Trio produce career night to rally Blue Raiders to OT win

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Career performances from Adam Vogelsberg, Tim Blue and Kevin Kanaskie weighed heavily as Middle Tennessee came from behind to beat South Dakota State, 89-82, in overtime in front of 3,127 at the Murphy Center Monday night.

Vogelsberg scored a career-high 25 points - the most points in a game by a Blue Raider this season, while Blue collected his first career double double with 20 points and 11 rebounds (both personal bests) to lead Middle Tennessee's offense. Kanaskie, a freshman point guard from State College, Pa., continued his solid play running the squad by establishing career highs in points (12) and assists (6) to help the Blue Raiders dodge a late-season bullet.

"We feel fortunate to win this game but, at the same time, we did find a way to win in the end and that's important," said Vogelsberg, who scored 21 of his 25 points in the final 19 minutes, including overtime. "We have won five of six and we are trying to build momentum but we can't be taking steps back. We have to be moving forward. We have a lot of work to do but it's good to be finding ways to improve out of a win."

Middle Tennessee (13-10) trailed 35-26 at the half and was starting at a 45-38 deficit with 14:56 remaining. The game, which saw 11 lead changes and 12 ties, finally turned in the Blue Raiders' favor when Vogelsberg heated up down the stretch. Tied 55-55, Vogelsberg drained consecutive treys to give Middle Tennessee a 61-55 lead with 6:13 remaining; however, the Jackrabbits were not finished.

They went on top 66-63 with 3:45 remaining before Fats Cuyler's long 3-pointer tied the game for the sixth time. The game continued back-and-forth down the stretch and Middle Tennessee trailed 71-70 with 38 seconds remaining.

Cuyler was fouled out of a timeout and hit the second of two free throws with 25 ticks on the clock to tie the game, 71-71, but South Dakota State was unable to get off a potential game-winning shot on its final possession.

Middle Tennessee won the overtime period, 18-11, to win its fifth game in six outings. The Blue Raiders return to action when they play at Arkansas State Thursday.

POSTGAME NOTES

VOGELSBERG SETS CAREER-HIGH: Junior Adam Vogelsberg got hot at the right time to key Middle Tennessee's overtime win against visiting South Dakota State. Vogelsberg scored a personal-best 25 points, including 22 in the second half to carry the Blue Raiders past the Jackrabbits. The Marysville, Kan., native hit four 3-pointers and made a season-high 13 free throws in 14 attempts to account for the most points scored by a Blue Raider this year.

KANASKIE HAS CAREER NIGHT: Freshman Kevin Kanaskie enjoyed the best statistical game of his Blue Raider career in the win over the Jackrabbits. The State College, Pa., native poured in a personal-best 12 points, grabbed five rebounds, and dished out a career-high six assists in 33 minutes. Kanaskie, who had only two turnovers running the point, also equaled his career-best with two made 3-pointers.

VOGELSBERG IN TOP 10: Adam Vogelsberg now has his name in the Blue Raider record books after Monday's win over South Dakota State. With four made 3-pointers, Vogelsberg ran his season total to 57 which puts him in ninth place on the single-season list.

BLUE TURNS IN STELLAR EFFORT: After a disappointing first half, forward Tim Blue turned in on in the last 20 minutes to record his best game as a Blue Raider. Blue tallied a career-high 20 points to go along with a personal-best 11 rebounds in registering the first double-double of his career. In the second half, Blue scored 16 points and ripped down 10 boards.

SHOOTING PROBLEMS CONTINUE: Despite the victory over South Dakota State, Middle Tennessee continues to have problems shooting the basketball. Over the past two games combined, the Blue Raiders are shooting a dismal 35.8 percent (48-134) from the field. Middle Tennessee made just 38.6 percent of its shots against the Jackrabbits but was 57.1 percent in overtime.

BENCH KEEPS PRODUCING: The Middle Tennessee bench continues to dominate the opposition as they outscored South Dakota State's reserves, 43-8, on Monday night. Over the last six games, the Blue Raider bench is averaging 39.5 points.

PLAYER OF THE GAME: Adam Vogelsberg was voted the Alexander Automotive Family Player of

the Game against South Dakota State by members of the working media.

TIDBITS: Tim Blue, Adam Vogelsberg, and Kevin Kanaskie accounted for 50 of Middle Tennessee's 63 second half points ... Middle Tennessee is now 17-8 all-time in the month of February under Kermit Davis ... The Blue Raiders are now 4-4 all-time under Davis in overtime, including a 1-1 mark this season ... Tim Blue made a career-best eight free throws ... The Blue Raiders started three true freshman in tonight's game ... The Blue Raiders won the rebound battle in the second half by a 35 to 14 count ... Kyle Young's 12 points put him in double figures for the first time since Jan. 19 against South Alabama ... The Blue Raiders finished the season with a 4-1 mark against non-conference foes at home.

Quotes from Middle Tennessee Head Coach Kermit Davis:
Opening Statement
"I'm really proud of our team for finding a way to win. On the other hand, I'm really disappointed in the step back we made defensively in the past couple of games. We have lost our edge offensively and we lost our toughness. We were very fortunate to win, but it was a good win mentally."

On what Middle Tennessee needs to improve on before Thursday's game at Arkansas State:
"We have to make plays. How many eight- or nine-footers did we miss? Calvin O'Neil and Bud Howard were just staring at the goal. Marcus Morrison had balls flying out of his hand four feet from the rim. We're a team that should be playing over the top of their team. When you give a team open looks, you are going to give them confidence to win."

On the positive outcome of Monday's game:
"I was proud of Kevin Kanaskie because he played with a lot of confidence. Vogelsberg made big plays at the end, and he shot well from the line. I thought Tim Blue was absolutely horrendous defensively, but we had to keep him on the floor because we thought he could score."

About guarding the perimeter from South Dakota State:
"We talked about it every time out. It's my fault because we looked poorly coached tonight. Usually these games are earlier in the year. We were very fortunate we won the game. We are going to correct some mistakes and try to win our game on Thursday."

Middle Tennessee Player Quotes:
Junior Guard Adam Vogelsberg:
About Monday's win against South Dakota State:
"We didn't play real well, but we found a way to win at the end and that's important."

On playing a non-conference opponent during the final weeks of conference play:
"We have had conference games for several weeks. It's harder to get up for a non-conference game when you are trying to play for a (bye) in the tournament."

About not starting in Monday's game for the first time this season:
"It doesn't bother me. I don't care, whatever works out best for our team."

About the play of Kevin Kanaskie:
"Kevin did a good job pushing the ball and making some good passes. He has been solid for us of late."

About the play of South Dakota State's Matt Cadwell:
"We saw he averaged 15 and was their best players. I didn't expect him to make some of the big plays like he did. He will have some good years ahead of him."

Junior Forward Tim Blue:
About Monday's win over South Dakota State:
"We were lucky, and we took this team for granted a little bit. We were fortunate to win."

About Coach Kermit Davis' halftime speech:
"Halftime was rough and he got on us pretty good. He gave us everything he had. We had to come out and play like we are capable."

About making some clutch shots at the free-throw line:
"I take my time at the free throw line and try to make the most of those shots because they are all important. I was glad to come through tonight when it counted."

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