# Explosive start propels Blue Raiders to victory

## Washington scores 20 in 63-51 win over Troy

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**MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -** A strong first half performance followed by tough defense and key plays in the second half propelled the Blue Raiders to a 63-51 win over Troy on Thursday night in Murphy Center. The Blue Raiders ended the game shooting 45.1 percent from the field with senior James Washington and r-sophomore J. Jones each scoring in double figures. Washington went 6 for 12 from the field and 5 for 8 from behind the arc to score 20 points. "I thought for the first 20 minutes we came out with a purpose defensively, shared the ball with a smaller lineup, got in transition and played fast just like we wanted to. It was a nice half. We shot 50% and held them to 32%. The shots we got were really good shots," head coach Kermit Davis said. " In the second half, all we talked about was to play like we were ten down, trying to win the second half, trying to be a dominant team, but we just didn't come out with the energy defensively, we were passive on offense, we were trying to play fast in transition, we didn't get anything. We were trying to play vertical, and then when we did, we missed a few easy shots, and we just kind of clamed up a little bit. I was proud of how we came back, and weathered the storm." A usually strong free throw team, Middle Tennessee struggled at the line against Troy making just eight of 18 attempts. Washington led the team making three of his six opportunities. "We lead the league in free throw shooting, and I think James Washington is first in our league. With some of our deficiencies, that's why we won a couple of league games because we made free throws in late game. We had a chance to really kind of separate ourselves. But that part I'm not worried about, we've done it enough, we are going to be

fine there," Davis said. The Blue Raiders held Troy to just 32.7 percent from the field and the team known for making three-balls had just seven in the game with no one play making more than two. No Trojan scored in double figures and Bernard Toombs led the defense with 10 rebounds. Middle Tennessee outrebounded Troy 39 to 33 with r-junior Jimmy Oden leading the charge with a team high nine rebounds. Also aiding the defense were senior Trevor Ottley, junior Trevor Charles and freshman Shawn Jones who each had two blocks. Middle Tennessee jumped out to an 11-0 lead in the first three minutes and 23 seconds of the game as the Trojans took a timeout. The team then rattled off 14 more points while holding Troy to just one bucket to extend its lead to 23 points, 25-2, with 11:57 on the clock. In the first nine minutes of action, Washington went a perfect 4 for 4 from behind the arc to help guide the team to its big lead. After trailing 25-4, Troy mounted a 14-5 run to cut the Blue Raider lead to 12, 30-18, with 5:39 remaining on the clock in the first half. Middle Tennessee continued to score and a layup with 53 seconds to play by J. Jones gave the Blue Raiders a 40-22 lead headed into the break. Washington led all scorers with 12 points as the Blue Raiders shot 50 percent in the first half. The team held Troy to 32 percent shooting from the field and just six points in the paint. Defensively, Middle Tennessee had 24 rebounds and nine steals in the first half. To begin the second half, Troy went on a 10-3 run cutting the Middle Tennessee lead to 10, 43-33. The Trojans extended that run 19-6 making it a five-point game, 46-41, with 7:44 to play in the game. Key baskets by Oden and Hammonds kept the Blue Raiders ahead by eight, 54-46, with fewer than five minutes to play. The Blue Raiders' game with Troy will reair on Comcast Channel 176 in Murfreesboro on Friday, Jan. 21 at 7 p.m. Middle Tennessee will be back in action on Saturday, Jan. 22 at 7 p.m. when it plays host to Denver. Saturday's game will feature the 1977-78 Middle Tennessee men's basketball team in the annual "Legends Reunion Night".

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