

Green comes through in clutch as Blue Raiders extend win streak to seven

Maintain SBC East lead with 5-0 league record

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Demetrius Green's nickname on the Middle Tennessee basketball team is "Duna," but he is quickly becoming known as "Clutch" to Blue Raider followers.

Green scored the game winner for the second time in as many games, this time burying a 3-pointer from the baseline with 38 seconds remaining to send Middle Tennessee to a 68-63 win and equal the sixth-longest win streak in school history at seven against FIU at Murphy Center Saturday night.

Green provided the heroics for the second straight game. He scored on a short jumper with 2.4 seconds remaining to give Middle Tennessee a 59-57 win against Florida Atlantic Thursday night.

With the score tied 62-62 and less than a minute remaining in regulation the shot clock was under five when Nigel Johnson beat his defender,

penetrated the lane, drew two defenders and passed the ball to a wide open Green in the corner at the baseline.



Green knocked down the game-winning 3-pointer as the shot clock expired to give Middle Tennessee a 65-62 lead with 38 seconds remaining. Nick Taylor's 3-point attempt was off the mark

with 22 seconds remaining and Middle Tennessee knocked down three free throws in the final 21 seconds to seal the win.

Middle Tennessee (11-5, 5-0) extended its win streak to seven which matches the sixth longest in school history and is the longest winning streak since the 1990-91 season when the Blue Raiders won seven straight. Middle Tennessee also remained unbeaten and atop the SBC East standings with a 5-0 league ledger. The 5-0 start equals Middle Tennessee's best conference start since 1988-89.

Johnson led three Blue Raiders in double figures with 15 points to go along with a team-high seven rebounds. He also dished out three assists and collected a steal but his greatest contribution was his final assist, a well-crafted play that was set up because of the senior guard's playmaking skills.

Green and Montarrio Haddock scored 14 each. Green also had six rebounds. Kevin Kanaskie finished with another solid line in the box score with nine points, five rebounds, seven assists, no turnovers and two steals in a workmanlike 36 minutes of action.

FIU was led by center Freddy Asprilla, who turned in a double double with 28 points and 10 rebounds. Senior Alex Galindo added 19 points in a fourth impressive outing since his return from a preseason ankle injury.

It was Asprilla; however, who changed the game in the second half. With Desmond "Boogie" Yates on the bench in foul trouble for the brunt of the game the Golden Panthers (6-12, 1-4) attacked the inside and Asprilla was strong. He had 17 of his 28 in the second half to lead the FIU comeback.

The game started as though it would be one-sided in Middle Tennessee's favor as the Blue Raiders raced to a 19-5 lead on Haddock's jumper with 12:22 remaining in the first half but Yates picked up his second foul and the Blue Raiders went cold from the field.

Middle Tennessee maintained a 33-22 edge at the half but the Golden Panthers methodically chipped away at the lead and used a 21-10 run late in the second half to wipe out a 43-41 Blue Raider lead. FIU went ahead 60-58 on Asprilla's dunk with 3:46 remaining but Yates answered with a jumper on the other end to tie the score, 60-60, for the fourth time.

Haddock knocked down a pair of free throws with 2:57 remaining to give the Blue Raiders a 62-60 advantage but Marlon Bright's jumper with 2:19 remaining evened the slate once again.

The score remained tied until Green's late-game heroics propelled the Blue Raiders to their seventh consecutive win.

Middle Tennessee will put its SBC East lead on the line at rival WKU Thursday at 7 p.m.

NOTES: Middle Tennessee improved to 14-5 all-time against FIU, including 11-2 under Head Coach Kermit Davis ... The Blue Raiders' 5-0 conference start equals their best since 1988-89. The best conference start ever is 9-0 in 1974-75 ... Middle Tennessee's current seven-game win streak is the longest since 1990-91 and ties for the sixth-longest in program history. A win Thursday would be the longest win streak since 1981-82 when the Blue Raiders won nine straight ... With seven assists vs. FIU Kevin Kanaskie inched closer to the all-time assists lead at Middle Tennessee. Kanaskie now has 448 career assists which is four shy of second and 15 short of Gerald Harris' all-time mark of

463 ... Nigel Johnson surpassed 550 career points with 15 vs. FIU. He now has 563 ... Demetrius Green reached career point 575 against FIU. He scored 14 points to bring his career total to 577.

Middle Tennessee vs. FIU Postgame Quotes

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis

Opening Statement:

"I thought we got off to a great start. We had a great defensive start, great effort. And then we went to our bench and it seemed like we lost our intensity. We kept having good ball movement, but we just couldn't make shots. Then in the second half we were up 50-36 and we just stopped scoring. We got in foul trouble so we went to a zone defense and that's what got Alex Galindo going. He didn't do much against our man defense but our zone helped him. Then when he started making shots that expanded our defense and they got it to Freddy Asprilla easier. He's the most dominant big man we've played against in the Sun Belt in my seven years here - tonight he was. He did it against Western Kentucky too. He was just a man among boys. But Desmond Yates only had eight points, Kevin Kanaskie and Nigel Johnson combined for 6-for-22 shooting, and we still win. So I'm proud of that."

