



KENT STATE 68, MIDDLE TENNESSEE 56

First Round, Wednesday March 18, 2015

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. — A late first-half surge was key in Kent State defeating Middle Tennessee, 68-56, in the first round of the 2015 CollegeInsider.com Postseason Tournament Wednesday night at the Murphy Center.

The Golden Flashes (22-11) used a 19-5 run over the final 7:03 of the first half to take a 40-29 lead into the locker room and never allowed the Blue Raiders (19-17) to get closer than seven the rest of the way.

"Our kids, we fought really hard tonight," said head coach Rob Senderoff. "I'm really proud of the effort and glad we were able to get out of here with a win. We have a lot of respect for Middle Tennessee State and the program that they have. They are great at home. So to be able to come in and get a win here is quite an accomplishment for these guys. It's a postseason win, which is not easy to do. You can't take these things for granted."

The run started with a tip-dunk by Raasean Davis. A technical foul was then called on Middle Tennessee head coach Kermit Davis, who thought basket interference should have been called on the play. Devareaux Manley made one of two technical free throws to tie the game at 24-24. Jimmy Hall gave the Flashes the lead on a putback, but the Blue Raiders got a three-point play to go back ahead, 27-26.

Derek Jackson then took over the next few minutes, beginning with a baseline drive in which he found Hall for a layup. Following a turnover, Jackson raced ahead for a breakaway layup and added a three-pointer from the wing. Gary Akbar made it 10 straight points for the Flashes on a layup off a nice find from Hall and two free throws. Middle Tennessee finally ended a four-plus minute scoring drought, but Kris Brewer answered with a three-pointer to give the Flashes momentum and a 40-29 halftime lead.

Kent State clamped down on the defensive end, holding the Blue Raiders to 31.8 percent (7-for-22) shooting over the final 20 minutes. A three-pointer by Jackson at the 3:23 mark gave the Flashes their largest lead of the night, 68-53.

Hall led Kent State with 20 points on 9-for-14 shooting and 8 rebounds. It was his sixth 20-point

performance of the season, but just the second time it came in a victory.

Jackson added 16 points and was 4-for-8 from the three-point line, while Brewer scored 12 points and had six assists. The senior duo was unphased by the different defensive schemes and traps thrown at them throughout the game, and the Flashes finished with a season-low four turnovers.

"Our guards have played well with the basketball," said Senderoff. "We haven't always shot the ball great of late, but we've done an excellent job of handling pressure, taking care of the basketball and getting shots every possession."

The win is the first for Kent State (22-11) on the road in the postseason since 2011, when it won games at Saint Mary's and Fairfield in the National Invitation Tournament (NIT).

Additionally, the win is the most in a season for fourth-year head coach Rob Senderoff and the 80 in the collegiate careers of seniors Kris Brewer and Devareaux Manley.

"I'm really happy for our seniors, especially our four-year guys," added Senderoff. "Kris and Dev are the 21st and 22nd players in school history to win 80 games in their career, and that's quite an accomplishment."

Kent State will head back on the road for a second round matchup against Texas A&M-Corpus Christi on Monday, March 23.