

Blue Raiders power out 78-62 win over UT Martin

Knight tallies career-high 18 points, Dendy scores 21 for third time

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Marcos Knight scored a career-high 18 points and LaRon Dendy matched his career-best with 21 points as the duo led the Middle Tennessee men's basketball team to a 78-62 win over UT Martin on Saturday evening at Murphy Center. Knight also tallied a career-high six assists to go along with a block and a steal, while Dendy added three assists and three blocks in the contest. Junior guard Raymond Cintron also reached double figures with 12 points and produced three assists and a career-best three steals as the Blue Raiders improved to 9-2 on the season. Overall, nine Blue Raiders scored in Saturday's contest. MT shot 64.4 percent from the field while holding the Skyhawks to 46 percent shooting. The Blue Raiders capitalized on turnovers as well, scoring 25 points off 20 takeaways while allowing just nine points on 12 turnovers.



MT also took advantage from the charity stripe, knocking down 17-of-22 free throws. Myles Taylor led the way for UTM (2-9) with 19 points, while Mike Liabo added 13 points and Corderio Maclin scored 10. Dendy opened the game with a reverse layup on a pass from Cintron, who made his first start of the year, and JT Sulton's breakaway dunk made it a 4-0 lead. The Skyhawks knocked down their first bucket at the 17:16 mark and quickly tied the game at 4-4 on Dane Smith's jumper. Knight

sparked a 7-2 run when he drove along the baseline for a layup then found Dendy inside for another bucket. Knight's triple from the corner gave the Blue Raiders an 11-6 lead with 15:05 to play in the first frame. UTM responded with five straight points, including three free throws, to knot it again at 11 with 13:52 remaining in the half. Liabo knocked down back-to-back 3-pointers sandwiched around a jumper from Knight, then Dendy zipped a pass to Shawn Jones for the dunk to make it 17 all at the 11:42 mark. The two teams continued the back-and-forth contest, with five ties in the first half, until the 5:41 mark when MT began to pull away with a 10-2 run sparked by Knight's jumper and capped by Gallman's bucket in the final seconds of the stanza. The Blue Raiders held the Skyhawks without a field goal for the final 6:12 of the first half and headed to the break with a 34-25 advantage. After Taylor knocked down a pair of baskets to open the half for UTM, Dendy took over at both ends. He scored eight straight points for the Blue Raiders, hitting a jumper then converting his block at one end to points at the other with a floating layup. Dendy's pair of free throws gave MT a 13-point lead with 16:30 to go, and he completed the stretch with a layup in the paint to make it 44-33 at the 14:28 mark. Cintron's triple with 11:55 to play made it 49-35, and Jacquez Rozier's pair of free throws gave MT a 16-point advantage with 11:36 to go. The Skyhawks worked the deficit to 12 with 8:02 remaining, but Cintron answered with his second trey of the game to stretch MT's lead back to 15. Liabo knocked down a 3-pointer with 5:01 to play to cut it to 11 before Knight banked in a jumper and Cintron sank two free throws for the 66-51 lead. The Blue Raiders took their largest lead of the game after Knight found Dendy alone under the basket for a dunk, then Sulton and Knight delivered back-to-back jumpers for a 78-60 advantage with 23 seconds left. Taylor's layup with seven seconds remaining accounted for the final score of 78-62. MT wraps up the two-game home stint with a rematch against Belmont on Tuesday. On Nov. 20, the two teams battled through double overtime before the Bruins handed the Blue Raiders an 87-84 loss, their first of the season. MT and Belmont are slated for a 7 p.m. CT tipoff and the game will air live online via ESPN3.com. The US Marine Corps Reserve will also be on hand to accept unwrapped toys at the game for Toys for Tots. These toys will be distributed as Christmas gifts to needy children in the community. **Postgame**

Quotes

Head coach Kermit Davis

Opening Statement

"It was a good win. I thought UT Martin played hard. It was a little bit of a struggle out there for our team. We shot a great percentage, 64%, 19 assists, 12 turnovers, but we are having a problem coming up with loose balls and long rebounds. As athletic a team as we are, we've got to get better at that.

"LaRon Dendy had great energy today. It was a great bounce-back game for him. Marcos (Knight) was good, and it was great to see Raymond (Cintron) do well. We kept him in late because of his free throw shooting. Two guys that I thought really turned the game were Jacquez (Rozier) and Zane (Gibson). Our energy level wasn't great and those guys came off the bench and gave us great energy. Both those guys haven't played hardly any minutes, and they have been our hardest working guys in practice the last week, and that is kind of why we rewarded them today to play."

On shooting 64% for the game from the field

"That has been the M.O. for our team. We share the ball and take good shots, we don't take many bad ones, and that's just a mark of an unselfish team. You starting thinking about the game, and who really shot an unforced shot, and we really don't do that. Are we the greatest collection of shooters? I don't think so. We just have guys who shoot the ball in areas they can make them in."

On shooting of LaRon Dendy and Marcos Knight

“Both of those guys spent a lot of time in the gym the last couple of days. Every time I walked by, they were in the gym. It was important for LaRon to bounce back like he did. He didn’t rebound the ball like he needs to, but still he was very efficient offensively.”

On improved free throws in the second half

“That was because Raymond Cintron was shooting most of them. The key to the whole thing is you hope the guys who are shooting the foul shots are your best shooters. When we had Boogie (Yates) and James Washington, those guys got fouled all the time, and they made them all, led the league. LaRon and Marcos have spent a lot of time practicing their free throw shooting. And that was why we left Raymond and Zane in there because they are good free throw shooters.”

Junior guard Marcos Knight

On team having 19 assists on 29 field goals

“Coach is always getting on us about moving the ball from side to side, and we did that some in the first half, but we did it better in the second half.”

Senior forward LaRon Dendy

On bouncing back from the UAB loss

“It was very important to me, and also the team, to bounce back from the other night. We lost our identity a little bit, we got out-toughed and out-hustled, so we have to come out in our practice and keep going hard.”

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