Blue Raiders cruise to 52-point win over Troy

Davis ties Arrow as Sun Belt's all-time winningest coach

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's Raymond Cintron knocked down a career-high six 3-pointers and five Blue Raiders hit double-figures to knock off Troy, 93-41, at the Murphy Center on Saturday night. The victory marked the 112th for head coach Kermit Davis in Sun Belt play, tying Ronnie Arrow as the league's all-time winningest coach.

MT (22-4, 14-1 SBC) has won 11 straight, tied for the fifth-longest streak nationally, and 15 of the last 16 games. The 14 conference wins also tied the most in program history, which the Blue Raiders set last season.

The 52-point win is the largest margin of victory in Sun Belt history for the Blue Raiders, who are now 14-0 at home this season and have won four of their last five meetings with Troy (10-15, 5-9 SBC).

Cintron led the Blue Raiders with 20 points off the bench, two shy of his career-high, including a 6-for-8 shooting performance from beyond the arc. It marked a season-high 55 bench points.

Marcos Knight followed up his double-double performance in Thursday's game with 10 points and seven rebounds. JT Sulton scored 11 points, while Shawn Jones and James Gallman each added 10. It marked only the second time this season MT has had five players in double-figures, along with the UCF game on Nov. 20.

After shooting an impressive 56.5 percent in the first half, MT erupted in the second, hitting 72.7 percent of their shots and 55.6 from beyond the arc. They finished the game with a season-high 64.4 shooting percentage.

Troy was held to just 30.6 percent from the field, and hit 8-of-15 from the charity stripe.

The Blue Raiders led throughout, marking the third-straight game MT has not trailed, starting the game on a 9-0 run and holding the Trojans scoreless for nearly four minutes.

From that point on, the closest the Trojans came was within five. With the score at 11-6, Cintron hit two 3-pointers in the span of 22 seconds, part of a quick 8-0 burst to put the game out of reach early.

Marcos Knight hit a 3-pointer at 8:58 that sparked MT's largest run of the first half, a 14-0 spurt that contributed to Troy being held scoreless for over seven minutes.

MT shot 50 percent from beyond the arc in the first half and led 44-18 at the break. They are now 18-0 when leading at the end of the first frame.

In the second stanza, MT slowly increased its lead into the 30's, and, with 12:15 to go, broke out on a 21-2 run that included 3-pointers on four consecutive possessions. James Gallman and Cintron each had six points in that span.

MT led by as many as 56, the largest margin of the season.

Emil Jones led the Trojans with 16 points.

The Blue Raiders are on the road next week as they travel to UALR for a Feb. 16 matchup.

FIRST HALF

- Blue Raiders started game on a 9-0 run, and did not allow a field goal for opening 3:51.
- MT had three runs of eight or more unanswered points in the first half.
- Raymond Cintron started the game 4-for-4 from 3-point range, including two in a span of 22 seconds. He missed just one in the first half.
- At 9:29, MT started a 14-0 run that lasted over six minutes. During the run, Cintron hit two free throws after Troy's Emil Jones was called for a flagrant foul.
- MT's defense limited Troy just 18 points in the first half, a season-best. Previously, MT held ULM to just 19 first-half points on Jan. 12.
- Hammonds was fouled on a last second 3-point attempt and sank 2-of-3 from the line to close the half.

SECOND HALF

- Marcos Knight hit a 3-pointer 16 seconds into the first half, putting him in double-figures for the 21st time this season.
- Cintron and Neiko Hunter hooked up for a one-handed alley-oop with 12:51 remaining.
- With the score 62-27, MT broke out on a 21-2 run that featured 3-point baskets on four consecutive possessions.
- MT shot a season-best 72.7 percent from the field in the second half.
- Gavin Gibson hit two free throws with 2:35 remaining to score his first career points in a Blue Raider uniform.
- In holding the Trojans to just 41 points in the game, MT bested their best defensive performance from earlier this season when they held Tennessee State to 48.

