Jones' buzzer-beater caps 20-point comeback victory for MT over FIU

Massey finds Shawn Jones for game-winner with 0.9 seconds left

January 31, 2013 · @MTAthletics

Box Score (PDF)

MIAMI - Shawn Jones' leaner as time expired capped a 20-point comeback for the Middle Tennessee men's basketball team in a 66-64 victory over FIU on Thursday night at U.S. Century Bank Arena. The Blue Raiders (19-4, 11-1 Sun Belt) reeled off their eighth-straight win and 12th in the last 13 games.

With 26 seconds remaining and the game tied at 64 after FIU's Tymell Murphy hit a free throw, MT drove to the opposite end and missed a pair of shots before the ball rolled out of bounds off the Panthers. MT would get the ball back under the basket with 0.9 seconds remaining. That's when Bruce Massey's in-bounds lob found Jones streaking into the paint, and Jones delivered the leaning jumper as time expired.

The Blue Raiders ended the game on a 20-7 run after trailing by 11 with 7:09 to play and mounted the comeback thanks in large part to a 63 percent shooting performance in the second half. Raymond Cintron led the charge with 14 points, all of them coming in the second stanza, and Marcos Knight neared a double-double with 10 points and nine rebounds.

The rally began after the Blue Raiders found themselves down by double figures with seven minutes to play in the first frame after the Panthers (11-10, 6-6 SBC) went on a 13-2 run. FIU stretched that lead to 20 with 18 seconds remaining in the first, but a 3-pointer from Tweety Knight just before the halftime buzzer made it a 17-point deficit for MT at the break.

MT began to chip away at the deficit early in the second half, using a 13-6 run to trim the margin to 10 when James Gallman found Jones for a slam that energized the bench with 16:01 to play. The Blue Raiders held the Panthers without a basket for a five-minute stretch and worked the deficit to

five when Gallman knocked down a trey with 14:17 to go.

But FIU widened the lead back to 12 with seven unanswered points, capped by a triple from Tymell Murphy. Murphy finished with 19 points and 10 rebounds.

The Blue Raiders would inch closer again midway through the second, making it a six-point game on a Cintron driving layup, but again the Panthers answered to make it 55-43 with 7:52 to go.

MT would make its final push starting at the 7:30 mark when Cintron drained a 3-pointer. A minute later, Cintron would make another to make it an eight-point contest. Cintron's next trey brought the Blue Raiders within four at the 4:22 mark and his final 3-pointer 34 seconds later made it 59-57 FIU.

Marcos Knight sank a pair of free throws to tie the game at 59 with 3:15 to go, and with 56 seconds remaining, Massey knocked down two as well to give MT its first lead since the 14:57 mark of the first half.

The Panthers had a chance to take the lead, but a missed 3-pointer and Murphy only converting one of two free throws with 26 seconds to play kept the two teams even before Jones' game-winner.

MT's road swing continues Saturday when the Blue Raider take on the Florida Atlantic Owls. Tipoff is slated for 7 p.m. ET.

HEAD COACH KERMIT DAVIS
Opening statement...
"FIU is a really, really good team. They absolutely embarrassed us the first half. We started turning the ball over and they scored off our turnovers. I told our guys at half, 'I'm really curious. I'm really looking forward to watching the second half.' We talk about all this leadership. Everything is fine when we're up by 14 or 15 at home. But when you get on the road, this is when you've got to have leadership, when adversity sets in. I was really proud of our guys. We've had a lot of really good wins, and this was our best win."

On getting going in the second half...
"We had to come back about three times. They kept making plays. We expended a ton of energy. Raymond Cintron got us going in the second half. We ran a couple of set plays for him, then he got going, then we found him in the corner."

On the reaction after the win...
"It was just a really good team win. We've had some really good wins, but that's the happiest our locker room has been after a win this year. I think they felt, coming back, that everyone was together that last 20 minutes. A lot of good teams around college basketball have to survive and play in these kind of games."

On the final play...
"We practice it. It's a last-second play underneath the rim. Shawn got a great pass from Bruce. In those kind of plays you're not going to get a call. You've got to go make a play, and that's what we all understand. He kind of got bumped, and he caught that ball with two hands and made a great play right in front of the rim. I jumped on him hard the other day because he tried to dunk it with one hand and I told him, 'Just catch it with two and score it.' It was a great pass and really good execution by our guys."

JUNIOR FORWARD SHAWN JONES
On the final play...
"When Coach Davis called the play, I went back in my mind to when we would practice it all the time, I never converted the play...until tonight. That was the first time I converted. I knew when Bruce threw it, I had to make a play for the ball, and it went in."

On halftime adjustments...
"Coming in after the first half, we knew we weren't playing to our identity. In the locker room, (Coach Davis) was telling us if we're going to win or lose, we're going to go out how we play. And we played how we're used to playing and came out and got the win."

SENIOR GUARD RAYMOND CINTRON
On the win...
"This is a great win for us. We found a way to win in the second half. We knew they were playing good basketball right now. We started really soft and in the second half we knew we had to be more aggressive."

On adjustments at halftime...
"First half, we shot too many three's. In the second half, we started looking for our post guys more and they started making shots."

On hitting four 3-pointers in the second half...
"It's about confidence. All I need is one. Once I get the first one, everything gets going. I just try to stay positive."

On the final play...
"We live or die with that play. We know that's the only chance we had."

Printed on December 11, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/65344