

Record setting shooting barrage keys season-opening win

Blue Raiders knock down 12 treys in 94-53 triumph

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

The NCAA extend the men's basketball 3-point line one foot to 20-feet, nine-inches in order to make the great equalizer in the sport a bit more difficult for the 2008-09 season.

Middle Tennessee did not have any trouble adjusting to the new distance as it used a record-setting 3-point barrage to rout Trevecca, 94-53, in the season opener at Murphy Center Friday night.

The Blue Raiders established a new single-game record for 3-point field goal percentage, scorching the nets to the tune of 66.7 percent (12-of-18) to best the previous mark of 64.7 (11-of-17) against UT-Martin

during the 1999-00 season. Middle Tennessee shot 89 percent from beyond the arc in the opening half by knocking down eight of nine attempts. The eight treys tied for the second-most in one half in a single game.

Senior standout Kevin Kanaskie keyed the record-setting night with his hot hand, but the veteran guard also enjoyed one of his most complete performances as a Blue Raider. Kanaskie scored a game-high 22 points and tied the school record for 3-point field goal percentage by going 6-of-6 from 3-point range. The six 3-pointers also tied for the ninth most in a game. He also turned in his third career double double with 11 assists and had just one turnover. Kanaskie also tied for game-high rebound honors with six.

Four Blue Raiders reached double figures and 12 of the 14 players who saw action scored as Middle Tennessee raced out to a 46-24 lead and never looked back. Middle Tennessee shot 64 percent (38-of-59) from the field overall and its players combined to dish out assists on 32 of the 38 field goals. The 32 assists tied for the fifth-most in a single game in program history.



Desmond "Boogie" Yates poured in 20 points on 8-of-10 shooting and collected a career-high three steals; newcomer Eric Allen netted 12 points, dished out three assists and had a game-high four steals. The game also marked Calvin O'Neil's return after suffering a season-ending injury in last year's opener. He drew a starting nod and scored 10 points, added four assists, four rebounds and one steal.

Freshman Demario Williams also had a solid debut with seven points and five assists, and John Hopson came off the bench to score five points.

The score was tied 8-8 with 16:15 remaining in the first half but Yates capped a 16-0 run over the next 4:23 with a 3-pointer from the top of the key as the Blue Raiders went on top 24-8 to seize control.

Middle Tennessee returns to action when it plays host to Houston Baptist Sunday at 3 p.m.

Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis

On tonight's game

"I don't think I've ever had a team with 32 assists on 38 baskets made. That's a good number. I liked the way the ball moved tonight. Trevecca is very well coached, they were short-handed but they played well. I was disappointed with our rebounding. It's a huge concern of mine when the teams get bigger and more athletic. But it was good to play everybody and I liked the emotion of our team. Darren Avery changed the culture of the game. We were playing hard but he checked in and our level went up. He made two good loose ball plays and it revved our team up."

On Demario Williams

"Demario was great tonight. He still doesn't guard like he needs to but he played with a lot of confidence and it was good to see him do that."

On Kevin's play

"Kevin's been shooting the ball well lately. It looks good coming off his hand. We talk about Kevin Kanaskie and Desmond Yates but I thought Nigel Johnson played well. He played so fast but under control."

On play of walk-ons

"We've got the most dedicated walk-ons (John Hopson, Lindal Yarbrough, KC Anuna, Nivan Khaliff) in America. They're in this gym more than my scholarship guys. John Hopson deserves to make baskets because he loves it. He loves being a part of this team and he knows his role. You can see how many people appreciate him. They want him to make shots. He was running the scout team the other day and made about 10 or 15 against us so it didn't surprise me they went in."

Kevin Kanaskie

On shooting well

"I think we moved the ball well tonight. Anytime you make the extra pass those shots usually go in. The team did a great job screening and I got lucky tonight. I've never shot like that before. I was just in a rhythm I guess. I'm sure I'll have nights where I'm 0-for-6."

On the 3-point line being moved back

"We shot well tonight but I think it's because we shared the ball. Usually when we come down and make one pass then shoot they usually don't go in. But when you move the ball and get that extra pass, those shots usually go in."

On extra intensity

"Darren Avery came in and really changed our team with his defense and pressure. Same with Nigel Johnson, he played really well on the ball."

Eric Allen

On importance of hitting the first 3-pointer he took

"It was important but I'm still trying to find my rhythm because I'm still not shooting as well as I can from 3-point but it was good to get that first one."

On importance of exhibition games

"It was very important; even though we weren't playing Division 1 schools it gave me a look at better talent than I was seeing on the junior college level."

Desmond "Boogie" Yates

On first 10 minutes of game

"I've got to be stronger around the rim. I got the ball knocked out of my hand but I took some good shots tonight. I've just got to be stronger."

