Blue Raiders let one slip away against visiting Privateers

Yates scores career-high 30 points in OT setback

January 19, 2008 · MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee has been at its best with the lead in late-game situations but the Blue Raiders were left thinking about one they let get away as New Orleans overcame a six-point deficit late and won 82-75 at Murphy Center Saturday night.

The Privateers (14-5, 5-2) stormed back from being down 64-58 with 31 seconds remaining in regulation and forced overtime when James Parlow's offensive rebound and putback just beat the buzzer with two-tenths of a second remaining, and New Orleans outscored an outmanned Blue Raider team16-9 in overtime to escape with the win and improve to 6-1 on the road this season.

Sophomore standout Desmond Yates scored a game-high 30 points on 12-of-20 shooting from the field but it wasn't enough as the Blue Raiders (7-10, 4-3) saw their three-game win streak end in their first home conference loss this season.

"I give New Orleans credit because they made the tough plays with the game on the line and we didn't," said Yates, whose 30 points are the most by a Blue Raider since William Pippen poured in 32

against Florida International Feb. 22, 2003 - a span of almost five years. "It's a disappointing and frustrating loss because we had it within grasp despite foul trouble and everything else but we didn't finish."

In addition to Yates' 30 points, Josh Sain finished with 13 and Kevin Kanaskie added 12. New Orleans guard Bo McCalebb led the Privateers with 28 points on 12-of-24 shooting, while Kechan Myers finished with 14.

"Those were two very special players on the court tonight," Head Coach Kermit Davis said, referring to Yates and McCalebb. "I don't care if you are watching SEC, ACC or Big 12, those two guys are special players and they showed it here tonight. It's a tough one but we have to bounce back. That's conference play. The games are tough and you have to be resilient."

The Blue Raiders were playing without junior starting center Theryn Hudson, who suffered a severely strained mid-foot injury to his right foot in Thursday's practice. He did not dress and his status for future games will be further evaluated Monday. If that wasn't bad enough, the Blue Raiders were also without Kanaskie and Nigel Johnson - their top two ball-handlers and two of the top seven assist men in the Sun Belt - after each fouled out down the stretch.

Johnson fouled out with 4:40 remaining and Kanaskie was whistled for a controversial fifth foul with 16 seconds remaining. He was called for the foul as Myers converted a 7-footer to pull the Privateers to within 64-63 with 16 seconds remaining. Myers connected on the free-throw to convert the three-point play and even the score 64-64.

"I wasn't questioning whether there was a foul on the play but I wanted them to review the play on the TV monitor, and it's a reviewable play, because I didn't think the foul was on Kanaskie," Davis said. "They would not review it and we lost Kevin on the play."

The Blue Raiders got the ball to Yates on the inbound and he knocked down an eight-foot jumper with seven seconds remaining in regulation to stake Middle Tennessee to a 66-64 lead. The Blue Raiders denied McCalebb the inbound pass and the Privateers got the ball in to Myers who missed a runner in the lane with three seconds remaining; however, Worley kept it alive with an offensive rebound. His tip-in failed but Parlow's went through just before the buzzer sounded to force overtime.

"If we can box out and get a rebound there the game is over but we missed too many free throws down the stretch and that was the difference," Davis said. "We had a six-point lead with 30 seconds to play and we couldn't convert at the line."

And the Blue Raiders had one of their top free-throw shooters at the stripe in Dino Hair, who led the Blue Raiders with a career-high eight rebounds. Hair came into the game shooting 87 percent and had connected on 15 straight before going 3-of-7 against the Privateers, including 1-of-4 in the final 31 seconds.

Once the game reached overtime, New Orleans took advantage of Middle Tennessee's excessive foul trouble and outscored the Blue Raiders 16-9 to secure the come-from-behind road win.

The Blue Raiders will look to rebound when they play at Louisiana-Monroe Thursday night.

Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes

Sophomore forward Desmond Yates

On the disappointment of the loss

"It hurts a lot. Towards the end I felt like they were the tougher team, and I give them a lot of credit. But it hurt a lot."

On the difference down the stretch

"They were coming up with rebounds, making tough shots, running offense, getting stops on defense, all the stuff we work on in practice. We didn't put it into the game today, and they did."

On the feelings of Coach Davis

"He said it was a really tough loss. He was very disappointed that we couldn't get the toughness into the game. We knew that we needed to and we should have, but we couldn't do it. We've just got to put it behind us and get ready for [Louisiana] Monroe."

On defending Bo McCalebb

"We did pretty good on him. He still got 28 [points], but we did a decent job. He started taking over in the second half. He's the best scorer in our league, so we kind of knew he was going to do that."

On moving on from the loss

"I know what I'm going to take from it. We've got to take toughness and learn from our mistakes. The mindset of our team is, tough loss, and we've got to put it behind us, and prepare and move on."

Freshman guard Josh Sain

On being shorthanded in overtime

"We didn't have our two point guards, Nigel [Johnson] and Kevin [Kanaskie], on the floor to run the offense. It was hard to do anything."

On momentum shifting in overtime

"It's tough to stop, especially when we've got people who played the whole game out of the game, and they've got everybody on the court. That makes it hard."

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis

Opening statement

"I thought it was a hard played and exciting college basketball game for any level. It boils down to simple things. We couldn't rebound at the end. Dino Hair was 1-for-4 for free throws down the stretch. If we would have just made free throws, the other part really doesn't matter. Bo McCalebb made some great plays at the end. It's really difficult for us because we lost our center in Theryn Hudson and we had to play without Nigel Johnson and Kevin Kanaskie at the end. It's really hard. We set up a clear out for Desmond Yates and he makes it and we go up two. We probably shot it too quick. We score at seven seconds."

On if the goal was made before the end of regulation

"No. I looked at the play and thought it was good. There wasn't any question about that. What we wanted to review was Kevin Kanaskie's fifth foul. It's a reviewable play and they wouldn't review it."

On the play of Desmond Yates

"He's playing as good as any big guy in our league. He can take New Orleans big guys and go off the dribble and drive into the paint. For a sophomore, he's going to be a special guy. There were two

great players on the floor tonight in McCalebb and Desmond Yates. I don't care what level you are watching, you are watching two-high level guys."

New Orleans Postgame Quotes
Head Coach Joe Pasternak
On a come-from-behind win
"I think it just showed the character of our guys. They believed. We put on the board, forty minutes every game. The 'never-quit' attitude is probably the biggest characteristic of our team. We kept coming and kept coming, and I was really proud of their effort."

On missed opportunities by Middle Tennessee
"You have to have good fortune everywhere, I think. They [Middle Tennessee] had a lot of good fortune too. I wish I could just say we got lucky, but I don't think we did."

On Bo McCalebb
"I think when the game is on the line, I don't know if there's anybody better in America. He gets stronger as the game goes on. He played forty-plus minutes, and the end of the game was when he was at his best. He had more energy at the end of the game. He let the game come to him, and that's what a special player does. What he did was pretty incredible."

On heading into overtime
"Our team was really excited coming back to the bench, and the momentum definitely shifted in our direction. Defensively we got stops and that made the difference."

On the tip-in that sent the game to overtime
"They told me to get away from the monitor. Coach Davis was there, and they told me to get away. It [the shot] was good. I'm glad that they got it right so we couldn't say [that we were cheated]."

On winning on the road
"It's huge. I think that this shows our senior leadership and the character of our players. It's not easy to win on the road in college basketball, it doesn't matter what conference. [It was] a sheer show of perseverance and never giving up."

Senior guard Bo McCalebb
On the shift in momentum down the stretch
"They [MT] kind of made us play their way and slow the game down, and that's not the way we play. The second half we sped the game up a little bit."