

## Late-game heroics key Blue Raiders' sixth straight win

### MT assumes sole possession of first, only remaining unbeaten in SBC with 59-57 win vs. FAU

January 8, 2009 · Athletic Communications

#### **MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -**

Demetrius Green failed to reach double figures in scoring for just the second time in 28 games dating to last season with six against Florida Atlantic, but the senior guard's final two points may have been the biggest of his Blue Raider career.

Green's driving layup with three seconds remaining climaxed a furious finish that provided Middle Tennessee with its sixth-straight win, a 59-57 comeback effort against Florida Atlantic at Murphy Center Thursday night.

Middle Tennessee's sixth straight win matches the program's longest winning streak since the 1997-98 season but more importantly the Blue Raiders (10-5, 4-0) remained perfect in four Sun Belt games. The 4-0 league mark matches the best conference start for a Blue Raider team since the 1988-89 squad opened its OVC slate

with five straight wins. Middle Tennessee's win, coupled with WKU's loss at Florida International moved the Blue Raiders into sole possession in the SBC East and the only remaining unbeaten team in the league.



A strong comeback capped with Green's driving layup kept the winning streak alive. Blue Raider junior forward Desmond Yates poured in 20 points and grabbed eight rebounds - both game highs - to lead three Middle Tennessee players in double figures. Montarrio Haddock scored 12 points and collected six rebounds, and Kevin Kanaskie scored 10 points, dished out six assists and had just one turnover in 40 minutes of play. Nigel Jonson added seven points and two assists with no turnovers.

Florida Atlantic (4-12, 0-4) took its largest lead when Alex Tucker's jumper put the Owls ahead 37-28 with 13:53 remaining before the Blue Raiders started chipping away at the lead with their best stretch of basketball when it mattered most.

Haddock's jumper with 2:14 remaining gave Middle Tennessee a 55-53 lead - its first since leading 4-2. Carlos Monroe's two free throws tied the game with 1:47 remaining but Yates made his way to the free throw line when he was fouled in the paint with 33 seconds remaining. He nailed both pressure free throws to give the Blue Raiders a 57-55 advantage but FAU standout Paul Graham III drew a foul with six ticks remaining. He answered with two clutch free throws to even the score 57-57 to set up Middle Tennessee's final play.

Kanaskie took the ball out and ran the baseline, finding Yates coming open in the middle of the court beyond the 3-point line. Yates advanced the ball before making a perfect pass to Green in stride. Green raced down the sideline, beating the defender and slicing through defenders for the game-winning layup.

Yates moved into 18th on the all-time scoring list with his 20-point outing against the Owls, passing Ty Baynham (1,125). He now has 1,144 points and needs 11 to pass Harry Gupton (1,154) for 17th. Kanaskie moved past Ken Riley (1,043) for 25th on the career scoring list with 1,044 points.

Middle Tennessee's game time against FIU has been moved from 7 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday night.

### **Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes**

#### **Head Coach Kermit Coach Davis**

##### **On tonight's game:**

"I saw this coming from the last couple days of practice. We were good but we didn't have the edge we needed to. I'm extremely proud of the win. A league win is a league win and we'll take it. I give a lot of respect to (FAU Coach) Mike (Jarvis), his staff and his players. I thought they controlled the tempo. They made big plays when they needed to. I think in the end our experience won out. We need to work on defense. They shot 48 percent which is too high. We never got in a rhythm offensively until about the last eight minutes."

##### **On the game-winning play:**

"It was supposed to go to Nigel Johnson. I put Kevin Kanaskie (throwing the ball) in there because he makes the right decisions. He threw it right to Desmond Yates who advanced it to Demetrius Green. I said if they stopped us around halfcourt to call a timeout but Demetrius was open and went right to the basket and made a nice play off two feet."

##### **On the thought of a charge on last play:**

"I was nervous and they got back on defense but Demetrius had great body control and avoided the charge. It was a great pass and he made a great finish. That was good for him; He didn't come out with a lot of energy and just wasn't defending. The whole team looked like we lost that bounce we've

been playing with on the road. We have to be better than that on Saturday against FIU."

**On close conference wins:**

"Last year Western Kentucky and South Alabama ended up winning a lot of these kinds of games. Teams that are doing well in their leagues win games like this. There are good players everywhere. We're excited about the win; we made plays at the end. We have to get better and find ways to win."

**MT senior guard Kevin Kanaskie:**

**On poor shooting:**

"I don't know what the problem was. We were missing everything in the first half. We held them to 26 points but we only scored 22 in the first half and we can't do that and expect to do well."

**On FAU's defense:**

"I think we just had an off night but they were really guarding Desmond well and going under our screens and sagging inside."

**On what led to rough start:**

"We didn't practice well the last couple of days and we need to practice better to play better."

**MT senior guard Demetrius Green**

**On the last play:**

"Nigel (Johnson) was supposed to get the ball but it didn't work out. Kevin made a nice pass to Desmond and he made a good pass to me. I knew I had to finish and I did."

**On possible charge on the last play:**

"I knew they would call a charge because he had his feet set so I had to avoid that and get the shot off."

**On coming back home:**

"It was tough to play here tonight being the first game back off the road trip. But we just have to keep playing hard, practicing hard and getting better every day."

**Florida Atlantic Head Coach Mike Jarvis**

**Opening Comments:**

"We lost to a good team on the road. There are two things to look at during a game. One is rebounds which were even. The other is assist-to-turnover ratio which we lost. Too many times, especially in crucial situations, we had turnovers. You're not going to win on the road against a team like this. They are probably the best team we have played so far this year."

**On Middle Tennessee's game-winning play:**

"We were thinking maybe we could deny them enough to get a five second penalty. The one thing that wasn't supposed to happen was for us to let them get between us and the basket. At the worst we would force overtime. We can't make mental mistakes at crucial times in the game. "I give Middle Tennessee credit. They are a good team. They stayed with their stuff and won the game. Middle was able to convert on some key steals and hit some big threes."

**On FAU's performance tonight compared to other games vs. Sun Belt opponents:**

"We've been playing better. We've had chances in some past games. Better is not good enough. We've got too many guys playing too many minutes, but this is the way it's going to be. These guys

playing 38 to 39 minutes are going to have to get used to it because that's what we've got. Hopefully, we won't make as many mistakes. Tonight we had some seniors make some mistakes which is the most difficult when your seniors are the ones making the mistakes. But I guess that's why I'm at FAU."

**On FAU early-season injuries:**

"Every team is going to have to play through injuries. When you are at the mid-major level, you don't have a bench full of McDonalds All-Americans. Having one your best players go down can really mess up your team. You have to find a way to make it work with what you've got."

---

*Printed on July 31, 2014*

*Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/36240>*