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Surging Blue Raiders earn 89-80 overtime win at North Texas

Yates, Kanaskie combine for 44 as team wins fourth straight and six of last eight

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DENTON, Texas - When it comes to winning on the road Middle Tennessee has proven to be one of the Sun Belt's elite teams under Head Coach Kermit Davis.

The Blue Raiders showed their moxie once again when they stormed back from an 11-point deficit in the second half to secure their fourth straight win with a riveting 89-80 overtime win against SBC West co-favorite North Texas at the Super Pit Wednesday. It is Middle Tennessee's 27th Sun Belt road win since Davis' hiring. Only South Alabama (28) has more during that stretch.

Desmond "Boogie" Yates led four Blue Raiders in double figures with a game-high 25 points and **Kevin Kanaskie** poured in 19 points to become the 29th player in program history to amass 1,000 points. **Demetrius Green** and **Calvin O'Neil** each scored 10 points as Middle Tennessee (8-5, 2-0 SBC) won its fourth straight and sixth in eight games.

"What a great road win for our basketball team," Davis said. "I am so proud of our guys. They battled from behind against a very good North Texas team and showed a great deal of character today. It took several different people stepping up and contributing to make this happen and they did."

Kanaskie was sitting on 999 points entering the game and joined Yates in the 1,000-point club when he scored a driving layup and drew a foul for the game's first points with 18:04 remaining; however, the superlatives were provided in the game's final minutes - and overtime.

O'Neil played just two minutes in the first half with fouls but he was there for the finish. O'Neil scored all 10 of his points in the final 2:44 of regulation and overtime to spark Middle Tennessee, and **Montarrio Haddock** added seven critical points and shared game-high honors with eight rebounds before fouling out. Dino Hair also was huge off the bench with six points, two rebounds and two assists in 12 minutes. **Nigel Johnson** finished with six points, six rebounds and five assists in a game where every player who stepped on the court found a way to make contributions to victory.

"We just never quit," O'Neil said. "We had a tough run there in the second half when North Texas had a good run to open up the lead but we absorbed that run and proved we can be a tough team down the stretch. We have some momentum going and we are playing with confidence. What you saw today was a team that is going to fight until the end."



Calvin O'Neil scored 10 points in the final seven minutes and overtime to key Middle Tennessee's comeback win at North Texas. (B. Lambert) 📷

And battle the Blue Raiders did.

North Texas owned a slim 34-33 halftime lead but had extended its advantage to 62-51 with 7:40 remaining in regulation on Collin Mangrum's fifth 3-pointer. That's when the Blue Raiders started putting together one of their best comebacks of the season.

The Blue Raiders dominated the final 7:20 of regulation and used a 21-6 run to take a 72-70 lead when Kanaskie hit the first of two free throws with 21 seconds remaining. Eric Tramiel netted a layup for the Mean Green (8-5, 1-2) with 11 seconds remaining in regulation to tie the game, 72-72, and force overtime.

The extra period belonged to the Blue Raiders, who started overtime on a 6-0 run to seize control. North Texas never got closer than three in the overtime period. Kanaskie keyed Middle Tennessee's comeback with 10 of his 19 in the final seven minutes of regulation and overtime. O'Neil finished with nine during that same span while Yates had seven and Green six when the game was on the line.

Middle Tennessee returns to action when it faces SBC East rival South Alabama in Mobile Saturday at 7:05 p.m.

NOTES: With 25 points at North Texas Desmond "Boogie" Yates moved past three players and into 19th on the all-time scoring list with 1,109 points. He passed Render Carden (1,090), Doug Shrader (1,094) and Fred Allen (1,108) and needs 16 points to surpass Ty Baynham for 18th all-time ... **Kevin Kanaskie** became the 29th player in program history to reach 1,000 career points with 19 against North Texas. He needed one point for 1,000 entering the game. He now has 1,018 points which is 27th all-time ... Kanaskie is the only player in school history with 1,000 points, 400-plus assists, 150-plus 3-pointers and 100-plus steals ... Kanaskie and Yates become the first Blue Raider teammates playing while in the 1,000-point club since 1993 (Warren Kidd, Robert Taylor) and only the third set of teammates ever to play with 1,000-plus points in school history ... Yates has scored 20 or more points 21 times in his career, including seven times this season. Middle Tennessee is 16-5 in those games ... Dino Hair tied his season high with six points vs. North Texas ... **Calvin O'Neil** tied his season high with 10 points. Middle Tennessee is 11-2 all-time when O'Neil scores double figures ... The Blue Raiders improved to 63-46 in SBC games under Head Coach Kermit Davis, which represent the fourth most SBC wins of any league member during his six-plus seasons ... Middle Tennessee secured its 27th SBC road win under Davis, which is second among SBC members during his six-plus seasons. Only South Alabama (29) has more ... Middle Tennessee improved to 4-1 all-time on New Year's Eve, including 3-0 under Davis ... Davis tied Lee Rose for 11th on the SBC all-time wins list with 53 SBC wins (tournament wins not included) ... Middle Tennessee improved to 34-1 under Davis when scoring 80-plus. The Blue Raiders have won 19 straight overall when scoring 80 or more points ... Middle Tennessee improved to 92-12 under Davis when outshooting the opposition, including 8-0 this season ... The Blue Raiders shot 48 percent and North Texas shot 38 percent. Middle Tennessee is 8-0 this season when the opponent shoots 40 percent or less.

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