

# Yates, Kanaskie key Blue Raider win vs. Denver

## Four players reach double figures as team improves to 2-2 in league race

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**MURFREESBORO, Tenn.** - Middle Tennessee's offense was outstanding going from the inside out and the Blue Raiders were sensational defensively as they secured a 68-50 win against Denver at the Murphy Center Saturday night. "Finally," sophomore forward Desmond Yates said. "That was one of the more complete games we have played and it was against a tough team that is difficult to defend." Yates tied his career high with 23 points on 10-of-13 shooting and Kevin Kanaskie dished out a season-high nine assists against just three turnovers and the Blue Raiders (5-9, 2-2) shot a season-high 58.7 percent (27-of-46) as they evened their Sun Belt Conference record at 2-2. Middle Tennessee had four players reach double figures. In addition to Yates' 23 and Kanaskie's 13 points, Demetrius Green scored 12 - all in the second half - and Theryn Hudson finished with 11 to key the offensive surge.



The Blue Raiders shot an astounding 72.7 percent in the second half - the third-highest single-half shooting percentage in program history and the highest single-half showing since Middle Tennessee scorched the nets to the tune of 83 percent against Akron almost 26 years ago (Feb. 4, 1982). The Blue Raiders improved to 4-0 this season when Yates and Hudson both reach double figures and

Kanaskie was intent on getting the ball inside to the big men early and often. In fact, seven of Kanaskie's nine assists were to Yates. "We believe we are at our best offensively when we are going from the inside-out," said Middle Tennessee coach Kermit Davis, who notched his 225th career win. "Kevin ran out team extremely well and we were efficient offensively with Yates and Hudson getting us going inside, then Kevin and Demetrius really gave us a spark from the guard positions."

Kanaskie's nine assists moved him into sixth on the all-time list with 316 and the three 3-pointers give him 103 for his career, tied for eighth on the career list. Yates surpassed the 525-point mark for his career and has 534 points in just his 46th career game. Middle Tennessee's 58.7 percent field goal percentage was its best this season and the 63 percent showing from beyond the arc also was a season high. While the offense was solid, Middle Tennessee's rock-ribbed defense was superb. The Blue Raiders, who had just two days to prepare for Denver's Princeton offense, limited the Pioneers to 38.9 percent (14-of-36) from the field. Of their six first-half-field goals, five were 3-pointers as Middle Tennessee would not allow the Pioneers to successfully run their offense. Denver was shooting 58 percent in Sun Belt wins vs. Louisiana-Monroe and North Texas but their 14 field goals made were the second-fewest the Blue Raiders have allowed and the 50 points were the second fewest by a Middle Tennessee opponent this season. Middle Tennessee scored the game's first six points but Denver went on a 16-2 run to go on top 16-8 with 10:17 remaining in the opening half. The Blue Raiders stormed back with Hudson and Yates leading the way. In fact, Yates scored eight of Middle Tennessee's last 10 points of the first half to send the Blue Raiders into the half with a 27-24 advantage. The Blue Raiders didn't lose their rhythm at the break. Yates connected on nine of his last 10 field goal attempts, including a 5-of-5 showing in the second half. Middle Tennessee, leading 30-28, went on a 9-1 run early in the second half to stake claim to a 39-29 lead with 15:06 remaining and controlled the game from there. Denver closed to within six on one occasion but Kanaskie came back with a long 3-pointer to ignite a 12-2 run and seal the win. Middle Tennessee will play host to Florida Atlantic Wednesday. Tipoff is 7 p.m. **Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes**

#### **Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis**

"I thought Denver came in playing with a lot of confidence and they were playing really well. I thought that we had a good plan trying to defend them. They are a hard team to guard. I thought our guys, for the most part, executed it. To hold them to 38 percent and to shoot 58 percent and to rebound them by 11 was good. I think we made some progress tonight and got back even in the conference race with 2-2. Hopefully we will continue to improve." **On when Theryn [Hudson] and**

#### **Desmond [Yates] are both in double figures**

"I think our team has a better rhythm, start going inside-out more. Kevin Kanaskie started playing like the old Kevin, the one that was all league last year, so hopefully that will continue to improve. When they play well our team usually plays well." "It makes all the difference in the world. I really think Demetrius [Green] is getting a lot better. I know he had 24 points a couple of games ago, and against Western he was really solid. I thought tonight he was real solid. He just handled the ball and rebounded. I thought Josh [Sain] was really solid, 5 rebounds, 16 minutes. Even Broderick [Gilchrest] came off the bench and finished the game for us." "I don't think that Darren Avery came out with the same tenacity that he did against Western Kentucky. Everybody has got to figure out their role. Darren's role is, hopefully to be our best defender and rebound the ball. I think Demetrius [Green] came in with a nice demeanor about him defensively." **Middle Tennessee junior guard**

#### **Kevin Kanaskie**

#### **On seven of his assists to Desmond Yates**

"Desmond [Yates] can score pretty easy. We try to get him on the block every game and I think the match-up zone was going there was a little guy guarding him most of the night. Like he always does, once he gets it on the block he usually scores it." **On end of the first half**

"The presence inside with Desmond [Yates] and Theryn [Hudson]. That is our game plan every game and especially Desmond did a great job of getting open tonight." "We still gave up a lot of lay ups and open threes. Being our first time to face that offense, with two days to prepare, we did a good job." **On how dependent he is on Desmond Yates and Theryn Hudson**

"Real dependant because once they get going the guy who is guarding me usually double ups and leaves me open." **Middle Tennessee sophomore forward Desmond Yates**

**On when he and Theryn [Hudson] score in double figures**

"Coach [Davis] has mentioned it a lot. He has said in the games we win, Theryn [Hudson] and I are the leading scorers. So every game Theryn and I try to make a presence. Luckily tonight Kevin was getting us the ball." **Denver coach Joe Scott**

**On the loss to Middle Tennessee**

"We are still young. In a road league game, you must have a certain desire to be zeroed in on what we do. Until we get that certain mentality or develop that certain focus toward what we do and how we do it, we aren't going to win on the road. We already have enough of that experience and all of sudden we don't. It's not going to change until we get that intensity. [Kevin] Kanaskie shouldn't be allowed to get all those 3-pointers. He had been struggling all year long. He has not been playing well all year and he played well tonight. He's the key to their team and that's why they had been struggling this season. We are up 16-8 and we give up a 3-point shot. That's not the way we should give them up. If he scores another way, then he scores another way. Guarding shots like that is how you win on the road. You win on the road with focused intensity. If you don't have that, then you are not going to win on the road." **On the play of Middle Tennessee**

"They played well. They made us unaggressive and they did well shooting some key 3-pointers. [Kevin] Kanaskie did a good job making those shots. People don't miss at home. That's why you can't let them shoot. You have to make them miss. You have to limit their opportunities."

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