

Blue Raiders thwart Union upset bid, 95-82, in exhibition action

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Eight Middle Tennessee players scored eight points or more, including five in double figures, as the Blue Raiders stormed from behind to beat Union University, 95-82, in exhibition action at Murphy Center Tuesday night.

Newcomer Adam Vogelsberg led the Middle Tennessee charge with 18 points on the strength of 4-of-6 shooting from 3-point range, while Marcus Morrison (17 points), Kyle Young (16 points, eight rebounds), Tim Blue (10 points) and Calvin O'Neil (10 points) all reach double figures in front of the 1,538 who

braved poor weather

conditions to watch the team's only exhibition game of the preseason. Additionally, Fats Cuyler netted nine points, pulled five rebounds and dished out seven assists to just one turnover, while Brian Lake finished with eight points and five rebounds for Middle Tennessee. Union, the No. 6-ranked NAIA team in the nation, battled the Blue Raiders from the outset and owned a 47-37 lead at the break. The game was delayed for 34 minutes at halftime as fans were evacuated from the seating areas and asked to remain in safe areas on the bottom level of Murphy Center due to tornado warnings throughout the area. "Our people handled that situation real professionally," Middle Tennessee coach Kermit Davis said. "At about 3:30 (Tuesday afternoon) I was real nervous for Union's team because I could tell watching the weather that it was all up Interstate 40. I'm just glad everybody was safe. I really appreciate the people that came out tonight considering the weather. I thought it was a great turnout considering the weather and everything." Those in attendance were left somewhat perplexed at halftime as Union, which is located in Jackson, Tenn., brought the battle to the Blue Raiders and controlled the first 20 minutes. "Our team is usually at the top of the Sun Belt in rebound margin and defensive field goal percentage and tonight we gave up 54 percent (shooting) and was outrebounded (37-36) so I think we lost some of our identity, at least for tonight," Davis said. "I think this was what we needed against what we consider the best non-Division I team in our state this year. They have a good team and if they keep going they have a chance to win the NAIA National Championship. They went right at us early." But it was the Blue Raiders who brought the

battle in the second half as they outscored the Bulldogs 58-35 to seize control of the exhibition game and build some momentum heading into Monday's opener against Utah State. Middle Tennessee outscored Union 16-5 in the first five minutes of the second half and took its first lead since the game's first possession when Vogelsberg drained a long 3-pointer to stake the Blue Raiders to a 53-52 advantage with 15:05 remaining. After Union's Mack Bealim connected for a short jumper, Middle Tennessee went on a 9-0 run, capped by O'Neil's 15-footer, to extend the lead to 66-58 with 11:15 remaining and the Blue Raiders controlled the game from there. One aspect of the contest that has been consistent with Middle Tennessee's preseason practices was unselfishness and ball distribution. The Blue Raiders had 24 assists on their 34 baskets made and were guilty of nine turnovers, while forcing 24.

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