

Blue Raiders move into second in SBC East with 62-60 win at North Texas

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DENTON, Texas - What a difference three weeks can make. Three weeks ago the Blue Raiders were 1-4 and at the bottom of the Sun Belt's East Division standings, but they are coming home to face Denver with a four-game winning streak and in sole possession of second in the East following a rugged 62-60 win against North Texas in front of 2,058 at the Super Pit Thursday. The Blue Raiders (12-9, 5-4) won their fourth straight league game - matching their longest Sun Belt win streak ever - as Tim Blue scored 16 points, Marcus Morrison contributed 15 and Adam Vogelsberg added 12

on the strength of 4-of-5 shooting from beyond the arc. "It's amazing what a three-week difference can mean," Middle Tennessee coach Kermit Davis said. "I told our team when we were on that 5-1/2 hour bus trip back from Troy that I knew we had a lot of good in us. I think we hopefully handled our team in a smart way and refreshed them, and I think it has helped us." Middle Tennessee certainly played like a refreshed team for the fourth straight game as it won the contest in the second half. Bench production again was huge as the Blue Raiders received 37 points from their reserves in the pivotal conference road win. More impressive, the Blue Raiders secured victory in an arena where the home team was 10-3 on the season coming into the game. While several players stepped up big in the riveting win, none were bigger than Morrison as he produced one of his best all-around games of the season with the 15 points, eight rebounds, three assists, two steals and three clutch free throws down the stretch in just 20 minute of action. "Our team is playing well and with a great deal of confidence right now," Morrison said. "We are getting a lot of production from different people. This was a big win for us on the road and it puts us in good position down the stretch. Winning back-to-back games on the road in league play is never easy so we should feel good about what we accomplished here tonight." The game was tied 32-32 at the half but the Blue Raiders stormed out of the locker room after the half and built a 50-42 advantage on Calvin O'Neil's 3-pointer with 12:18 remaining; however, North Texas (12-10, 5-6) wouldn't go away and eventually tied the game 59-59 with 2:15 remaining. That's when Morrison knocked down three crucial free throws down the stretch

and the Blue Raiders came up with huge stops on the defensive end to earn the hard-fought win. Leading 62-59 with seven seconds remaining, Middle Tennessee elected to foul Lionel Brown with three seconds remaining. Brown made the first charity toss and missed the second on purpose. North Texas was able to get the rebound and the desperation 3-pointer was off the mark at the buzzer. "Give our players a lot of credit," Davis said. "There were two or three times when we had a chance to go up eight or nine late and we couldn't close it out. North Texas just kept battling and coming back but that's when you saw the confidence our team is playing with because guys kept making plays. Our guys just battled and found a way to win a big road game." The Blue Raiders return to action when they face Denver Saturday at Murphy Center. Tipoff is 7:05 p.m. **NOTES:** Former Middle Tennessee point guard Keith Connor was in attendance Thursday night. Connor is working in Dallas and sat on the Blue Raider bench for the win ... Fats Cuyler's 3-pointer with 14:51 remaining in the second half was the 100th of his career as he became the third-fastest player in program history to hit 100 treys, doing so in his 52nd game ... Adam Vogelsberg was 4-of-5 from 3-point range and is shooting 55 percent (21-of-38) from beyond the arc in his last five games ... Middle Tennessee improved to 53-2 under Kermit Davis when outshooting its opponent ... The Blue Raiders earned their 16th SBC road win under Davis in the win and are tied with Louisiana-Lafayette for the most wins away from home since 2003 ... Middle Tennessee's bench is averaging 39 points in the four-game winning streak ... The Blue Raiders improved to 16-7 in February under Davis.

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