Eighth straight win for Blue Raiders with 70-59 victory at FIU

MT remains undefeated in Sun Belt at 5-0

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MIAMI - The Blue Raider men's basketball team battled to a 70-59 victory over FIU on Thursday night at U.S. Century Bank Arena to remain undefeated in Sun Belt play. Middle Tennessee has won eight in a row, the longest winning streak since the 1985-86 season, to improve to 16-2 overall and 5-0 in league action. Balanced scoring highlighted MT's offensive attack, as JT Sulton and Shawn Jones each scored 10 points while LaRon Dendy, Bruce Massey and James Gallman each tallied nine points. The bench production proved clutch for the Blue Raiders, delivering 34 points compared to the Panthers' nine points off the bench. The Blue Raiders held the Panthers (4-12, 1-3 SBC) to 38.8 percent shooting while hitting 42.3 percent of their own shots, including 52 percent in the second half. MT also took advantage of 18 FIU turnovers, turning them in 28 points. Dominique Ferguson paced the Panthers with 20 points, 14 of which came in the first half, and Jeremy Allen posted a double-double with 19 points and 11 rebounds. MT opened the game on a 10-2 run, capitalizing on five early FIU turnovers to hold the Panthers to one field goal over the first 7:28 of the contest. Dendy led the charge with six points during the stretch, hitting two buckets and a pair of free throws. The Panthers battled back with an 11-1 spurt to tie the game at 15 with 8:58 remaining in the frame. FIU rode Ferguson's hot hand, as he scored eight points during the run and finished the half 6-for-7 from the field. FIU took its first lead of the contest when Ferguson converted

a three-point play, but Torin Walker immediately responded for the Blue Raiders with a three-point play of his own to knot things at 18. Jeremy Allen's dunk then sparked a 7-0 run for the Panthers for the 25-18 advantage at the 5:32 mark. The back and forth battle continued as Jason Jones' 15-foot jumper brought the Blue Raiders back within five before MT regained the lead on Sulton's putback to make it 26-25. The Panthers controlled the final minute of action in the first half, as Ferguson sank a free throw and Allen drained a 3-pointer to give FIU a 29-26 advantage at halftime. Sulton opened the second stanza with back-to-back buckets, working his way in for a layup then knocking down a jumper from the free throw line to put MT back on top at 30-29, a lead MT would not relinquish the rest of the way. While the Blue Raiders strung together nine unanswered points, FIU hit a 4:07 drought. The Blue Raiders built up a 16-point lead midway through the second half after Jimmy Oden sank a pair of free throws, but the Panthers trimmed the deficit back to eight with a 9-1 run. FIU would get as close as seven with 1:04 remaining, but MT's solid free throw shooting down the stretch sealed the 11-point victory and completed the season sweep of the Panthers. MT wraps up the road swing at FAU Saturday. The Blue Raiders and Owls will tip at 6 p.m. CT with Chip Walters calling the action on the Blue Raider Network.

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