Sulton's double-double lifts Blue Raiders to win over Loyola Marymount

MT starts 2-0 for first time since 2008-09

November 13, 2011 · Athletic Communications

LOS ANGELES - Junior forward JT Sulton registered a double-double with 12 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Middle Tennessee men's basketball team to a 58-51 victory over the Loyola Marymount Lions on Sunday evening at Gersten Pavilion. The Blue Raiders are off to a 2-0 start for the first time since the 2008-09 season. Junior guard Marcos Knight had a game-high 15 points, matching LMU's Ashley Hamilton, who led the Lions with 15 points. The Blue Raiders had contributions across the board, as senior forward LaRon Dendy had nine points and six boards, while Shawn Jones added eight points, eight rebounds and three blocked shots. MT out-crashed LMU on the boards, 45-31, including a 15-8 advantage on the offense glass. Those offensive rebounds led to 14 second-chance points for the Blue Raiders compared to the Lions' eight. Although MT struggled out of the gate, quickly going down 5-0 in the opening minutes, the Blue Raiders bounced back with a 10-0 run sparked by Jones' three-point play. He knocked down MT's first bucket of the game and added a free throw en route to the Blue Raiders' 10-5 lead at the 10:26 mark in the first half. LMU responded with an 8-0 run to regain the lead at 13-10, but MT inched back before junior guard James Gallman hit a key trey to give the Blue Raiders a one-point edge with 3:04 to play in the half. A pair of heads up plays gave the Blue Raiders a two-point lead at the break. Tied at 18 with 1:29 remaining, Sulton had a putback on a missed free throw and a minute later, Knight ripped

the ball out of the hands of LMU's Ayodeji Egbeyemi and drove into the lane, finishing a layup to make 22-18. LaRon Armstead hit a jumper for the Lions in the closing seconds of the half to make it 22-20 at the break. The two teams continued to seesaw into the second half, as the first six minutes of the second frame featured three ties and three lead changes. The two teams finished the game with six ties and seven lead changes. Junior guards Bruce Massey and Raymond Cintron then came up with two key baskets on back-to-back possessions. Massey's only field goal of the game, a floater at the 14:45 mark, gave the Blue Raiders the lead for good and Cintron followed with his only triple of the contest to make it 34-31. Massey also had two assists and a steal in the contest. The Lions kept it close, pulling within a point at 11:13, but a 7-0 run stretched MT's lead back to eight with 7:07 remaining. LMU worked the deficit back to three twice in the closing minutes, but a bucket from Jones and pair of free throws from Knight kept the Lions at bay. Desperation fouls from LMU sent the Blue Raiders to the line where they hit 7-of-8 free throws, including 3-of-4 from Jimmy Oden, in the final 2:10 to seal the victory. MT looks to continue the winning streak at No. 17/20 UCLA on Tuesday. Tipoff is slated for 10 p.m. CT at LA Sports Arena and the game will air on Fox Sports Prime Ticket, channel 694 on DirecTV and 408 on Dish Network. **Postgame quotes**

MT head coach Kermit Davis

On the defensive battle

"It really was (a defensive battle). I thought we came out and had some really good looks, but credit LMU because their bigs blocked some shots early in the game. LaRon didn't come out as sharp as he has, but in the second half he was much better. We shot only 35 percent, and we didn't take bad shots, but we turned it over a few times when we shouldn't have. We really had to guard and rebound, and we out-rebounded them by 14 and held them to 33 percent shooting. That's how you can win, kind of ugly, against a quality team on the road." *On the difference in today's game compared to the last*

"We didn't move the ball as well as we did against Austin Peay. We found ourselves open after one pass and settled and shot it. We had several possessions with a one-pass shot. But it was a good quality win and they're a good team. Especially to take our guys for the first time on the road, we'll take that and get out of here." *On disrupting LMU's guards*

"It's hard for (small guards) to see over that length. When you start putting JT, who was fantastic, at the point of that thing with two big wings, and add another 6-9 guy in the center, I thought we did a really good job against their guards." *On Sulton's performance*

What can you say about JT Sulton. He's had back-to-back games where's he's really played well, so I'm proud of JT. He's hopefully picking up where he left off last year." **Junior forward JT Sulton**

On the battle against LMU

"Coming off the long flight, we had a big game to get us ready the day before that. Coach Davis trusted us this game. We had a good pre-game practice, so he trusted us and we showed that we trust him back." *On knowing LMU had beaten UCLA*

"We were watching the game on TV. How they battled UCLA, we knew we were going to get their best. We came in here and battled tonight." *On LaRon Dendy's impact*

"LaRon's a great player. If they don't double him, he's going to score. He can score, outside, inside or take it to the basket. He brings a lot to our team because (opponents) double him and that leaves me open, and if the defense collapses to me, it leaves our shooters open."