Blue Raiders fall 62-51 to hot Florida Atlantic team

Charles helped guide team on both sides of the ball

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BOCA RATON, Fla. - Inadequate rebounding coupled with poor shooting hurt the Blue Raiders on Thursday night against Florida Atlantic in a 62-51 loss at FAU Arena. The Blue Raiders (9-12, 4-4) had 28 rebounds as a team and just six offensive rebounds while FAU (16-6, 8-0) had 41 total rebounds and 16 on the offensive side of the ball. Senior Trevor Ottley pulled down a team high seven rebounds and junior Trevor Charles added five. Charles also had two blocks in the game while Ottley had one block and a steal. Charles aided the defense with nine points after going 2 for 2 from the field and 5 for 7 at the free throw line. R-sophomore Jason Jones led all scorers with 10 points. "I thought we compete hard and guarded them the exact right way. They really struggled around the goal and the only way their posts scored was on offensive rebounds off dribble penetration. Our triangle and two was great and I think they went 19 offensive possessions without scoring. We couldn't finish shots. It's sickening to watch and that's just college players, wide open shots around the goal and we just can't make them," head coach Kermit Davis said. As a team, Middle Tennessee shot 38.3 percent from the field with Jones being the only player to score in double figures. FAU shot 40.7 percent from the field with Raymond Taylor scoring a team high 21 points. Taylor ended the game 8 for 15 from the field and 4 for 5 at the free throw line. Brett Royster scored 10 points and aided the defense with seven rebounds and two steals. Kore White led the defense with nine rebounds and two blocks. "Give Florida Atlantic a lot of credit. They really got us on the boards and came into tonight as the leading

rebounding team and pounded us on the glass. The bottom line is the best player in our league is Raymond Taylor and he totally dominated both games and that's why they won both games," Davis said. The two teams traded points to begin play but then FAU took a 9-0 run jumping out 14-8, 12:52. Middle Tennessee then closed the gap with two baskets of its own, 14-12. FAU kept up the pace and took a six-point, 23-17, with 4:33 to play. FAU's Taylor scored five straight points to give the Owls a 31-21 lead with just under two minutes to play. The Blue Raiders held FAU from scoring in the final minute of the half as they trailed 33-24 at the break. Turnovers and rebounds were the key in the first half. FAU had two more offensive rebounds with nine in the first half than Middle Tennessee had total rebounds. The Owls had 24 total rebounds and committed 12 turnovers including five Blue Raider steals but did not let it affect them. Middle Tennessee shot just 39.1 percent in the first half while the Owls shot 42.3 percent and made nine of 11 free throw attempts. The Blue Raiders opened the second half strong connecting on five of six free throws to cut the FAU lead to four, 35-31, with 15:41 to play. Middle Tennessee continued to perform well after the break outscoring FAU 13-8 and keeping within four-points with 11:58 on the clock. FAU outscored the Blue Raiders 10-3 to take a 49-38 lead with 7:44 left on the clock. Then a three-point play by Charles put Middle Tennessee back within eight points, 49-41. Middle Tennessee will travel to Miami for a doubleheader with FIU at 6 p.m. CST on Saturday, Jan. 29. Chip Walters will call all the action on the Blue Raider Network and live stats may be found on goblueraiders.com. The Sun Belt Championships will be held in Hot Springs, Ark., March 4-8. Tickets for all sessions are $83 and on sale through the Blue Raider Ticket Office by contacting 1-888-YES-MTSU or purchase tickets through goblueraiders.com.

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