Hot shooting leads Blue Raiders to season-opening win over Austin Peay

Dendy pours in 21 points in Blue Raider debut

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Senior forward LaRon Dendy opened the season with an exclamation point on a breakaway dunk for the Middle Tennessee men's basketball team (1-0) and went on to score a game-high 21 points in the Blue Raiders' 80-71 victory over Austin Peay on Friday night in Murphy Center. Dendy, in his Blue Raider debut, was one rebound shy of a double-double with nine rebounds, in addition to three assists, three blocks and a steal. Newcomer Marcos Knight made an immediate impact in his first MT game as well, netting 15 points and eight rebounds. Junior guard James Gallman added 14 points, going 3-for-4 from beyond the arc, and four assists, while junior forward JT Sulton chipped in 13 points and seven rebounds. For Austin Peay (0-1), Tyshwan Edmondson led the way with 20 points while Josh Terry tallied 17. The Blue Raiders finished the game shooting 55.1 percent, including a 70 percent (14-for-20) clip in the second half. Austin Peay was 39 percent from the field. The Governors took their first lead of the game at 6-4 with 17:33 to play in the first half. Austin Peay widened the margin to three at the 14:31 mark, but Dendy knocked down three free throws, giving him seven of the first 11 Blue Raider points and tying the game for the fourth time. The two teams continued to seesaw until the 10:30 mark when Gallman hit back-to-back baskets, including a triple, to spark a 14-2 run over the next 3:30 as the Blue Raiders took a 10-point lead, the largest of the half. The Governors chipped away at the Blue Raider lead

thanks in part to 11 first-half points from Edmondson. Austin Peay cut the deficit to three with 3:57 remaining before halftime, but buckets from Sulton and Dendy stretched the lead back to eight for MT. Edmondson reeled off seven points in the final 1:24 of the half to bring the Governors back within three at the break, trailing 38-35. Dendy opened the second half in the same fashion, slamming home the first points of the second frame to make it 40-35. Despite a series of quick Blue Raider fouls putting Austin Peay into the bonus with 14:14 to play, MT maintained its lead and built up a nine-point advantage after Gallman hit a transition three and breakaway layup to make it 61-52 with 8:16 remaining. The Governors inched back on an Edmondson triple and three free throws from Jerome Clyburn to pull within three, but MT responded with five unanswered points to go back up by eight. Dendy knocked down his first trey as a Blue Raider with 3:32 left to make it 69-61 and 14 seconds later Dendy found Sulton alone under the basket for an easy dunk and the 10-point lead. The duo struck again at the 1:56 mark to make it a 12-point advantage, the largest of the contest. Edmondson hit his fourth triple of the game and Terry added a jumper to bring the Governors back within seven at the 1:20 mark, but the Blue Raiders drained four straight free throws down the stretch for the nine-point victory. The Blue Raiders hit the road for the next two games, traveling to California to face Loyola Marymount and No. 17/20 UCLA. MT will play the Lions on Sunday at 5 p.m. CT, then take on the Bruins Tuesday at 10 p.m. CT. Tuesday's game will air on Fox Sports Prime Ticket (Dish 411 and DirecTV 694). **POSTGAME QUOTES**

Middle Tennessee head coach Kermit Davis

Opening statement …

"It was just the kind of college game we expected. We played a really well-coached team – a veteran team that started four seniors." *On the significance of the win …*

"We knew exactly what it was going to be like tonight. The game had two teams that are going to have good years." *On the team's play …*

"You saw a glimpse of what LaRon Dendy can do. Marcos Knight played well, too. Jason Jones did not play because he has a disc problem that we found out about late last night." *On the attendance …*

"We needed that. It was good to see over 4,000 people here. Everyone left the arena enjoying watching LaRon Dendy and the guys play." *On the team's depth …*

"When we get Torin Walker back and Jason Jones healthy, I feel we will be able to play 10 players." **Forward LaRon Dendy**

On his dunk early in the game …

"It released a lot of tension. It was the first time in two years." **Guard Marcos Knight**

On his playing time …

"Coach wants us to be leaders and expects a lot from us. It is important to make a good first impression for the fans."

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