On balance of team:

"I was really disappointed in how Montario Haddock rebounded but he scored well tonight. Nigel got 15 points, but Kevin is really up and down. If he would have made some shots tonight we could've separated ourselves. But I was really happy with the balance. We went with a triangle-and-two in the second half and tried to make Nick Taylor score and he missed a couple shots. I thought that was the turning point of the game when we could kind of get them stopped late."

On Asprilla's scoring ability:

"We went to a zone but they got it to him no matter what. We weren't pressuring the high post and because of that they got to him rather easily. And really nobody we had was any match for him. But what really happened was Galindo got going. And when that happened our defense had to spread out a little bit and that opened up the inside. We have to have three good days of practice this week to fix that."

On winning another close game:

"We're very proud of being 5-0 in (the Sun Belt) conference. Middle Tennessee hasn't done that in a while and we have seven wins in a row for the first in 17 or 18 years. So that's great, but we know where our team is. There are some parts of that game that were good. Defensively we still held them to 63 points, but offensively we need to do some better things."

On playing Western Kentucky:

"I've always thought if revenge is the biggest factor to win a game then you'll probably get beat. Our biggest thing is what we do in practice this week to prepare. You don't have to tell our seniors anything. We had a lot of success against them the first few years I was here but the last few we haven't. We all know about the championship game last year. Our guys were there so they know. It's a rivalry game as well as a big conference game so it does add some incentive for both teams."

Senior guard Demetrius Green

On the game-winning 3-pointer:

"Nigel is the one who made that play. He mad a move and got me the ball, I just had to make the shot."

On Galindo and Asprilla playing well:

"Galindo is really good. He just came off an injury so he's not even as good as he will be when he's 100 percent. We knew we had to pressure him and make him take tough shots. Asprilla is a beast down there. We just have to get better defensively and focus for the rest of the year."

Senior guard Nigel Johnson

On starting hot tonight:

"The last game (against Florida Atlantic) we didn't come out with much energy, so we decided to come out with more intensity and that's what we did. We lost it a little bit in the second half but we'll have to work hard in practice this week to get it back."

On the game-winning play:

"I knew I had to penetrate and kick it out for a (3-pointer). I saw Demetrius wide open and I have confidence that he'll make it."

On seventh- longest winning school history:

"I think it's a special thin but we just don't want to get a big head. We have to keep playing hard and doing what has got us to this point. It is cool to be a part of history so I'm pleased."

FIU Head Coach Sergio Rouco

On the play of Alex Galindo:

"Right now, we are playing with one senior which is Alex (Galindo). He had a bad injury. He had a dislocated ankle. We didn't think he would come back that quickly. Today was the first day that I think of the games he has played, his legs have been under him. Tonight, he could drive the basketball and show some stuff offensively."

On the play of Tremayne Russell:

"Tremayne (Russell) who never gets winded-- gets winded. He plays 15 minutes and he gets three points for us. He's a kid who averages nine points. It's good to get him back. This is not baseball. Our track is the basketball court. You've got to get him back in basketball rhythm with the team."

On starting out slow in the first half:

"I am disappointed that we came out in a lull. This is two years in a row that we came in here and gave them a big lead. At the same time, I am proud of them coming back. You can't shoot 49 percent from the field and lose the basketball game. We make our free throws. Here's Alex (Galindo), who is a great free throw shooter and he shoots 50 percent today. Marlon (Bright) is a very good free throw and he goes 1-for-3 from the line."

On the improvement of the team:

"We are getting there. Hopefully, these kids are going to get healthy. I don't talk about the guys that are not here because they are not here. I talk about the guys that we have. Poor Nick Taylor has been playing his tail off. He had a great game against Western Kentucky. He had two wide open looks today and he couldn't make them. He's wide open and we expect him to shoot it. He missed it. It didn't boil down to that. We lost this ballgame in the first 10 minutes of the game. Again, Middle Tennessee wins like they won against FAU because they older experienced kids. That's the bottom line. They have older experienced kids, especially the guards. You are talking about experience and that's what wins games."

On the play of Freddy Asprilla:

"He's pretty darn good. I'm a genius ain't I? He's very good. Kermit (Davis) tried to press us and made it hard at angles for us to get the ball. Our guys did a good job of getting it to him. He's a very good basketball player. We are very fortunate to have him."

On if the FIU was trying to attack Desmond Yates' offensively:

"The game plan is to give the ball to the big boy (Asprilla). If Yates is the guy guarding him then so be it."

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