Kanaskie makes history; Blue Raiders roll to 77-54 win

Middle Tennessee wins for 10th time in 13 outings, remains within one-half game of SBC East lead

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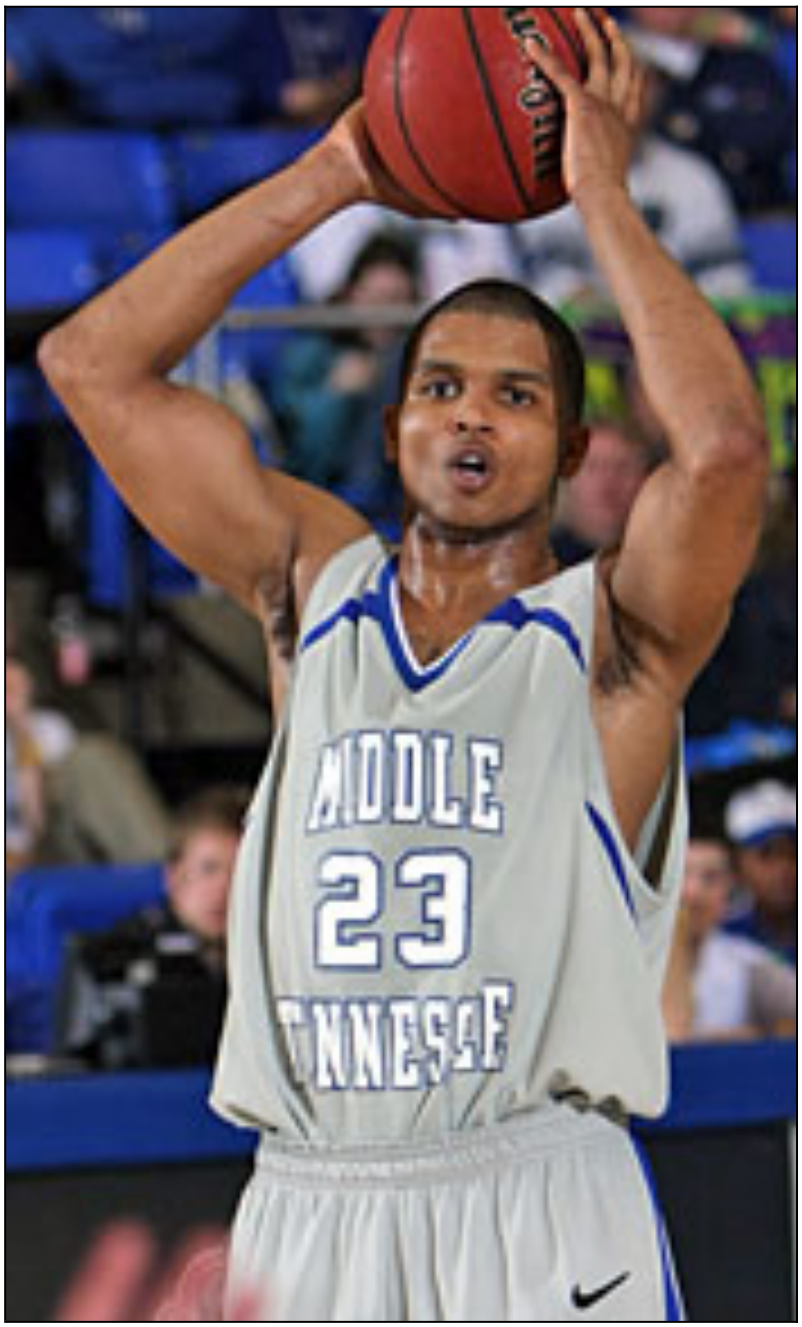

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The second-largest crowd of the season turned out to support Middle Tennessee in its chase for the Sun Belt Conference Championship at Murphy Center Saturday night. Not only did the 5,411 in attendance cheer a Blue Raider team clicking on all cylinders to a resounding 77-54 win against Louisiana-Monroe, but they also witnessed history as senior guard Kevin Kanaskie became the all-time assists leader at Middle Tennessee. The Blue Raiders (14-8, 8-3) won for the 10th time in 13 outings and remained within one-half game of WKU for the top spot in the SBC East. Kanaskie entered the game tied with former great Gerald Harris (1986-90) for the career assists lead (463). Fans, standing for defense, already were on their feet to provide a rousing and deserving ovation when Kanaskie established a new standard just 17 seconds into the game. He collected a steal on the far sideline and threw a baseball pass to Desmond Yates, who caught the ball in stride and delivered the first of three dunks to provide career assist 464. "That's the way to do it," said Blue Raider Head Coach Kermit Davis, who moved into a tie for

