Five Blue Raiders crack double figures in 82-50 win over UALR

Hunter led MT with career-high 15 points

January 17, 2013 · @MTAthletics

Box Score (PDF)

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Five Blue Raiders scored double figures as the Middle Tennessee men's basketball team dominated UALR in an 82-50 win on Thursday evening.

Neiko Hunter finished the game with a career-high 15 points to lead the Blue Raiders (15-4, 7-1 Sun Belt), and the squad hit a season-high 56 percent from the field, including 64.3 percent from long range. Eleven different Blue Raiders scored in the contest.

Shawn Jones added 12 points and Marcos Knight had 11, while Tweety Knight and Raymond Cintron each tallied 10 points. Tweety Knight also grabbed a team-high six boards, matching his career-high, and dished out six assists to go along with three steals. Bruce Massey matched Tweety Knight with a season-best six assists.

After trading baskets in the opening five minutes, MT put together a 24-6 run that lasted 8:47 to pull ahead, 29-14. From there, the Blue Raiders used strong defense and a potent shooting performance to put the game away early. MT held the Trojans, the West Division's leader coming into tonight's contest, to just one field goal during the final 9:35 of the first half.

In the second half, UALR (11-9, 5-4 SBC) matched MT nearly basket-for-basket over the first 10 minutes, but the Blue Raiders started an 11-0 run at 10:53 that lasted over three and a half minutes. Shawn Jones scored six of MT's 11 points during the run, including an alley-oop dunk from Kerry Hammonds at 8:27.

The Blue Raiders held the Trojans to 35.3 percent shooting and just three treys in the contest. Josh Hagins led UALR with 14 points and Kemy Osse added 11.

Middle Tennessee is back in action Saturday evening against Louisiana at the Murphy Center. The men's game tips off at 5:30 p.m. following the women's game at 3 p.m.

FIRST HALF

- After three lead changes in the first six minutes, Marcos Knight hit a 3-pointer at 14:01 to put MT up for good.
- After tying the game at eight, MT went on a 22-6 run that lasted 8:47.
- The Blue Raiders outscored UALR 28-9 over the final 14:37 of the first half.
- MT went on a 9-0 run that lasted 4:16, and held UALR to just one field goal over the final 9:35 of the first half. During that span, MT ended the frame on a 16-3 run.
- MT was a perfect 3-for-3 from long range in the opening nine minutes.
- MT had 10 assists in the first half, compared to just two for UALR.
- MT was 6-for-9 (66.7 percent) from 3-point range in the first half, the highest 3-point field goal shooting percentage for a half this season.
- Neiko Hunter hit the first and last shot in the first half.

SECOND HALF

- Neiko Hunter hit first bucket of the first and second half, the third time this season that an MT player has accomplished that feat.
- Kerry Hammonds connected with Shawn Jones for an alley-oop dunk at 8:27.
- UALR used its final timeout of the game prior to the 8:00 mark of the second half.
- At the 10:53 mark, MT went on an 11-0 run that lasted 3:35. Shawn Jones had six of the 11 points.
- Zane Gibson hit his first 3-point shot of the year with 3:47 to go in the half.
- Neiko Hunter's career night was balanced throughout as he notched seven points in the first half and eight in the second.
- After scoring just two points in the first half, Shawn Jones erupted in the second and finished the game with 12.

POSTGAME NOTES

- MT is 15-4 overall and 7-1 in the Sun Belt, remaining atop the East Division.
- MT is 10-0 at home, including one win at Bridgestone Arena
- MT is 24-2 over the last two years in Murphy Center and has won 22 straight regular-season games in Murphy Center
- MT started its 11th different lineup of the year: Hunter, Massey, M. Knight, Hammonds, Sulton
- MT has held eight of its last nine opponents to less than 60 points
- MT is 11-0 when leading at halftime
- Neiko Hunter scored double figures for the fifth time this season with 15 points, a career-high, and knocking down a career-best seven field goals
- Marcos Knight scored double figures for the 15th time this season with 11 points. Knight has cracked double figures in six of the last seven games
- MT's bench out-scored UALR, 43-18, and has out-scored its opponent in all but one game this season
- Bruce Massey collected a season-high six assists
- Shawn Jones reached double-figure scoring for the eighth time this year with 12 points

- Raymond Cintron cracked double figures for the eighth time this season with 10 points

HEAD COACH KERMIT DAVIS
"I'm very proud of our team. We've had good parts of first halves and we haven't really finished teams in the second half. We've had a lot of lapses and that's been a big thing in our practice over the last three or four days, and I thought in tonight's second half our defensive pressure stayed with it for the most part. Little Rock is a good team that's been playing really well and beating teams pretty handily at home."

"I thought defensively and offensively we shared the ball. Guys started making shots. For the first time in a long time, we had different guys making shots. We did early in the year, but at Monroe we were one for thirteen from the three and tonight we had six guys make a three. That's when you score points and it was good to get ourselves in the seventies and even in the eighties."

On worrying of peaking too early...
"Not at all, I think we have so much good basketball ahead of us. We've kind of struggled lately, we've played hard but we hadn't put together complete games. Tonight wasn't either because we had seventeen turnovers, but it was better tonight. I saw our team practice better the last couple of days and we're kind of dinged up right now so that was a good sign. We didn't know if Jason Jones would play and he did. Tweety kind of fought through a foot deal so we're going to have to take it light before we play on Saturday."

On Bruce Massey...
"Bruce has really led our team and he has had some really good practices too. He gets our defense started, especially since he is guarding the point. He gets his hand on a lot of balls. He did a good job, we had excellent point guard play tonight. And Tweety came in and played his tail off, too."

JUNIOR GUARD TWEETY KNIGHT
On whether this was the best he played this year...
"Definitely. It was a complete game. I came ready to play tonight, so it was my most complete game of the year."

On whether the team is peaking too early...
"We're better than this. We're a lot better than this. We've just got to get a lot better in practice. This week we had three good days of preparation, so that's what led to a good game tonight."

On team's balanced play...
"Our identity in our offense is sharing the ball, moving the ball, and coach preaches about it every day."

JUNIOR FORWARD NEIKO HUNTER
On team's strong second half play...
"Coach talks about it so much, that we haven't been finishing games, so tonight we talked about how we've got to stick to it - keep the lead and keep playing hard."

On physical play in the paint...
"It's always a battle. We bring it every day in practice, so when we get in the game it's nothing new."

Printed on December 11, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/65007