Defense strong for Blue Raiders against Troy

Team returns to Murphy Center for USA

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TROY, Ala. - Middle Tennessee's defense held Troy to just nine free throws in the final seven minutes of the game on Thursday night but the Trojans held on for a 66-62 win. The Blue Raider (16-12, 10-5) defense kicked into high gear and did not allow the Trojans a field goal in the game after the seven minute mark. Troy (15-11, 10-5) did not score any points for almost four minutes as Middle Tennessee closed the gap to six, 57-51, with 4:13 to play. The nine free throws to end the game were the only points Troy scored as the Blue Raiders outscored them 15-9 but the lead the Trojans created early in the second half kept them ahead for the win. Troy used its momentum from the end of the first half taking a 9-0 run for a 10-pt lead, 38-38, with 16:52 on the clock. Then a basket by Ottley kept the Blue Raiders within 11, 51-40, with 11 minutes to play. Middle Tennessee outrebounded Troy by six with 39 as junior Trevor Ottley led the team with 12. It was Ottley's first double figure rebounding game of the season. Senior Calvin O'Neil also performed well on defense with seven rebounds and held Troy's top scorer Brandon Hazzard to just six points, which were all of free throws. "I thought it was as good of a defensive effort as we have had all year. Calvin O'Neil, I think, is the best defensive player in our league. I thought he competed all night. Trevor Ottley just had a great rebounding, loose ball sensation tonight but it is league play. You have to recover quickly after

a big win or after tough loss like to night. We will put this behind us and get ready for a tough South Alabama team on Saturday," head coach Kermit Davis said. The Blue Raiders shot 40.4 percent from the field led by O'Neil with 18. O'Neil ended the game 6-8 from the field and made 5 of 6 free throw opportunities. Junior James Washington added 15 while seniors Montarrio Haddock and Desmond Yates each had 10 points. The Blue Raiders won the tip and jumped out to a quick 9-2 lead to begin play. Middle Tennessee held Troy to just one basket in the first seven minutes of the game. Troy started making its shots and after putting together and 8-2 run tied the game at 12. Hazzard gave the Trojans their first lead, 14-12, after making both of his free throws. Then Troy extended that run to 14-5 for a three-point lead, 18-15 with seven minutes remaining in the first half. Middle Tennessee kept battling and a layup by Washington gave them a 28-27 lead with 39 seconds to play but Taylor hit a shot with 10 seconds giving the Trojans a 29-28 lead at the half. Middle Tennessee shot 32.1 percent from the field in the first half with Washington leading the way with eight points. Troy shot just 37.9 percent as the Blue Raiders performed well on defense. Middle Tennessee returns to Murphy Center for its final home game when it plays host to South Alabama on Saturday, Feb. 20 at 7 p.m. The six Blue Raider seniors will be honored pre-game and the game will be broadcast on Fullcourt and ESPN360.com with Chip Walters and Andy Herzer calling the action.

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