders had another run in them.

Desmond Yates, Kevin Kanaskie and Josh Sain powered Middle Tennessee's comeback bid with 3-



pointers on consecutive possessions. Sain's long trey cut the deficit to 62-59 with 8:10 remaining and the game was once again a back-and-forth affair between the two longtime rivals.

Green, who was 5-of-7 from the field and 4-of-5 from 3-point range, pulled the Blue Raiders to within 69-68 with a layup at the 3:56 mark and following an Austin Peay miss, Green pulled the rebound and was fouled on the offensive end. He connected on both free throws to give the Blue Raiders a 70-69 edge with 2:05 but Austin Peay (7-6) scored six straight points to go on top 75-69 with 18 seconds remaining and Middle Tennessee (4-8) could not finish the frantic rally.

Austin Peay, which was led by Drake Reed's 17 and 16 more from Derek Wright, made a living at the free-throw line. The Governors were 31-of-36 from the free-throw line and outscored the Blue Raiders by 13 (31-18) at the charity stripe. That statistic weighed heavily in a one-possession game that saw the Blue Raiders play without their two leading scorers (Hudson and Yates) due to foul trouble a majority of the game.

Middle Tennessee shot 50 percent (24-48) from the field and knocked down a season-high nine 3-pointers but their offensive prowess was offset by the Governors' success at the line. Austin Peay shot 41 percent (20-of-49) and were just 29 percent (7-of-24) from beyond the arc, but they shot 86 percent (31-of-36) from the free-throw line.

Kevin Kanaskie dished out five assists in the win, giving him 306 for his career and moving him into No. 7 on the all-time list at Middle Tennessee.

The Blue Raiders will return to action against rival Western Kentucky in Bowling Green, Ky., Wednesday at 7 p.m.

### **Postgame Quotes**

Middle Tennessee Coach Kermit Davis Opening Statement

"I was proud of our team's comeback. As always you get a very physical and tough effort from Austin Peay. They are very well coached. We did what we wanted to do. We held them at 40 percent from the field and we shot 50 percent. They outscore us 31 to 18 at the line and that's the key stat. I didn't think the second half had much flow. Nobody could really get into the flow of the offense. I was really proud of our team's effort tonight. The difference in the game was 31 makes from the line for Austin Peay and 18 makes for us."

### **On the team's fouling troubles**

"I really think we had a great chance to win at South Alabama and (Hudson) got into foul trouble there. I thought both teams were trying to post real physical. It just changes the game. I thought Theryn [Hudson] played smart when he had four fouls but it just changes the way you play because you can't be as physical as you would like."

### **On the late comeback in the second half**

"We couldn't get a stop. We climbed the ladder and had a great comeback. [Wes] Channels hits a jumper on us and then Demetrius Green took an ill-advised 3-point shot. We had been going to the rim and attacking the paint. He shot an off-balance 24 footer. That turned the game. We weren't going to foul and then Josh Sain fouls 30 feet from the basket, then it goes to a three point game. Then Dino [Hair] made a poor pass and threw it away and that was pretty much it."

### **On if Desmond Yates and Theryn Hudson in foul trouble makes a difference**

"It is the difference. We had a great chance to win at South Alabama if those two guys stayed out of foul trouble. I thought we had a great chance of winning tonight if they stayed out of foul trouble. If your two leading scorers are in foul trouble, it really hurts your game. I was proud of Darren Avery's minutes. He came in and changed the game from a defensive standpoint. Demetrius Green had a solid night tonight with no turnovers in 33 minutes."

### **Middle Tennessee Center Theryn Hudson**

#### **On tonight's loss**

"We lost focus and we took some bad shots that we shouldn't have taken at the end. We didn't let the offense develop because we took some early shots and didn't get the rebounds."

#### **On playing physical**

"I tried to be physical. The refs called some fouls on me that I didn't agree with. When I got back in I didn't worry about that and I didn't foul for the rest of the game. It was a physical game out there and a tough game for both teams. I thought we played well but we just feel short at the end."

#### **On what Middle Tennessee needs to change before playing Western Kentucky (Wednesday)**

"The only thing we need to change is to stop fouling people. We let them get to the line 36 times. If we would have got to the line that many times, we would have won the game."

### **Austin Peay Head Coach Dave Loos**

"I thought things were going towards Middle's way in the first half. I was really impressed with the way they bounced back. They shot 56 percent on us from the field in the first half and 44 percent in the second half. So we improved there in the second half. That was a big stat for us and for me. Our free throw percentage was phenomenal, 31 for 36, great free throw shooting. Ernest Fields had a terrific night, his best of the season. He was the guy that really stepped up for us." **On Derek's**

#### **[Wright] big steal**

"Bubba [Wells] had just said on the bench saying that D.J. needed a steal. Sure enough he comes up with a big play, which sealed the game really. He's a guy we look too. That's something that's not going to be noticed that much in the stats but it was a huge play." **On playing against guys like**

#### **Theryn [Hudson] and Desmond [Yates]**

"That was a big concern, because we are undersized. Coming into the game we were really worried about that. [Theryn] Hudson has great size, [Dino] Hair knows how to get an angle and work you, and [Desmond] Yates is a good basketball player. I was really pleased with the job we did on them."

#### **Austin Peay junior forward Drake Reed**

"Tonight was a lot more physical game and a lot of our guys played with tenacity. If it hadn't been for a couple of free throws, it probably would have been a different story." **On how they planned to**

#### **play against Theryn [Hudson] and Desmond [Yates]**

"We just wanted to pack it in on them and force the perimeter guys to make the plays, which they did a good job of during the first half. The big guys were also able to get a few buckets as well. We just wanted to keep the big guys touches down in the second half and we did a good job at that."