

Second half comeback carries South Alabama past Blue Raiders

Middle Tennessee drops 63-57 decision

February 20, 2009 · Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

South Alabama used a strong second half to come from behind and avenge an earlier loss against Middle Tennessee in a 63-57 victory against the Blue Raiders Thursday at Murphy Center. Desmond "Boogie" Yates and Demetrius Green each scored 15 points and Kevin Kanaskie added 11 points, a team-high seven rebounds and three assists but it wasn't enough as South Alabama outscored the Blue Raiders (15-12, 8-7) 40-31 in the second half to overcome a nine-point deficit and secure the win. C.J. Garner led South Alabama with 15 points and was one of four Jags (16-11, 9-7) to reach double figures, leading his team to its third straight SBC win. South Alabama's comeback was spurred by its 53 percent (8-of-15) shooting effort from the field as well as a decisive edge from the charity stripe. The Jaguars outscored Middle Tennessee by 23 points at the free-throw line, where they were 28-of-



42. Middle Tennessee was 5-of-12 and had two players foul out and two others finish the game with four fouls. Among those shackled with foul trouble was Yates, who fouled came back into the game with four fouls at the 6:55 mark and fouled out 34 seconds later with the Blue Raiders trailing 46-43. "I think South Alabama played very physical tonight," Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis said. "They were bigger around the goal than us but the real thing is the free throws. They outshot us

42-12 from there. Give them credit they got to the line and made them. They didn't have a lot of offensive rebounds but everyone they got led to a basket or a foul. We couldn't capitalize on our offensive rebounds and when you have 16 offensive rebounds that generally equates to more than 12 free-throw attempts because you are around the goal and going back up." Despite South Alabama's bigger, more physical inside game and playing with a makeshift lineup due to the foul trouble, Middle Tennessee still held strong on the boards. The Jags won the battle of the boards, 38-36, but the Blue Raiders grabbed 16 offensive caroms. Unfortunately, for Middle Tennessee, it failed to cash in on the second and third opportunities as it scored just 15 second-chance points to South Alabama's 10. Middle Tennessee took a 26-23 halftime lead and extended the margin to nine, 34-25, with an 8-2 run less than three minutes into the second half. The lead was still eight, 41-33, with 11:25 remaining before Yates was whistled with his fourth foul. With Yates on the bench Middle Tennessee's offense struggled as South Alabama quickly struck with a 12-0 run to take the lead, 45-41. The Jags built the margin to as much as eight down the stretch. The Blue Raiders climbed to within five twice in the final 25 seconds, once on a Kanaskie 3-pointer and again on Green's driving layup but time eventually ran out on the Blue Raiders. Middle Tennessee returns to action at Florida Atlantic Saturday at 7:30 p.m. **Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes**

Head Coach Kermit Davis

On tonight's game:

"I think South Alabama played very physical tonight. They were bigger around the goal than us but the real thing is the free throws. They outshot us 42-12 from there. Give them credit they got to the line and made them. They didn't have a lot of offensive rebounds, but each one they got led to a basket or a foul. The offensive rebounds we had, we missed the shots. We couldn't capitalize on them." **On positives from this game:**

"I feel a lot better about our team. We were up nine and Desmond Yates got his third foul. We were playing with a make-shift line-up there for awhile and everyone did a great job. Then we brought Yates back in and he got his fifth (foul) right away with six minutes to go. South Alabama's playing well right now and they deserved the win. We are going to stay up-beat. We won't feel sorry for anyone, and we'll be fine." **On telling team about the positives:**

"We're not satisfied with losing, but at this time of the year you have to stay up-beat with your team. You have to find positive things for energy, especially with the quick turnaround. There are some things we need to work on. We missed a lot of wide open shots tonight. We've lost some confidence but we're going to bounce back Saturday." **On Demetrius Green's play:**

"I thought he was very assertive going to the basket. He struggled from the line but he had six rebounds. I thought he was much more aggressive tonight." **Senior guard Kevin Kanaskie**

On South Alabama's defense:

"They altered a lot of shots around the goal. We needed to make shots and we didn't tonight." **On the difference in foul shots:**

"I think every game this year we've fouled way too much. It showed up again tonight and that's something we need to correct." **On fixing the problems:**

"I thought we showed some signs of improvement in practice this week. We were up eight at one point and we just couldn't get rebounds when we needed to. There for a while they had a bunch of offensive rebounds and we need to correct that." **Senior guard Demetrius Green**

On being more assertive tonight:

"There were some opportunities for our guards to drive to the basket more so I tried to take advantage of that." **On practice this week:**

"I feel like I made some progress in practice but I have to keep on pushing myself every day to get better." **South Alabama Coach Ronnie Arrow**

On the game:

"That was a very, very physical game. I thought both teams really came out and got after it really good. The difference in the game was we held them to 36 percent field goal percentage and we had nine blocked shots. (DeAndre) Coleman really got active and had three of his four blocked shots in the last two minutes and that really helped us because some of those were right there that could have very easily gone in." **On what's changed since the last meeting:**

"Maturity. We always thought that this year we would have a very good inside game coming back. We had some junior college players that are just now starting to play for us. They started out slow for us now they're contributing heavily. And now CJ (Garner) is growing up. He's not a freshman anymore, we call him an advanced freshman with all the experience he's gotten and he ran this team very good tonight." **On struggling with foul shots in the first half and improving in the second half:**

"We discussed it at halftime. You have to make free throws in close games. We just weren't concentrating and I thought we came out and concentrated really good in the second half. We executed really good at the end. We shot 48 percent and got two crucial lay-ups at the end and made our free throws." **On Yates fouling out and MT's struggle at the end:**

"I mean he's arguably the best player in the conference and whenever you lose a magnitude player like that the sign of a good team is somebody else picks up the slack. Kermit does a really good job. Those guys are experienced and I just think we have gotten better and better and better on defense. That is where we've got to be defensively to be where we want to be and that's in the NCAA Tournament. Now's the time of the year that teams that are going to make the NCAA tournament turn it on and that's definitely where we want to be." **South Alabama Guard CJ Garner:**

On his second half performance:

"Like coach said, I thought I did a good job of running this team in the second half. In the first half I would come down and take a bad shot and in the second half I would find the same opportunities to shoot but I would pull it back out and set up an offense and that benefited us in a really good way."

On the difference between the two match-ups:

"I think our defense is playing a lot better and doing a good job of keeping the ball out of the lane. At our house they were getting to the lane every time and getting good shots so I think our defense made the difference in this game." **On the comeback and how it helps team confidence:**

"Well we haven't won a lot of close games. We've lost a lot of close games. Playing Middle Tennessee, we knew we had to beat them and it would be a good win for us." **South Alabama**

Forward Deandre' Coleman: On the team's defensive effort:

"Our defense is picking up as a team. We're playing more solid defense. We're not gambling and we're moving our feet better. We're just keeping the ball in front of us and keeping it out of the lane."

On playing with four fouls:

"It's difficult but knowing you have a guy on the bench to come in and back you up and maybe even play better makes it easier."

Printed on July 22, 2014

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/37041>