Four tally double figures as Blue Raiders roll past Ragin' Cajuns, 73-59

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Junior guard Adam Vogelsberg led four Blue Raiders in double figures with a career-high 21 points as Middle Tennessee turned back two-time defending Sun Belt Conference champion Louisiana-Lafayette, 73-59, in front of a season-high 5,003 at Murphy Center Saturday night.

- **Photos:** Blue Raiders vs. Lafayette

The Blue Raiders (10-9, 3-4) completed the weekend sweep and moved to within one game of second in the Sun Belt's East Division by displaying exceptional ball security with only six turnovers, playing solid defense by forcing 22 turnovers, and hitting clutch shots down the stretch.

Joining Vogelsberg in double figures were reserves Tim Blue (14), Fats Cuyler (13), and Marcus Morrison, 11) as the Blue Raider bench piled up 38 points after producing 48 points in the win against New Orleans Thursday.

"These were two big wins that we really needed to get things back on track and gain some momentum going down the stretch," said Vogelsberg, whose six 3-pointers were a career best

and also the ninth most by an individual in a single game at Middle Tennessee. "It was a team win and everyone got into the act and did positive things to help our team win. The crowds were great for both games and that means a lot to us. We appreciate the support."

Middle Tennessee led 25-24 at the half and owned a 39-36 lead with 11:57 remaining before Vogelsberg drained a 3-pointer and Morrison followed with back-to-back treys to ignite a run that put the Blue Raiders on top 45-36.

The Ragin' Cajuns (5-14, 1-7) would not go away and closed to within 56-55 on Lucian Pesoli's jumper with 4:43 remaining; however, Vogelsberg connected on a free throw and followed with a clutch long-range 3-pointer - his sixth of the game - to extend the lead to 60-55 with 3:34 remaining. The Blue Raiders knocked down 11-of-12 free throws in the final three minutes to seal the win and end a five-game losing streak against Louisiana-Lafayette.

Middle Tennessee will try to make it three straight when it travels to Miami to face Florida International next Saturday.

POSTGAME NOTES

STREAK IS OVER: Middle Tennessee's 73-59 win over Louisiana-Lafayette on Saturday night ended a five-game losing streak against the Ragin' Cajuns. Prior to tonight, the last time the Blue Raiders defeated Louisiana-Lafayette was on Jan. 12, 2002 at the Murphy Center.

LIMITED MISTAKES: The key to Middle Tennessee's victory over Louisiana-Lafayette was how the Blue Raiders valued the basketball. Middle Tennessee tied the single-game mark for the second fewest turnovers in a game by committing only six against the Ragin' Cajuns while forcing 22 miscues by ULL. The school record for fewest turnovers in a game is five set against Arkansas State in 1988. Since freshman Kevin Kanaskie took over the starting point guard duties in Thursday's win over UNO, the Blue Raiders are averaging just 9.0 turnovers a game.

VOGELSBERG HOT FROM ARC: Hot-shooting Adam Vogelsberg paced the Blue Raiders in the win over Louisiana-Lafayette with 21 points but it was his long-range shooting that sparked the MT victory. The junior connected on a career-best six treys which tied for the ninth most in a single-game at Middle Tennessee. Over the past three games, Vogelsberg is shooting a sizzling 51.7 percent from three-point range (15-29) and is shooting 39.5 percent on the season.

ALONE IN SIXTH: Tonight's win over Louisiana-Lafayette was the 62nd for Kermit Davis at the helm of the Blue Raider program. That figure moves him into sixth place on the all-time wins list at Middle Tennessee and he now needs nine more victories to tie Stan Simpson for fifth place.

SOLID AT THE POINT: True freshman Kevin Kanaskie turned in another solid effort against Louisiana-Lafayette as he helped lead a nearly error-free Blue Raider attack. The State College, Pa., native had three assists and no turnovers in 29 minutes while collecting a career-best four steals. In his two games as a starter, Kanaskie has tallied eight assists and just one turnover in 60 minutes of action.

BLUE LOVIN' THE MURPH: Junior Tim Blue is starting to play like everyone thought he could

and the friendly confines may be a big reason for the turnaround. In the last three home games, Blue has averaged 16.3 points, shot 69.2 (18-26) percent from the field, averaged 5.0 rebounds, and connecting on 85.7 percent of his free throws (12-14). In eight games at home this year, Blue is averaging 10.5 points, 4.5 rebounds, and is shooting 53 percent from the field.