On everyone making 3-pointers

"I try to do whatever to help my team win. Tonight Kevin was shooting the ball unbelievably well. Everybody was playing good around me but I've got to be stronger because there were a lot of balls around the rim that I'm supposed to put in."

Trevecca Head Coach Sam Harris

On Middle Tennessee

"Middle Tennessee has got a good ball club. They are athletic, quick and they put good pressure on you. We had the right guys on the floor to create the right matchups and try to make them work for their shots. Kanaskie killed us from the 3-point line. We are not going to find a shooter like him in the next few games that is just going to pull up and shoot it over the top of us. (Middle Tennessee) has a good team and they are picked to win the Sun Belt. I think they have a good shot."

Middle Tennessee Postgame Notes

SHARING THE BALL: Middle Tennessee players combined to assist an amazing 84 percent of the team's 38 field goals in the season-opening win. The Blue Raiders' 32 assists tied for the fifth most in a single game. Kevin Kanaskie led with 11 helpers. In fact, guards Kanaskie, Nigel Johnson, Eric Allen, and Demario Williams combined for 24 assists and just three turnovers for a 7-to-1 assist/turnover ratio. Kanaskie had 11 assists and one turnover, Johnson had five assists and no turnovers, Allen had three assists and no turnovers, and Williams had five assists and two turnovers.

KANASKIE STARTS STRONG: Heralded guard Kevin Kanaskie set records, reached milestones and tied all-time Blue Raider greats with one of his best performances in a career filled with memorable ones. Kanaskie enjoyed his third career double double with 22 points and 11 assists, and he tied former great Duane Washington for the most career double-figure assist games in school history with his fourth. The 11 assists tied for 13th most in a single game. He also tied the school record for 3-point field goal percentage by going 6-of-6 from 3-point range. Kanaskie surpassed 150

career 3-pointers and 375 career assists in the impressive outing.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH: The conventional double double is points and rebounds but Middle Tennessee players have turned in nine such games dating back to 1985 using a different approach and Kanaskie has produced three of the nine. Kanaskie produced his third career double double Friday with 22 points and 11 assists. Each of his three double doubles has consisted of points and assists. He was four rebounds shy of a rare triple double.

MOVING ON UP: Preseason Sun Belt Player of the Year Desmond "Boogie" Yates racked up 20 points on 8-of-10 shooting in the opener. Yates increased his career scoring mark to 880 points and moved into 38th on the all-time scoring list. He is one spot behind teammate Kevin Kanaskie and both players are closing in on the top 30. Yates hit two of his first four shots before knocking down six straight field goals to cap a strong opener.

WELCOME BACK: Calvin O'Neil returned to the court one year after suffering a season-ending injury in the 07-08 opener. O'Neil earned a start in his return and responded with 10 points, four assists, four rebounds and one steal in 20 minutes. It's not a surprise Middle Tennessee enjoyed success. The Blue Raiders are 9-2 when O'Neil scores double figures.

NEWCOMERS GET INTO ACTION: All five Middle Tennessee newcomers saw action in Friday's opener and each had their good moments. Redshirt freshman Antwaun Boyd drew a start in his first Division I college game and finished with four points. Newcomers Eric Allen, Montarrio Haddock, Demario Williams and Josh Jones also saw their first action as Blue Raiders. Allen led the newcomers in scoring with 12 points. Williams' debut was memorable with seven points and five assists in 14 minutes. The freshman from nearby Culleoka showed great confidence when he came off the bench and immediately drained a long 3-pointer. Haddock averaged one rebound every three minutes, pulling four boards in 12 minutes of work.

THAT'S PRODUCTON: Blue Raider junior walk-on John Hopson made the most of his two minutes of action in the opener. Hopson brought the fans - and the Middle Tennessee bench - to their feet with five points on 2-of-2 shooting. Hopson hit a 3-pointer upon entering the game for his first career points and added a long field goal on the team's next possession. Walk-ons KC Anuna and Lindal Yarbrough also saw their first collegiate action in the win. Head Coach Kermit Davis cited his walk-ons, which also includes Nivan Khaliff, as "the most dedicated in America," during his postgame press conference.

80 IS A GOOD NUMBER: When Middle Tennessee has been able to light up the scoreboard under Head Coach Kermit Davis the results have been staggering. Middle Tennessee has won 97 percent of the 31 games in which it has scored 80 or more points in Davis' six-plus seasons. The Blue Raiders are 30-1 in such games after scoring 94 points in the opener. The only time Middle Tennessee failed to win under Davis when scoring more than 80 was an 85-83 overtime setback at Western Kentucky, Feb. 24, 2005. The Blue Raiders have won 15 straight overall when scoring 80 or more points.

PROTECTING THE LEAD: Middle Tennessee has been solid playing with the lead under sixth-year Head Coach Kermit Davis. The Blue Raiders are 76-15 under Davis when they lead at the half, and they have won an astounding 87 percent (88-13) of the 101 games in which they have led with five minutes remaining.

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