

Blue Raiders battle to bitter end in 81-79 loss to Evansville

Gallman scores career high 24 points

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EVANSVILLE, Ind. – Middle Tennessee fought until the bitter end against Evansville on Saturday afternoon tying the game with 9.3 seconds to play but UE's Kevon Lacey hit the game winner with two seconds on the clock for an 81-79 win.

The bucket was the only one in the second half for Lacey, who ended play with 10 points. It was also the only field goal in the final seven-and-a-half minutes for the Purple Aces who made 21 free throws in the second half.

Middle Tennessee trailed by as many as 21-points in the second half but sheer grit and determination put it back in the hunt with four minutes to play. Guided by senior James Washington, the Blue Raiders used a 14-3 run, allowing UE no field goals, to make it a four-point game. The Blue Raiders continued to battle but UE made seven free throws to stay ahead and extend the lead, 77-69, 1:32.

Middle Tennessee still had some fight. Sophomore James Gallman made a trey with 49.7 seconds making it a three-point game, 77-74. Then the team got a five second call on UE's inbound to get the ball back. A layup by r-sophomore Jason Jones put the Blue Raiders within one, 77-76.

Ryan made two free throws putting the Purple Aces back up by three. Then the Blue Raiders drove the floor and got the ball to Gallman who hit a trey to tie with 9.3 seconds. UE drove the floor and got



the ball to Lacey who made a layup for the win.

Gallman ended the game with a career high 24 points after going 6 for 9 from behind the arc. Washington and J. Jones added to the scoring with 15 and 11 points respectively. The Blue Raiders shot 58 percent as a team and made nine three-pointers.

"I thought it was a game of some fantastic runs, both ways. We absorbed JT's foul trouble in the first half and were down five. In the second half, Evansville played extremely well for the first seven or eight minutes. They had great offense, guarded us with toughness and then we got down 18 and I thought we flipped it," head coach Kermit Davis said. "Our full-court defense was very good, we did a good job with the screen and getting James Washington and James Gallman open."

The Purple Aces shot 54.3 percent from the field including eight three-pointers. UE's Colt Ryan scored 24-points after going 6 for 8 from the field including five treys. The team also used 43 free throw attempts to its advantage connecting on 35. 13 of those free throws were in the final eight minutes of the game.

Middle Tennessee made 12 of 21 free throws and was called for 22 fouls, 10 less than the Purple Aces.

Gallman led the team early scoring 9 of the first 11 points and the Blue Raiders used it to their advantage taking a seven-point lead, 20-13, after a basket by Hunt. UE outscored Middle Tennessee 12-5 to tie the game at 25. The two teams traded points but then the Purple Aces pulled ahead and were able to keep the lead into the half, 37-32.

Middle Tennessee shot 56.5 percent in the first half led by Gallman who scored 12. Gallman was 5 for 6 from the field at the break.

UE shot 58.8 percent from the field in the first half led by Harris with nine points. The Purple Aces also outrebounded Middle Tennessee 13-9 in the first half.

The Blue Raiders struck quick to begin the second half cutting the UE lead to one after a three by Gallman and free throw by J. Jones, 37-36. Then Ryan went on a tear scoring eight points in a 30-second period to give the Purple Aces a nine-point lead, 45-36, with 16:29 to play.

Evansville extended the run to 22-4 as it pulled ahead by 19, 59-40 with 12 minutes on the clock. A trey by Washington put the Blue Raiders back within nine, 67-58, with right at six minutes to play. He then hit another three to cut the lead to seven, 68-61. Then a three-point play by Ottley made it a four-point game, 68-64, with just under five minutes remaining on the clock.

The Blue Raiders will be back in action on Tuesday, Dec. 21 when it plays host to Vanderbilt. The game is set to tip at 8 p.m. and will air on CSS.

The Marines will be collecting toys for their annual "Toys for Tots" campaign at the door. Fans are also encouraged to wear their official "Blueout" GoDaddy.com Bowl shirts to show their Blue Raider spirit against the Commodores.

For those fans that have not yet purchased their \$45 bowl ticket and T-shirt combo may do so by visiting the Middle Tennessee Ticket Office at gate 1A of Floyd Stadium or calling 1-888-YES-MTSU.

The ticket and T-Shirt combos may also be purchased at the Vanderbilt game. The MT Ticket office will be set up on the concourse behind Section O.

Fans can also purchase a ticket voucher with the Blueout shirt at the following locations: State Farm Operations Center, Blue Raider Bookstore, Kirkenburts, Ideastees, Lightning's Locker Room, Alumni Hall, and the Learning Circle. If you purchase at one of these locations, please redeem the voucher at the Blue Raider Ticket Office or in Mobile during Will Call hours.

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