MT earns ninth-straight victory, cracks 20-win plateau at Florida Atlantic

Davis collects 200th win as MT head coach

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Box Score (PDF)

BOCA RATON, Fla. - Four Blue Raiders scored in double figures, led by Raymond Cintron with 16, as Middle Tennessee earned its ninth-straight victory with a 73-56 win over Florida Atlantic on Saturday night at FAU Arena. At 20-4 overall (12-1 Sun Belt), MT has back-to-back 20-win season for the first time since 1987-88 and 1988-89 after finishing 27-7 last year.

The win also marked the 200th at MT for head coach Kermit Davis and the 110th for him in the Sun Belt. Davis is one win shy of Gene Bartow, who ranks second among the league's all-time winningest coaches behind Ronnie Arrow with 112.

Marcos Knight scored 13, while Kerry Hammonds and JT Sulton added 12 apiece. Shawn Jones nearly cracked the double-digit mark with nine points. The Blue Raiders were also balanced on the boards, as Knight and Hammonds each had six, while Sulton grabbed five.

MT started the contest 5-for-5 from the field and went on to hit 55.3 percent from the field, the second-best performance of the season.

The Blue Raiders quickly opened up a nine-point lead just five minutes into the game after a 9-0 run, but the Owls (11-13, 6-7 SBC) would respond with a 10-0 spurt of their own to knot things at 18 midway through the first stanza. Stefan Moody scored eight of his game-high 17 points during the stretch.

Cintron's jumper broke up the tie with 8:21 to play in the first, and the Blue Raiders never trailed the rest of the way. The Owls managed to tie it up again with 3:16 left before the break, but back-to-back buckets from Knight and a layup in the final seconds from Sulton gave the Blue Raiders a 31-25 lead

at halftime. Greg Gantt also had a basket during the run, but as the nation's seventh-leading scorer managed just 13 points.

MT stretched the lead to 11 within the first five minutes of the second frame, extending a 16-5 run into the latter half. A triple from Moody spawned a 7-0 run for FAU to cut the deficit to four with 14:09 remaining, and the Owls would hang around over the next five minutes before Tweety Knight's layup put MT up by nine with under nine to go.

Marcos Knight's pair of free throws pushed the Blue Raiders' lead back to double figures, and the Owls would never get closer than that the rest of the way. MT led by as many as 18 with 3:38 to play before earning the 17-point victory.

MT returns home for four of the next five games, beginning with Arkansas State on Thursday. Tipoff is slated for 7 p.m. CT and the game will air on ESPN3.

HEAD COACH KERMIT DAVIS

On the win...
"It was a good night for the Raiders. We're getting a lot of people's best shot. Florida Atlantic played terrific in the first half. I just thought the second half we showed great, great balance. We had more guys play well and I thought we really guarded the second half."

On Stefan Moody...
"He started making hard shots. Even the shots they made were tough, tough shots."

On the defense...
"I thought we ended the first half the right way. It gave us a boost going in. I thought in the second half, we really got our shoulders square and did a great job on (Greg) Gantt and Moody. We made everything tough for them. It was a really well-balanced win for our team."

SENIOR FORWARD JT SULTON

On the win...
"Coach always emphasizes that we have to come out in the first five minutes and let this team know we're going to be in for a fight. We did that tonight. FAU has a lot of talent on the floor, so we just tried to put a lot of pressure on (Greg) Gantt and (Stefan) Moody."

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