

# Strong second half lifts Blue Raiders over Pioneers

## J. Jones leads team with 21 points and seven rebounds

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### MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

The Blue Raiders used a solid second half to take a 59-49 win over Sun Belt West Division leader Denver on Saturday night in Murphy Center. Middle Tennessee (9-11, 4-3) handed the Pioneers (10-10, 6-1) their first loss in Sun Belt action after shooting 50 percent from the field in the second half. The Blue Raiders ended the game shooting 37.7 percent with just one player having more than three field goals in the game. Free throws were key for Middle Tennessee when it came to scoring and the team made 17 of 22 attempts on the night.

"We beat a quality team that is playing really, really good basketball at both ends of the court. We knew it would be a game just like this. The key stat was the 20 turnovers they had. Our defense was active, and we disrupted some things for them. We drove the ball, got to the line, and down the



line had a really good percentage on three's. Any time you play them, it's a tough, grinding game on both ends of the floor," head coach Kermit Davis said. R-sophomore Jason Jones once again led all scorers with 21 points after going 7 for 13 from the field. J. Jones also led the team at the charity stripe making 7 of 8 attempts. "He's just getting so much better, he rebounds the ball, he can score a lot of different ways, and right now we are calling on him to play a lot at the "4" because of the untraditional styles of Troy and Denver. Jason accepts any role. He's playing as good as any newcomer in our league right now," Davis said. Senior James Washington was the only other player to record double figure scoring as he had 13 points. Washington also performed well at the free

throw line making 6 of 7 attempts. Defensively, J. Jones led the team there as well with seven rebounds while senior Rod Emanuel and sophomore JT Sulton each added five. As a team, Middle Tennessee had 32 rebounds and nine steals. "The biggest stat was the 16-2 edge in offensive rebounds. That's the biggest I can ever remember. We've had success against Denver. They are so good in their zone that you have to try to be physical in the offensive rebounding. Trevor Charles got us started in the second half with a put-back. Jason Jones was good, that was as good as Trevor Ottley has done all year. I hope he can start there and keep moving forward," Davis said. The Pioneers grabbed 22 rebounds but just two of those were on the offensive side of the ball. The team shot 53.3 percent from the field after an impressive 60 percent in the first half. Three players scored in double figures led by Chase Hallam with 17 after going 5 for 7 from the field and 7 for 9 from the free throw line. The two teams traded points to begin play and the Blue Raiders too their first lead after a layup by J. Jones, 8-7, with 15 minutes on the clock. The two continued to battle it out and at the five minute mark at shot by Hallam gave DU a 20-17 lead. Middle Tennessee trailed 23-21 at the half after trading points back and forth with the Pioneers. J. Jones led all scorers at the break with 10 points after an impressive performance from the free throw line in which he made six of seven attempts. Offensively the Blue Raiders struggled with just five field goals in the first half for a 21.7 shooting percentage from the field. The team capitalized on free throws however making 10 of 14. The team had 15 rebounds including nine on offense. The Blue Raiders also capitalized on 13 DU turnovers scoring nine points. The two continued to trade points when the second half started. Denver pulled ahead 31-28 with 15:25 remaining on the clock but the Blue Raiders picked up the pace and went on a 13-1 run to take a 41-32 lead with 11:14 to play. The Pioneers closed the gap back to three, 43-40, after scoring seven straight including four free throws. Middle Tennessee held onto a four-point lead, 49-45, with right at three minutes to play. Then a dunk by Sulton put the Blue Raiders back up by six, 51-45. The Blue Raiders outscored DU 8-2 in the final minute of the game to seal the win. The Blue Raiders will be back in action next week after traveling to Florida to face Florida Atlantic and FIU. Middle Tennessee will play FAU first on Thursday, Jan. 27 at 6 p.m. in Boca Raton, Fla. Then the team will travel to Miami where it will face FIU on Saturday, Jan. 29 at 6 p.m. Blue Raider fans are invited to attend Kermit Davis Live! each Monday night at Coach's Grill in Murfreesboro. Chip Walters, the voice of the Blue Raiders, hosts the show which airs from 7-8 p .m. on WGNS (100.5. FM, 101 .9 FM, 1450 AM), WMOT (89 .5) and WNSR (560 AM). Fans have the opportunity to ask questions by calling into the show at 1-866-RAIDERS, emailing [radio@goblueraiders.com](mailto:radio@goblueraiders.com) or submitting a question if they are in attendance.

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