Balanced attack leads MT past Louisiana in Sun Belt opener

Gallman leads four Blue Raiders in double figures

November 29, 2012 · @MTAthletics

LAFAYETTE, La. - Four Blue Raiders scored double figures as the Middle Tennessee men's basketball team earned a 72-58 victory over Louisiana in the Sun Belt opener on Thursday night at the Cajundome.

James Gallman paced MT (5-1, 1-0 SBC) with 14 points and Marcos Knight added 12. Jason Jones and Tweety Knight rounded out the double-figure scorers with 11 and 10 points, respectively.

The Blue Raiders got half of their points from the bench, overpowering the Ragin' Cajun bench, 36-3. All 10 Blue Raiders that saw action also scored.

Although MT pulled away in the end for the 14-point victory, it was a seesaw affair through the first 30 minutes. Louisiana (2-5, 0-1 SBC) never led by more than two, but forced six ties and eight lead changes.

The two teams swapped the lead five times within the first nine minutes of the contest before the Blue Raiders went on a 9-2 run to take a 25-18 lead with 8:38 to go in the early stanza. MT worked the margin to 11 six minutes later, building its largest lead of the first half when Gallman sank a triple to make it 36-25.

Louisiana worked the deficit back to six at the break thanks in part to a Matthew Moss 3-pointer as time expired.

The Blue Raiders saw their lead dwindle to open the second half as Elfrid Payton hit a jumper four minutes into the second frame to knot things at 42. Payton finished the contest with 11 points, one of four Ragin' Cajuns to score double figures.

Louisiana regained the lead with 11:54 remaining on six straight points from Shawn Long. Long posted 17 points and 13 boards in the contest to pace the Ragin' Cajuns.

With the Blue Raiders trailing 49-48, Bruce Massey scored his first points of the contest, knocking down a jumper to put MT back on top for good. On the next possession, Massey found Raymond Cintron open for a 3-pointer to swing the momentum back to the Blue Raiders and spark a 19-3 run over the next eight minutes.

MT closed the contest on a 25-10 run, holding Louisiana to two field goals over the final 11:19.

The Blue Raiders shot 41.7 percent from the field, including a 35 percent mark from 3-point land, and owned a 40-31 advantage on the boards. M. Knight grabbed a team-high seven boards as MT out-rebounded its opponent for the sixth straight game.

Louisiana shot 40.7 percent from the field and 23.5 percent from 3-point range. Steven Wronkoski and Bryant Mbamalu also scored double figures for the Ragin' Cajuns with 13 and 11 points, respectively.

MT continues its road swing on Sunday when the Blue Raiders travel to Akron. Tipoff is slated for 1 p.m. CT.

HEAD COACH KERMIT DAVIS

On the road win...
"They're always such a good home team. We didn't get off to a great start, but got into a great rhythm for awhile. We had no energy to start the second half. They came out and took it right to us. Give our guys credit. The bench won the game tonight. Our bench play was terrific."

On bench play...
"Shawn Long is a terrific young player. He's going to be a really good player in the league. But I thought Tweety Knight gave us a great life off the bench, and I though JT (Sulton) played well. Jason Jones was terrific tonight. He guarded, finished balls at the rim and I'm really proud of him. Kerry Hammonds came in and gave us some really good minutes. That's the beauty of our team, that we can have guys that start games not be at their best and our bench kind of took over."

On the team's performance...
"The one thing I think about our team is that we weren't at our best, fought through some adversity and we absorbed a few deals on the road. It's hard to go 3-0 on the road to start the year. It's difficult no matter where you play. Anytime you can get a road win in your league, you've got to be really happy."

SENIOR GUARD JAMES GALLMAN

On the win...
"Louisiana is a tough team to play. We came out slow second half, but bench play brought us up and gave us a lot of energy. It was an ugly win, but we got the win."

On bench play...
"That is our strength. Our starters know our bench is going to come out with a lot energy and we feed off of them the same way they feed off of us."

On mixing in twos and threes...

"Coach always says be creative. Shoot twos because everyone knows you can shoot threes. I had to show them I could shoot twos and score to get the win."

Printed on March 10, 2014

Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/64272