PLAYER OF THE GAME: Adam Vogelsberg was voted the Alexander Automotive Family Player of the Game against Louisiana-Lafayette by members of the working media.

TIDBITS: The Blue Raiders have hit 23 3-pointers in the last two games combined ... The Middle Tennessee bench has scored 86 points over the last two outings with 38 against the Ragin' Cajuns ... Adam Vogelsberg saw his streak of 21 straight free throws made come to an end during the second half against ULL ... The Blue Raiders have now won back-to-back games for the first time since downing Belmont and Freed Hardeman in December ... Middle Tennessee shot 47.6 percent from 3-point range against ULL, but just 37.9 percent from two-point range ... A dozen relatives from Home, Kansas came to see Adam Vogelsberg in tonight's win over ULL ... Jay Ivey, who signed a scholarship agreement with the Blue Raiders in November, was in attendance tonight. Ivey plays for Owensboro (Ky.) Catholic and is averaging a double-double on the season.

POSTGAME QUOTES
Head Coach Kermit Davis
On defeating Lafayette for the first time in his career:
"They are not as talented as they have been in the past few years, but they are still a physically challenging basketball team. It was a great night for our fans and the (Scout Night) promotion we had. Our marketing department did a great job and we appreciate the support that we've been getting, not only tonight, but also throughout the season. It was a big win for us tonight and it will help put ourselves back into the middle of everything."

About the performance of players coming off the bench:
"We have 38 points tonight off the bench. I was pleased the way our guys played off the bench. Marcus [Morrison], Tim [Blue], and Fats [Cuyler] had a great game and this shows other teams that we have depth beyond our five starters. What pleases me most is the way those three guys responded to coming off the bench in these two home games. They are not selfish players and they understand no one has been demoted. They enjoy coming off the bench and the moves we have made really helps to give us a deep and productive bench and it showed in these two home games."

Thoughts on creating turnovers in the past two games:
"Our turnovers were 30 to 18 over the weekend which is a good number. We double teamed the post which was critical, which allowed us to cause some turnovers."

On how Coach Davis feels about the team midway through the conference season: "I think we still have a lot of improvement to do. I feel a lot better about our team than I did last Saturday. I thought the move of Kevin Kanaskie to the point helped him gain a lot of confidence and allowed us to move [Fats] Cuyler to the number 2 spot, where he is probably more comfortable."

About the Blue Raiders playing good basketball in the month of February:
"Our teams always seem to play well in the February. We will be smart with our week off. We have to keep guys healthy and we are still playing a lot of new guys. Tim Blue is making a lot of progress this past month which is helping our team improve. These are two good wins and now we need to build off of them."

Middle Tennessee Player Quotes:
Senior Guard Fats Cuyler:
Thoughts on boosting team confidence after Saturday's victory:
"We were motivated which helped us execute our game plan and get the win tonight. We played together and everyone got involved and hopefully these two games will get us going in the right direction. We know we have a good team and we showed some things this weekend. We still have to improve in our practices and keep getting better, but I like the direction of our team and the prospects of what could lie ahead."

On improving the shooting percentage in the second half:
"We kept practicing shooting and we know it would come back to us and help us get a win. We shot the ball well in these two home wins and I think we had some players gain some much-needed confidence from the field. A big key was having so many people contribute because that makes it hard to key on one guy. What did we have, four guys in double figures in both games? That makes us pretty hard to defend."

Thoughts on the importance of the win on Saturday:
"This win against Lafayette was very important us and to Coach Davis because they have a good team. Their record is deceiving because they played a very tough non-conference schedule. This win will help us get ready for our next game against Florida International."

Adam Vogelsberg:
Thoughts on defeating the Ragin' Cajuns:
"We wanted to get back on a win streak. Getting the win (against New Orleans) Thursday was important in helping us get back to where we need to be. This win also helps boost our confidence that we can play with anybody and shows that we can play very talented team."

On how Saturday's win against Louisiana-Lafayette will help the Blue Raiders' gain confidence:
"It was important to get these two home wins and get our conference home record up. This will also help boost our team confidence because we know we can win at home and make the Murphy Center a home court advantage during the conference tournament."