Free throws down Blue Raiders against Jags

J. Jones and Washington lead all scorers

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MOBILE, Ala. – South Alabama used free throws late in the game to help propel it past the Blue Raiders on Sunday afternoon as the Jaguars took a 63-57 win.

Middle Tennessee (5-9, 0-1) committed 18 fouls in the second half of the game on which USA made 16 of 22 free throw attempts including 10 to end the game. The Jaguars (7-6, 1-1) did not make a field goal after the 4:20 mark in the second half using the free throws to their advantage.

“I think we made a really good comeback. I have been doing this a long time and I don’t think I have ever been on the end of a stat where in the second half they shot 22 free throws and we shot 1 and that is the total of the game,” head coach Kermit Davis said.

Senior James Washington and r-sophomore Jason Jones once again guided the Blue Raider offense scoring 11 and 10 points respectively. As a team, Middle Tennessee shot 36.2 percent from the field and made 8 of 11 free throw attempts in the game for a 72.7 percent.

USA was led by Tim Williams who scored 25 after going 7 for 11 from the field and 10 for 11 at the free throw line. The Jags made 20 of 26 free throw opportunities on the night and shot 41.3 percent from the field.

Defensively, USA had eight more rebounds with 40 but each team had 10 on the offensive side of the ball. The Blue Raiders also had seven steals and four blocks in the game. Senior Trevor Ottley

led the team in rebounds with seven while J. Jones and freshman Kerry Hammonds each had six.

The Blue Raiders took an 11-9 lead but then USA went on a 9-2 run to take an 18-13 lead with 9:38 remaining in the first half. The Jaguars extended the run 16-3 and held Middle Tennessee scoreless from the field on its way to taking a 25-14 lead at the eight-minute media timeout.

After being scoreless for over eight minutes, Oden hit a jumper to end the drought and keep the score close, 27-18. The Blue Raiders also made five free throws during the drought and used free throws to its advantage to close the gap. Middle Tennessee trailed five, 31-26, at the half.

Oden who played just four minutes in the first half led all scorers with seven points after going 2 for 2 from the field and free throw line. The Blue Raiders shot just 33.3 percent in the first half while USA shot 46.2 percent led by Williams who had 11 points.

Middle Tennessee started the second half hot scoring seven points in the first five minutes to cut the lead to three, 36-33. Then a jumper by J. Jones made it a one-point game, 36-35 with 15:27 to play.

Treys by J. Jones and Gallman put Middle Tennessee ahead 47-43 at the 10-minute mark, its first lead since early in the first half. The Jags kept scoring but Middle Tennessee matched them point for point and kept a one-point lead, 49-48, at the six minute mark.

USA took a one-point lead after Williams hit two free throws but the Blue Raiders quickly got it back after five straight by Gallman, 54-50. The two teams traded points but USA made 3 of 4 free throws to take a 58-57 lead with three minutes to play. USA's Williams' made two more free throws to make it a three-point lead, 60-57, with just 39.6 seconds remaining on the clock.

The Blue Raiders will be back in action on Wednesday, Jan. 5 when they play host to North Texas at Murphy Center. The game is now a doubleheader with the women since the Blue Raider football team is playing in the GoDaddy.com Bowl on Jan. 6. The men's game is set to tip at 8 p.m. or 30 minutes after the women's game.

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