Raiders remain atop Sun Belt East after home win

Haddock records fifth 20-point game of season

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Blue Raiders shot 55 percent in the second half propelling itself to a 57-50 win over Denver on Thursday night.

Senior Montarrio Haddock led Middle Tennessee (15-11, 10-4) with 22 points, his fifth 20-point total of the season, and aided the defense with six rebounds. The Greenville, N.C., native hit a three-pointer with 1:12 to play giving the Blue Raiders a 10-point lead and helped seal the win.

Junior James Washington went 3-5 from the field and 2-2 from behind the arc to add eight points. Senior Calvin O'Neil posted nine points in the game which included making all five of his free throws.

"This was a really good win for us. Denver played exceptionally well and with a lot of physicality and toughness. They have such long possessions offensively. We were impatient in the first half, a credit Denver's defense, but a lot more aggressive in the second half," head coach Kermit Davis said. "Montarrio Haddock played well and James Washington defended a lot better. I know to the average person it was 57 to 50, but we're awful proud to get out of there with a win."

The Blue Raiders ended the game shooting 41.3 percent from the field and 78.9 percent at the charity stripe making 15 of 19 opportunities. After shooting 30.8 percent in the first half, Middle Tennessee turned things around in the second half shooting 55 percent and made 10 free throws.

The Blue Raiders used a 13-2 run to its advantage taking an eight-point lead, 44-36, with 7:32 to play. Middle Tennessee continued to stay ahead of Denver and a three-pointer by Haddock put the team up by nine, 49-40 with right at a minute to play.

Middle Tennessee had six more rebounds than Denver with 32 as senior Desmond Yates led the team with seven.

Denver began the game on a 7-4 run as the Blue Raiders called a timeout with 15:27 to play. The Blue Raiders kept the pace and a three-point play by Haddock put Middle Tennessee within one-point, 12-11 with 8:37 on the clock.

O'Neil gave the Blue Raiders their first lead, 19-18, after making both of his free throws on a 1-and-1 opportunity. Denver pulled ahead again but a basket by Ottley closed the gap to three, 25-21, at the half.

Middle Tennessee shot just 30.8 percent in the first half while the Pioneers shot 50 percent. Haddock led all scorers with nine points and had four rebounds.

The Blue Raiders have the weekend off in Sun Belt action but will play host to Houston Baptist in its final non-conference game. It is one of two home games remaining on the schedule and tip-off is set for 7 p.m. in Murphy Center.

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