

Blue Raiders capture riveting win against Ragin' Cajuns

Win fifth game in seven outings

February 1, 2008 · MT Media Relations

LAFAYETTE, La. - Middle Tennessee stared adversity in the face and came away victorious with one of the most emotional wins of the Kermit Davis era in a 57-51 win against Louisiana-Lafayette here Thursday night. Middle Tennessee overcame two starters who came down with illness prior to the game and two injured players to secure a victory that propelled the Blue Raiders into third place overall in the Sun Belt Conference standings heading into the second half of the season. Kevin Kanaskie did not travel with the team Wednesday after suffering from the flu but arrived 45 minutes before tipoff and played 22 minutes. Demetrius Green played 25 minutes despite suffering from a sinus infection. Desmond



Yates (knee) and Theryn Hudson (foot), who had missed the previous three games, were considered "60-to-65" percent by athletic trainer Drew Shea, but battled through injuries and competed at a high level. Adversity lost and so did the Ragin' Cajuns (9-12, 5-5) as the Blue Raiders (9-11, 6-4) won for the fifth time in seven games and moved into third overall in the league standings heading into the home stretch. While several players worked through injury and illness it was the all-around play of junior guard Nigel Johnson that was most impressive as the Blue Raiders continued their recent surge. Johnson scored a career-high 16 points, grabbed eight rebounds and ignited the resounding win, while also leading the team with three assists as he continued his outstanding play and provided the biggest of all pick-me-ups. "I thought Nigel Johnson was the MVP of the game," Middle Tennessee coach Kermit Davis said. "He was just tough. Everything that happened with our team, the guys just fought through a lot of adversity tonight and it was a great team win. We are playing as well as anybody in the league right now and hopefully these guys can get healthy and our team can gain some momentum. We beat a quality team tonight." In addition to Johnson's outstanding

performance, Middle Tennessee's Yates secured his second double double in three games with 17 points and 11 rebounds, both game highs, while Green battled through his sickness to score 11 points and grab six rebounds. Middle Tennessee also received seven points from Dino Hair. The biggest key to the game was Middle Tennessee's dominance on the boards. The Blue Raiders won the battle of the boards 49-27, including a whopping 21 offensive caroms. Defense also continued to be a strong suit. The Blue Raiders held Elijah Millsap - the Cajuns leading scorer at 10.6 points per game - to two points on 1-of-6 shooting. "This was one of those games where everyone who was available had to step up and give a little something extra," Johnson said. "We played great defense, rebounded hard and put together one of the best team wins I have been involved with. I am so proud of the team and what we accomplished here tonight against a quality basketball team." Middle Tennessee earned its 23rd SBC road win under Davis - which is tied for the most in the league since his hiring in 2002 - with trademark defense. The Blue Raiders fell behind 24-13 with 9:15 remaining in the first half but they followed with a 17-0 run and eventually carried a 36-31 advantage into intermission. That strong run turned the game in Middle Tennessee's favor for good. The Blue Raiders never relinquished the lead after they went on top 26-24 on Darren Avery's layup with 5:34 remaining in the first half. The Ragin' Cajuns cut the Middle Tennessee lead to 48-47 with 5:57 remaining but Yates came through with a layup with 5:36 remaining to extend the lead to 50-47 and they led by at least three the remainder of the way. "I thought that at the end we just got a number of stop in a row," Davis said. "Nigel was just tough tonight and these kinds of wins are what it is all about. We fought through a lot of adversity tonight." Middle Tennessee will seek its second three-game win streak of the season when it plays at Arkansas State Monday. Tipoff in Jonesboro, Ark., is 7:05 p.m.

Printed on July 24, 2014

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/29820>