

# Long layoff doesn't slow Blue Raiders in 92-48 win

December 18, 2005 · MT Media Relations

## MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

An eight-day layoff due to final exams did not derail Middle Tennessee's strong start to the season as the Blue Raiders erupted for a 92-48 win against Freed-Hardeman in front of 3,518 at Murphy Center Sunday afternoon. The Blue Raiders (5-2) were led by a career-high 23-point performance from senior guard Fats Cuyler, while senior Marcus Morrison registered his fourth career double double with 20 points and 10 rebounds. Junior guard Bud Howard had his best all-around game as a Blue Raider with seven points, 10 assists and eight rebounds, while Tim Blue finished with 12 points and six boards. "I thought it was a very unselfish effort by our basketball team," said Middle Tennessee coach Kermit Davis, who moved into seventh place on the Blue Raiders' all-time wins list with 57 victories. "I thought we shared the ball well. We shot



50 percent, held the opponent below 40 and had a better than 2-to-1 assist to turnover ratio, so all in all, it was a nice win all around, especially coming off an eight-day layoff due to final exams." The 44-point margin of victory is the largest for Middle Tennessee since a 56-point uprising against Bryan College, Nov. 17, 2001, and the win enabled the Blue Raiders to extend the nation's 15th longest home win streak against non-conference opponents to 19 straight. Cuyler and Morrison were almost automatic from the field, combining to hit 17-of-26 field goals, including 9-of-13 from 3-point range. Cuyler's career-high 23 points came on the strength of 9-of-13 shooting from the field and 5-of-8 from 3-point range. The Leesburg, Fla., native also dished out four assists and had just one turnover.

Morrison was as dynamic, shooting 8-of-13 from the field and a sizzling 4-of-5 from 3-point range. His 10 rebounds were a career high and he did all of his damage in just 25 minutes - as did Cuyler. Howard continued to show why he has the ability to not only electrify the crowd, but also ignite his team with solid all-around play. His 10 assists were the most by a Blue Raider since Keith Connor racked up 10 against Covenant College, Nov. 24, 2003, and he dished out the career-high 10 helpers while being guilty of just two turnovers. His eight rebounds also were a career high. The Blue Raiders, who won the battle of the boards 44-29, jumped out to a 44-25 halftime lead and never looked back on their way to the one-side lead. Middle Tennessee returns to action when it plays No. 4-ranked Louisville in the Billy Minardi Classic Tuesday at 6:05 p.m. **BLUE BITS:** Junior guard Wes Durrant scored a career-high five points against Freed-Hardeman ... With one blocked shot against Freed Hardeman, Kyle Young now has 34 career rejections, which ties him with former teammate John Humphrey for 14th on the all-time list ... Bud Howard's 10 assists against Freed-Hardeman tie him for 15th all-time on the single-game list ... Middle Tennessee increased its home winning streak against in-state opponents to 10 and is 11-1 against them at Murphy Center under Kermit Davis ... The Blue Raiders' 19 straight non-conference home wins represent the 15th longest such streak in the country ... Middle Tennessee improved to 46-5 when leading at the half under Davis, and they also are 48-2 when outshooting the opposition under Davis. **POSTGAME QUOTES**

#### **Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis**

##### **(About defeating Freed-Hardeman 92-48):**

"I think the best thing from tonight's game was the unselfishness of our team. We didn't guard well or didn't execute at times, but we played unselfish throughout the game." **(About having a big night offensively):**

"We had a 2-1 turnover ratio and shot over 50 percent. We also kept our opponent under 50 percent shooting, which was very positive." **(On preparing for Freed-Hardeman):**

"You have eight days off, final exams, and then you leave (Monday) for the Louisville trip at noon. (Assistant coach Al Pinkins) had the scout and he did a great job. I can assure you we prepared for Freed-Hardeman like any other team and started working on guarding their plays (Thursday). Our guys did a good job of keeping the focus on this game." **(About having a total of 44 rebounds):**

"I wish we had more offensive rebounds. Right now we are about third [in the Sun Belt] in rebound margin and we are 10th [in the Sun Belt] in offensive rebounds. We have to continue to get more rebounds and get more physical." **(About gaining a big lead against Freed-Hardman in the second half):**

"I thought we wore them down in the second half from a physical standpoint. We did a good job in playing our transition style of basketball." **(On preparing for #4 Louisville Tuesday evening):**

"Taqun Dean and [Juan] Palacios are very solid players. [David] Padgett has a good low post presence. Playing Louisville in Freedom Hall is a challenge, but we will go into Tuesday's game with a lot of confidence. We will give them [Louisville] our best shot." **Senior G/F Marcus Morrison: (About playing a Sunday afternoon contest against Freed-Hardeman):**

"We had a week off without a game, so everybody was anxious to play. Today's game was a little different, but we try to approach every game the same." **(On how getting more rebounds helps Morrison get involved):**

"It seems like when I rebound I play better and I am more active in the game." **(About establishing a big lead in the second half):**

"In the second half we wanted to come out strong and set the tempo for the rest of the game." **(Thought's about Tuesday's match up at No. 4 Louisville):**

"We are coming in to win. We think we can play with anybody in the country." **Senior G Fats Cuyler:**

**(About playing Freed-Hardeman on Sunday):**

"It was different playing an afternoon game on Sunday, we had a week to practice and we were ready to play." **(Thoughts about expecting a big run against the Freed-Hardeman Lions):**

"No we didn't expect to make big runs. We kept playing in transition and we wanted to play a full 40 minutes of basketball." **(About scoring a career high 23 points):**

"I felt like I could make the shots, so that's what I did. Sometimes I feel like I can help light a spark and I was fortunate to get some shots to fall today. I thought it was a good team win."

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*Printed on July 31, 2014*

*Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/4675>*