

Men's basketball upends North Alabama in Monday's exhibition

Dendy paces team with 21, four Blue Raiders score double-figures

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Four Blue Raiders reached double figures, paced by LaRon Dendy's 21 points, as the Middle Tennessee men's basketball team upended North Alabama, 108-58, in an exhibition contest on Monday night. JT Sulton, Jacques Rozier and Jason Jones also chipped in double-digit performances. Dendy's impressive debut was highlighted by an 11-for-13 performance from the stripe, while the senior forward hit 5-of-9 shots from the field. He also added a pair of assists and one steal in 18 minutes of action. Sulton notched 18 points on 7-of-11 shooting and grabbed four boards and Rozier, also debuting for the Blue Raiders, contributed 17 points and a pair of blocked shots. Jones scored 16 points, had six rebounds, two assists and two steals. The Blue Raiders had contributions across the board, with a team-high 10 rebounds from Kerry



Hammonds, five assists from Raymond Cintron and another four assists from Bruce Massey. Cintron also knocked down a trio of 3-pointers for nine points, one of eight Blue Raiders to hit a trey in the contest. MT shook off a slow offensive start to finish the game shooting 56.1 percent and held the Lions to 33.3 percent shooting from the field. The Blue Raiders also owned a 48-29 advantage on the boards in addition to forcing 16 turnovers. Both sides struggled to find a shot early, as Sulton

knocked down the game's first field goal at the 16:34 mark. But the Blue Raiders never looked back, going on a 16-2 run thanks in part to a spark from Rozier off the bench. Rozier was immediately productive in his first minutes on the court, hitting back-to-back jumpers to get the offense rolling. MT stretched the lead to as many as 32 at the break with a 58-26 advantage after James Gallman nailed a deep triple just before the break. The Blue Raiders continued the onslaught in the opening minutes of the second half, commanding a 40-point lead with 18:03 to play. The Lions worked the deficit down to 27 with 14:04 to go, riding a double-double from Theron Jenkins with 14 points and 11 rebounds in the contest, but it was as close as they would get the remainder of the game. MT hits the floor again Friday to open the regular season against Austin Peay. Tipoff is slated for 7 p.m. CT at Murphy Center. **POSTGAME QUOTES**

Head coach Kermit Davis

Opening statement

"I was really proud of the way we moved the ball tonight with 26 assists and ten turnovers. That has been one of the biggest positives in the last three weeks of practice. I think our team plays unselfishly, and when we do, we are a fun team to watch. We guarded really well in the first half, but our intensity level was not as good in the second half. But it was a good start." *On being eager to play*

"We were so eager to play tonight, we really were. I don't know if it was because of the way we played in Canada, or what. But our shoot-around this afternoon was more like one in mid-January. We have a good locker room, and they pull for each other." *On if the team is prepared for the regular season*

"I think we are. I can tell in practice, we have had good solid practices. I like our depth. Guys are being very competitive for playing time in practice, which is a good thing. And we better be ready, because we jump into some really good teams right off the bat." *On the depth of the team*

"The guy I thought really played his tail off tonight was Kerry Hammonds. He had ten rebounds, three assists, no turnovers and he took really good shots. And that is what I'm excited about, the depth of our team. "Jacquez Rozier is a physical freshman. He's a great kid to coach, and he's going to have to play in these early games until Torin (Walker) and Shawn (Jones) come back." *On team's talent*

"I know Jason (Jones) and LaRon (Dendy) and I will be the core guys to lead this team. We have a lot of transfers and newcomers, so the ones who have been here need to step up and be the leaders of this team." *On how competitive practice has been*

"I think practice has picked up this year because we have a long bench. We have a lot of people who can play several positions. If someone gets in foul trouble, we'll have guys who can step up. We just have to work hard in practice to see who gets the playing time. **Senior forward LaRon**

Dendy

On foul shooting

"I've worked on my foul shooting a lot, and I believe it will pay off big time." *On playing around the perimeter*

"I'm really comfortable with those positions. I've been playing around the perimeter my whole life, so I'm really comfortable and ready to step up for the team. But we have a lot of guys who can that too. We have a really versatile team."