Solid final five minutes hands Blue Raiders 79-70 win over FIU

Ottley records first career double-double

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MIAMI - Middle Tennessee used its loss earlier in the week as motivation to play better and it showed on Saturday night against FIU as five players scored in double figures and senior Trevor Ottley posted a double-double in a 79-70 victory. Ottley led the team in rebounds with 12, including four on the offensive side of the ball, and posted 10 points after going 3 for 4 from the field and a perfect 4 for 4 at the charity stripe. It is the first career double-double for the Hays, Kan., native, who also added three blocks to his already impressive performance. Ottley's double-double is the fifth by a Blue Raider this season which is the most by a Middle Tennessee team since the 2008-09 season. "I thought James Washington was tremendous. Trevor Ottley and JT were really, really good and tough. It was just good balance and I think that's what our team will do if we share the ball like we did," head coach Kermit Davis said. The two teams traded points throughout the game but Middle Tennessee used a 15-6 run in the final five minutes of play to seal the win. Senior James Washington led the offense with 22 points as he went 5 for 8 from behind the arc and missed just one of eight free throw attempts. The Saint Louis, Mo., native also had four assists on the night. Middle Tennessee posted an impressive 54.2 shooting percentage from the field, a season high for the team, with r-sophomore Jason Jones, and sophomores JT Sulton and James Gallman also adding to the scoring onslaught by the Blue Raiders. "I thought it was the best we've moved the ball. It was a big emphasis of ours Friday and today at shoot around to try and get ball reversals. We had 20 assists tonight, which was a season

high, and played through some injuries. Jimmy got his hand banged up, James Gallman tweaked his knee a little bit, Rod's out with a bad sprained ankle so we really got some tough play," Davis said. As a team, the Blue Raiders had 20 assists, also a season high for the team, led by r-junior Jimmy Oden with six. Middle Tennessee had 30 rebounds, four blocks and nine steals on the night for a strong defensive showing. Sulton led the team in steals with four while Ottley's three blocks were a team high. FIU shot 50 percent in the game led by Marvin Roberts who posted 17 points after going 6 for 9 from the field. Eric Frederick and Brandon Moore also posted double figure scoring for the Panthers. It is the 39th Sun Belt road win by the Blue Raiders since Davis took over the program for the 2002-03 season. The Blue Raiders are tied for first with Western Kentucky in the category during that span. The two teams traded points to begin play but then FIU started to pull away and a trey by Allen put the Panthers up 14-8. The Blue Raiders fought back and a trey by Washington knotted the score at 14 with 12:56 to play. The two teams continued to trade points and free throws kept the Blue Raiders close as they made six to close out the half and keep FIU within five points, 39-34 at the break. Washington led all scorers with 14 after connecting on all four three-point attempts and two free throws. Middle Tennessee shot 50 percent in the first half and had 12 rebounds. FIU's Roberts missed just one shot in the first half scoring 13 as he led a team that shot 54.5 percent in the first half. The Blue Raiders started the second half strong and after outscoring FIU 8-3 tied the game at 42 with 16:21 on the clock. Then a jumper by Oden gave Middle Tennessee a 44-42 lead. FIU continued to shoot well and pulled ahead again but a dunk by Sulton kept them within two, 64-62, with six minutes to play. Then Gallman hit a jumper to knot the score at 64 with 5:42 left in the game. Middle Tennessee again mounted big run going 10-1 on FIU to take a 70-65 lead with 3:30 on the clock. Leading by four, Sulton hit a dunk after a pass by J. Jones to put the Blue Raiders up six, 74-68, with 1:13 left to play. The Blue Raiders will return to the friendly confines of Murphy Center next week for games with ULM and South Alabama. Middle Tennessee will face ULM at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 3 in its annual Mardi Gras Night. Then Saturday, Feb. 5 on the front end of a doubleheader with the women's team the Blue Raiders will play host to South Alabama at 3:30 p.m. The game with the Jaguars will be Coaches vs. Cancer Night with money being raised for the American Cancer Society and the respective coaching staffs wearing their sneakers. 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 or submitting a question if they are in attendance. 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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