Long scoring drought hinders Blue Raiders in loss

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KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – Middle Tennessee fell behind early in the first half and could never catch up in an 86-56 loss to No. 17 Tennessee in Thompson-Boling Arena Tuesday night.

Seniors James Washington and Rod Emanuel each scored in double figures 11 and 10 points respectively to guide the Blue Raider offense. Emanuel also had five assists, three rebounds and three steals on the night.

As a team, the Blue Raiders (3-4) shot 40.8 percent from the field and 68.8 percent from the charity stripe. Middle Tennessee made 11 of 16 free throw opportunities led by freshman Shawn Jones who made a career high six free throws.

“We shot it on one pass and played selfishly. I thought Tennessee moved the ball really well and played hard like an unselfish team,” head coach Kermit Davis said. “In the second half, we got a little bit better with the ball movement. I just give Tennessee a lot of credit. We couldn’t get anything around the goal, and blocked shots intimidated us.”

Tennessee (6-0) ended the game shooting 50 percent and made 11 treys for a 45.8 percent in that category. The Vols were led by Tobias Harris who posted 21 and Scotty Hopson who had 19. Harris and Hopson were the only double figure scorers.

Middle Tennessee had 21 rebounds and 11 steals in the game and used turnovers to its advantage

scoring 19 points off turnovers.

Tennessee jumped out to an eight-point point lead but big baskets by Washington and solid defense by Hunt and Charles tied the game at eight. Then Emanuel hit a layup to give the Blue Raiders a 10-8 lead.

The Volunteers then went on a 19-0 run as Middle Tennessee was scoreless for eight minutes. Tennessee then extended that run to 25-4 taking a 35-14 lead with 5:48 on the clock as the Blue Raiders took a timeout.

Middle Tennessee tried to chip away at the Vols' lead making four free throws and scoring nine points to end the half but was unable to make much of a dent. Tennessee took a 23-point lead into the half after Skylar McBee hit a three-pointer at the buzzer.

Middle Tennessee shot 36.4 percent in the first half while Tennessee posted a 53.6 shooting percentage after connecting on almost double the shots with just six more attempts. Tennessee also outrebounded the Blue Raiders 19-12 and scored 19 points off 12 Middle Tennessee turnovers.

Washington led all scorers at the break with eight after going 2 for 4 from behind the arc and 3 for 6 from the field. Tennessee's high scorer was Hopson who had 14 after making four treys in five attempts.

The Blue Raiders came out strong in the second half matching Tennessee basket for basket until the Vols went on a 10-4 run to keep the lead at 27. Middle Tennessee went on another long drought but was able to keep Tennessee from scoring for a couple of minutes. At the final media time out, Tennessee led 80-47 with two players in double figures.

Middle Tennessee will play the second game of a three-game road swing on Saturday, Dec. 4 when it faces SIU-Edwardsville in Edwardsville, Ill. The game is set for 7 p.m.

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