

Blue Raiders battle in loss to No. 10 Florida

MT trailed Gators by three half

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[Box Score \(PDF\)](#)

TAMPA - The Middle Tennessee men's basketball team trailed the No. 10 Florida Gators by three at halftime, but the Gators managed to pull away in the second half for a 66-45 win on Sunday evening at the Tampa Bay Times Forum.

The Blue Raiders (2-1) were led by Marcos Knight with 12 points and five rebounds, while Shawn Jones also cracked double figures with 10 points. JT Sulton grabbed five boards and Tweety Knight chipped in five assists.



For Florida (3-0), Kenny Boynton led the way with 20 points and Will Yeguete recorded a double-double with 11 points and 13 rebounds.

MT out-rebounded Florida, 34-32, but shot just 32 percent from the field while the Gators hit 46.7 percent of their shots. The Blue Raider bench outscored the Gator bench, 26-11.

It was a back-and-forth contest early, with the first half featuring four ties and four lead changes. After Florida made the opening basket, Jones scored four straight points to give MT its first lead of the contest.

The Gators took a four-point lead with 12:19 remaining in the first frame, but back-to-back layups from M. Knight and Sulton knotted things at 14. Florida's Erik Murphy knocked down a trey to break up the tie, but James Gallman responded at the other end with a triple of its own for the second tie of the contest.

Two minutes later, it was Mike Rosario with a 3-pointer for the Florida lead, but again Gallman answered to make it 20 all.

The Gators worked their lead to six with 1:09 remaining in the early stanza before a Neiko Hunter jumper and pair of free throws from M. Knight made it a two-point game. Yeguete sank a free throw

with 0.7 seconds left in the half to make it a 29-26 Florida lead heading into the break.

Florida went on a 14-2 run to open the second half and never looked back. The Gators went up by 15 with 11:38 to go, but the Blue Raiders worked the deficit back to nine with 6:10 remaining on four points from Sulton and a bucket from T. Knight.

An 18-4 run for the Gators halted MT's momentum and made it a 23-point contest before Florida went on to the 21-point win.

MT continues its swing through the state of Florida when it travels to UCF on Tuesday. The Blue Raiders and Knights tip off at 6 p.m. CT.

HEAD COACH KERMIT DAVIS

Opening statement...

"They're a good team. Extremely well-coached, physical and a good rebounding team. We knew what we were up against, and I was proud of our effort. Their length bothered us. We looked up and we're down 10 or 12 in the second half, but their number of points was a good number for us to have against Florida. If you go in and say 'Can you hold Florida to 66?' would you take it, you'd say 'No doubt. I'll take 66 every time.'

"We got in some foul trouble and we had to go really small. I thought in the first half our mixing up of defense had them off-balance. Against these kind of teams, we played hard, we just have to have more guys play better and we didn't today."

On the second half...

"I thought we got some good opportunities around the rim. Their length bothered us and we couldn't get anything in the rim. We had some balls fall in and out that could've kept the game to five or six. I was pleased that we got the game back to nine with the ball, then we got tired and Boynton made two or three shots late."

SENIOR GUARD MARCOS KNIGHT

On the game...

"Florida is a great team. We did a good job in the first half, but we didn't score in the first eight minutes of the second half and it kind of got away from us. But we battled and now we have to get back to work."

On transition play...

"Coach Davis talked to us about how fast they play in transition. I thought we did a pretty good job of getting back early and stopping them from scoring. But without us scoring the basketball early in the second half, we had no chance of winning."

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