

Record-breaking night for Blue Raiders in marquee victory over UCLA

MT 3-0 for first time since 2001-02

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LOS ANGELES - The Middle Tennessee men's basketball team shot a Sun Belt record 90.9 percent from 3-point range en route to an 86-66 domination of UCLA in one of the EA Sports Maui Invitational Opening Games at the L.A Sports Arena on Tuesday night, marking the program's biggest win under head coach Kermit Davis. It was a memorable night for the Blue Raiders, who shot a school-record 71.4 percent from the field, as five different players reached double figures, led by senior forward LaRon Dendy's double-double with 16 points and 13 rebounds. MT's 3-0 start is the best since 2001-02, when the Blue Raiders also opened the season 3-0. Junior guard Marcos Knight collected 15 points, four assists and two steals, while junior guard Bruce Massey added 14 points, three assists and a steal. Massey, who hadn't attempted a 3-pointer this



year, was 3-for-3 from beyond the arc against the Bruins. He was one of six Blue Raiders to hit a trey, as junior guard Raymond Cintron was also 3-for-3 from 3-point land and netted 11 points. MT finished 10-for-11 from long range, hitting the first nine in a row. Sophomore forward Shawn Jones also proved to be an inside force for MT, contributing 12 points, four rebounds and a blocked shot. Jones and Dendy played key roles in the Blue Raiders' 40-28 advantage in the paint. The Blue Raiders held UCLA (0-2) to 37.3 percent shooting and just a 20 percent clip from beyond the arc. Joshua Smith paced the Bruins with 15 points and nine rebounds, while Travis Wear had 10 points.

MT never trailed by more than two and took the lead for good at the 12:29 mark in the first half. UCLA scored the first bucket, but the Blue Raiders' 8-2 run gave them a four-point advantage with 14:58 to go in the first half. The two teams seesawed over the next two minutes before MT began pulling away. Tied at 15-15 with 12:04 to play, Sulton's layup sparked a 10-2 run for the Blue Raiders. UCLA battled back to within two at the 7:02 mark, but Dendy's old fashion 3-point play on a tip-in and free throw made it a five-point cushion. Cintron came off the bench and drilled his first 3-pointer of the game with 1:03 remaining in the frame, giving the Blue Raiders an eight-point lead at the break. MT stepped on the gas to open the second half, stretching the lead to 16 after a 13-5 run coming out of the break. The Bruins gained momentum midway through the second thanks to three straight buckets by Norman Powell, cutting MT's lead back to 10 with 10:20 to play, but Massey answered the rally with a triple to make it 64-51 at 9:59. The Blue Raiders continued to roll through the second half, hitting six of their final seven shots, including Dendy's triple that gave MT its largest lead of the game at a 22-point margin before going on to the 86-66 victory. MT returns home this weekend to host the EA Sports Maui Invitational Regional games on Saturday and Sunday. The Blue Raiders will face UNC Greensboro on Saturday at 5 p.m., following a matchup between Belmont and Towson. The winner from each game will play on Sunday at 3:30 p.m., preceded by the consolation game at 1 p.m. **Postgame Quotes**

Head coach Kermit Davis

On the team's performance tonight

"It was a perfect storm tonight. I don't know if I've ever had a team that played that well offensively, that efficiently. We just made shot after shot. UCLA started to make some runs, and we just kept making shots. It was a complete game for us. When you come on the road and beat a storied program like UCLA, it's great for our staff and great for our players."

On the attitude of the team

"They have a lot of fun and that's what I really enjoy about our team. They can have a lot of fun and laugh together, but when we start scouting reports, meeting and getting on the floor, it's a very focused approach. I really like the culture of our team a lot."

On the shooting performance

"Bruce has been putting up a lot of shots. He got off to kind of a bad start (in the game), but he shows good character and really responded from adversity to make some great plays. Dendy and those guys made some nice extra passes to find him. He shot really wide open threes, so that was good. One thing I'm proud of is that we held UCLA to 37 percent and matched them on the boards. That shows we still had the defensive game as well."

Junior guard Bruce Massey

On the 3-point shooting

"That's just putting in work back home. Everybody takes time with coach just shooting. That's just practice and putting in work when nobody's looking."

On playing together

"You can tell we all like each other on the court. Nobody gets jealous of anybody. If somebody's hot, we all keep going to him until he cools off. We really like playing with each other, love one another and there's no jealousy out there on the court."

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