

Blue Raiders extend streak to five with 80-68 win

Four starters post double figure scoring

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Four starters scored in double figures as Middle Tennessee extended its win streak to five games with an 80-68 win over FIU at Murphy Center Saturday afternoon. The Blue Raiders (14-12, 9-4) used hot shooting throughout the night to guide them to the win ending the game with a 53.1 shooting percentage. Middle Tennessee also shot 64.7 percent from the free throw line connecting on 22 of 34 opportunities. "We scored 80, which is good, but it didn't seem like the game ever got in a great flow. We were just up and down and playing and we were really trying to get in transition a bunch, then finally we started getting some baskets off their press. Early, I thought we were tentative against it," head coach Kermit Davis said. Defensively, the team grabbed 37 rebounds including 15 on the offensive side of the ball. Middle Tennessee also had three



blocks and 11 steals on the night. "We weren't at our best, but after an emotional win on Thursday, the thing we didn't do well at Western, we did well here, and that was rebound. We should have. They are a smaller team and they took some advantage of their undersized guys driving our bigs. I thought Isiah did a good job of isolating some mismatches with the dribble-drive. We moved the ball well, and shot over 50%, and that's a good sign," Davis said. R-sophomore Jason Jones led all scorers with 23 points after a 9 for 14 performance from the field. J. Jones also had five rebounds, two steals and a block to aid the defense. Sophomore JT Sulton and senior Trevor Ottley were each

a rebound away from a double-double against the Panther. Sulton went 5 for 8 from the field and 7 for 8 at the charity stripe for 17 points. Sulton also had nine rebounds while Ottley also had nine rebounds and scored 10 points. Senior James Washington also posted double figure scoring with his 12 points and further aided the offense with five assists. FIU (9-16, 4-9) shot 51.3 percent from the field with Phil Taylor scoring a team high 21 points. DeJuan Wright was the only other player in double figure scoring with 10 points. The Panthers had 30 rebounds but just six came on the offensive side of the ball. The Blue Raiders have now won seven of their last eight games and are three games ahead of Western Kentucky for second place in the East Division of the Sun Belt Conference. Middle Tennessee jumped out to a 13-3 lead in the first five minutes of play. Then FIU made two quick treys to cut the lead to four, 13-9, with 14:37 on the clock. The two teams continued to trade points and FIU made it a two-point game, 15-13, after a basket by Gary with 12:41 to play. The two teams continued to trade points but the Blue Raiders stayed on top by four, 26-22, at the three-minute media timeout. Middle Tennessee ended the half on an 8-4 run to take a 34-26 lead into the break. As a team, Middle Tennessee shot 58.3 percent from the field with Sulton scoring a team high 11 points. Sulton also had a team high five rebounds at the break. The Blue Raiders outrebounded FIU 19 to 7 and had seven offensive rebounds which was as many as the Panthers had as a team. The two teams traded points in the second half but a trey by Oden put the Blue Raiders up 17 points, 59-42 with 8:22 to play. FIU would not give up and continued to battle cutting Middle Tennessee's lead to as little as six, 64-58, with three minutes to play. The Blue Raiders will be back in action on Thursday, Feb. 17 when faces Troy in Troy, Ala. Then Middle Tennessee travels to Little Rock, Ark., for a weekend matchup with the Trojans on Sat., Feb. 19 at 3 p.m. The game with UALR has been designated the Sun Belt Game of the Week and will air locally on CSS. 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 by visiting goblueraiders.com.

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