seventh on the SBC's all-time coaching wins list with 59. "It's a great accomplishment. He broke (Gerald Harris') record, who means a lot to this university, and they're a lot alike. They're very team oriented. Gerald Harris was very successful both on the court and off so that's a huge honor." Kanaskie said he realizes the magnitude of the accomplishment after the game. "It feels good. Obviously having Desmond (Yates), Demetrius (Green) and Nigel (Johnson) makes it easy," Kanaskie said. "They're the ones making the hard plays. When they're open I get them the ball. Gerald Harris was a great player here with a strong reputation all these years later so it's special to be mentioned along with him." Kanaskie tied for game-high scoring honors with 15 points and he also collected six rebounds but the player of the game was senior guard Demetrius Green, who registered his first career double double with a career-high 11 rebounds and 15 points on 7-of-11 shooting. He also tied his career high with five assists and added three steals. Desmond "Boogie" Yates was the only other Blue Raider in double figures, scoring 14 points in 15 minutes of action. Nigel Johnson turned in another solid all-around performance with nine points, four rebounds, four assists, no turnovers and two steals. Middle Tennessee put together one of its best all-around performances to improve to 6-0 in SBC games at Murphy Center this season. The Blue Raiders connected on 10 of their first 15 shots. They erased ULM's only lead of the game, 3-2, with an 11-0 run capped by Kanaskie's 3-pointer, to go on top 14-3. Less than 14 minutes into the game they had raced to a 37-15 advantage and were never threatened from there. Green scored 13 of his 15 in the first half to help break the game open early with great plays in the open court combined with strong defense and rebounding. The Blue Raiders shot 61 percent (19-of-31) on the way to a 48-28 halftime lead and while the offense was in full gear the defense also was stifling. Middle Tennessee allowed just eight second-half field goals and it marked the ninth time the Blue Raiders have held an opponent to 57 points or less. They are 9-0 in those games. **NOTES:** Kevin Kanaskie became the all-time assists leader at Middle Tennessee with his first helper of the game against ULM. He broke the record 17 seconds into the game on a pass to Desmond "Boogie" Yates. Kanaskie finished with three assists and currently has 466 ... Kanaskie scored 15 points and moved into 19th on the all-time scoring list with 1,127, passing former great Ty Baynham (1,125) ... Desmond "Boogie" Yates scored 14 points to move into 13th on the all-time scoring list with 1,248 points, surpassing Bob Burden (1,242) ... With the win against ULM, Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis moved into a tie with former VCU coach J.D. Barnett for seventh on the SBC's All-Time Coaching Wins List with 59. He is one shy of tying former Jacksonville and WKU coach Matt Kilcullen (60) for sixth on the list ... With two steals against ULM, Nigel Johnson moved into a tie with Andrew Tunstill for 15th on the all-time steals list with 81 ... Including limiting ULM to 54 points Saturday, Middle Tennessee has held nine opponents to 57 points or less this season and is 9-0 in those games ... The Blue Raiders improved to 12-0 when leading at the half and 11-0 when leading with five minutes remaining.

Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis

On tonight's game:

"I was excited to see our team play tonight. They had a ton of energy, they were great in transition. They were really unselfish and shared the ball really well. I don't know if the students really understand what they mean to college environments but ours really make a huge difference. I hope they keep coming and doing what they did because they make a huge difference for us." **On Kevin Kanaskie breaking Gerald Harris' all-time assists record:**

"That's the way to do it. It's a great accomplishment. He broke a guy's record who means a lot to this university, and they're a lot alike. They're very team oriented. Gerald Harris was very successful both on the court and off so that's a huge honor." **On recruiting Kevin Kanaskie:**

"I knew he was a team guy. He's just one of those guys who was lightly recruited, went under the

radar. (Former associate head coach and current Morehead State Head Coach) Donnie Tyndall saw Kevin playing in an AAU Tournament in Orlando and he called me and had nothing but great things to say about him. We watched him and the home visit went great. When Kevin got here we knew he was going to be good. At the end of his freshman season we knew we had something because when we put him in the lineup our team just started winning games. I'll definitely miss seeing him in the locker room next year." **On Demetrius Green's play in last two games:**
"His energy level was great. He was good early. We've been on him about rebounding and when he rebounds well he plays his tail off. I thought he was aggressive at the rim and created some different things inside for us. Kevin and Nigel were good tonight too. We shared the ball really well." **On the bench playing well:**
"That's important to us. We need to keep Dino (Hair) playing well and Josh (Jones) has helped us some too. Montarrio (Haddock) is playing with a lot of energy. He settled for some 3-pointers tonight when I thought he needed to be driving the ball. I thought Eric Allen had good energy he just missed some easy baskets but they were all good shots. I think everybody has about seven guys they play, but you need to have about nine guys down the stretch to be good and I think we have that." **Senior guard Kevin Kanaskie**
On breaking the assist record:
"It feels good. Obviously having Desmond, Demetrius and Nigel makes it easy. They're the ones making the hard plays. When they're open I get them the ball but it feels good and Gerald Harris was a great player here with a strong reputation all these years later so it's special to be mentioned along with him." **On Desmond setting the tone early:**
"I thought that was the best Desmond played all year. He had some dunks and a couple blocks, so he did well tonight." **On playing in this atmosphere:**
"The crowd was great tonight. They helped us a lot. We got off to a great start and part of the reason was because of the crowd. I hope they come back." **Senior guard Demetrius Green**
On playing well at home:
"It all started this week in practice. We had three really good practices this week and if we keep doing that then we'll keep playing well as a team." **On upcoming three-game road trip:**
"We just have to stay focused and keep playing good defense. We know (Denver) is a tough arena to play in, but we just have to suck it up and play hard." **ULM Head Coach Orlando Early**
On tonight's game:
"Middle Tennessee did a great job. They defended us well. They pressured us well and really forced us into a lot of turnovers. We hadn't turned the ball over that much since the beginning of the year. Once they got us on our heels we were never able to fight back." **On Middle Tennessee shooting 61 percent in first half:**
"They came out and did a great job of getting us on our heels. Anytime we tried to mount a comeback opportunity, they did a terrific job of keeping us at bay." **On Middle Tennessee defense:**
"Middle Tennessee had certain guys who did a great job of really taking our strengths away. As a player you've got to adjust and we didn't do a good job of this. With 22 turnovers, we didn't get enough shots up. Hats off to Middle Tennessee and their defense. They are a team with (four) seniors on it and that's why they were picked to win the league."

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