POSTGAME NOTES

- MT is now 22-4 and 14-1 in Sun Belt play. The 14 league wins tied the school record, set last season.
- MT has won 11 straight games, tied for the fifth-longest streak in the country, and 15 of its last 16.
- Kermit Davis registered his 112th Sun Belt win, tying Ronnie Arrow as the league's all-time winningest coach.
- MT's 52-point win is the largest margin of victory in a Sun Belt game in program history.
- MT is now 14-0 at home this season and 28-2 over the past two years in Murphy Center.
- MT has won 26 straight regular-season home games.
- MT has held six of its last eight opponents to 60 points or less and 13 of the last 16.
- The 11-game winning streak is fifth-longest in program history.
- Raymond Cintron had 20 points, marking his 12th double-figure game of the season. His six 3-pointers were also a career-high.
- MT has had at least four players score double-figures in a game seven times this season. This marks only the second MT has had five players score double-figures (UCF on Nov. 20).
- MT led by as many as 56 in the game, the largest margin of the season.
- MT has beaten four of its last five opponents by double-figures.
- With 10 3-pointers in the game, MT has hit at least 10 treys three times this season. The Blue Raiders had 11 vs. Alabama State (Nov. 9) and 10 vs. Louisiana (Jan. 19).
- 93 points are the most since 97 against Alabama State in the season-opener.
- MT has not trailed in three straight games and four of the last five.
- The 41 points for Troy is the lowest by an MT opponent since FIU scored 38 on March 6, 2011.

HEAD COACH KERMIT DAVIS
Opening statement...
"You can't say much more than it was just a complete game. The stats kind of tell the story when you shoot sixty-four and give up thirty, rebound the way we did, share the ball, lot of balance, guys continued to play for long periods of time even in the second half, good starter minutes, really good bench minutes. We just played like a dominant basketball team tonight and I'm proud of them."

"We talked about trying to win each media timeout. We won the first media timeout by five and it continued, and I think we won maybe every one, but I'm not sure about the last one. We put (the score as) 0-0 on my board. We talk about quality of play, taking advantage of every possession and every minute, and I thought they did. I thought our bench played really good."

"Troy's been playing well. They've won three out of five, and their two losses were at Western by four and the South Alabama game they led by eight on Thursday night, so they've been playing good. It's a hard team to guard because it's a lot of dribble penetration and they attack the rim. I thought our guys were very disciplined, kept their shoulders square, and made guys score over them. It was just a really good defensive effort tonight."

On tying the Sun Belts wins record...
"We got closer and as it started to get written about a little bit I saw it (in the game notes). Coach (Gene) Bartow was a great friend of my father's, and I'm a good friend of (his son) Murray Bartow's. He kind of made Sun Belt basketball. Ronnie Arrow is another really good friend of mine. So it's just quite an honor to, number one, stay at a great place like Middle Tennessee for eleven years and to be mentioned with a lot of really good coaches in the Sun Belt."

On worthiness of Top 25 votes...
"I think so. Based on how we're playing, I sure do. Our RPI today was 28 and I think this weekend we played like a top 25 team. "

Raymond Cintron on continuing to play hard when up big...
"We never look at the score. We are just trying to improve, just trying to get better defensively as a team. So no matter if we are up 30 or 40 we are just trying to get better. We are just trying to get better defensively and as a team, trying to reach our goal."

James Gallman on Coach Davis wanting to win each media timeout...
"He says that every time so we continue to play hard, play aggressive and play smart, and we don't want to give them a lead so we play hard to win the media timeout."

Cintron on continuing to win but not getting top 25 votes...
"It doesn't bother me because I know the type of team we are. We can play anybody. We don't listen to them, we are just trying to get better every day and prove them wrong."

Gallman on continuing to win but not getting top 25 votes...
"Last year we didn't get into the NCAA tournament, so this year we are just humble. We don't care what other people say or the votes. We are just try to play hard each game."

Gallman on beating every team they play right now...
"We just play hard, no matter who we play. We just play hard and play smart. We try to play good defense and play smart."

Cintron on if this was the best defensive performance this season...
"I don't know if it was the best, but I can say we played pretty good defense for a long period of time."

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