

# Lady Raiders Defeat ASU 80-63

January 9, 2003 · MT Media Relations

**MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -** Middle Tennessee (8-6, 2-0 SBC) committed just one turnover in the second half to help the Lady Raiders to a 80-63 come from behind victory over Sun Belt Conference foe Arkansas State (5-9, 1-1 SBC) Thursday in Murphy Center.

Trailing by 10 points (48-38) with 16:15 left to play in the game, Middle Tennessee proceeded to go on a 21-10 and take the lead with 6:53 left on a jumper by Patrice Holmes. Middle Tennessee continued to pour it on as the team closed out the game with another scoring run of 21-5.

It was the first time this season Middle Tennessee has won after trailing at the half. The Lady Raiders shot 51.7

percent from the floor and was 70 percent from the free throw line.



Holmes led all scorers with 23 points and also grabbed eight rebounds and dished out seven assists. Juniors Jennifer Justice and Keisha McClinic each recorded a season-high 17 points in the contest.

The conference victory is the first time since the 1995-96 season that a Middle Tennessee women's team has opened up 2-0 in conference play. The Lady Raiders put their five-game home winning streak in the Sun Belt Conference to the test when the team hosts Arkansas-Little Rock on Saturday. Tip-off is set for 2 p.m. in the Murphy Center.

## NOTES:

**Tale of Two Halves:** The Lady Raiders played a very sloppy first half, committing 16 turnovers in the first 20 minutes, but had just one turnover after the break.

**A Way to End the Contest:** The Lady Raiders trailed 58-54 with 7:22 remaining in the game at the

under eight-minute media timeout. The squad scored 26 of the final 31 points in the contest to take the 17-point win.

**A First in Seven Years:** The Lady Raiders have opened the conference schedule 2-0 for the first time since the 1995-96 season. That was the final Middle Tennessee squad to win the regular season conference championship, finishing 13-3 in the OVC that season.

**Series Records:** The Lady Raiders won their fourth straight over Arkansas State in the series, including all three games played at Murphy Center. The win was also the fifth straight home Sun Belt win for the squad and the fifth consecutive regular season conference win, dating to last season.

**JJ With a First:** Junior Jennifer Justice netted a season-high points in the contest, hitting 8-of-11 field goal attempts. The eight field goals made ties a career-high for the Aiken, S.C., native. She also made the first three-pointer of her career in the win.

**McClinic Hot From Three:** Junior Keisha McClinic set a career-high by making a trio of three-pointers and set a season-high with 17 points in the contest. McClinic tied her career-high with six made field goals and tied her season-high with five three-point attempts.

**Holmes a Stat-Sheet Stuffer:** Sophomore do-it-all guard Patrice Holmes had an outstanding game in the win, picking up 23 points, eight assists and eight rebounds to go along with six steals. She scored 19 second-half points and had just one turnover in the final 20 minutes. Her scoring effort is her fourth 20-point effort of the season and second straight. She also tied a season-high with her eight boards.

**Above Fifty Again:** The Lady Raiders made 30-of-58 (.517) field goals in the game, shooting better than 50 percent for the fifth time this season.

**A DQ for Paula:** Senior Paula Penttila fouled out of the contest with 1:44 remaining in the game, the first disqualification of her career and the first Lady Raider to foul out this season.

**Tidbits:** The Lady Raiders improved to 1-6 when trailing at the half ... The squad is 3-0 this season when scoring 80 or more points.

#### **QUOTES:**

**MT Head Coach Stephany Smith:** "It was a hard fought game tonight. In the first half, we were really sluggish. It is not like I thought we weren't ready to play, but we weren't playing with very much energy. Our legs were tired and we have had a lot of basketball games since the New Year. We came back and played two games after Christmas before the New Year started. I know we are a little bit tired, but we shouldn't be that tired. I am glad we fought back in the second half and were able to pull away with the win because Arkansas State is a very good basketball team."

"We turned the ball over so much in the first half. We were just so sloppy. We were running an offense that I do not even know. Last time I checked I was in charge of putting our offense in. We did a better job of executing our offense in the second half. I thought Jennifer Justice had a great game. Most of the production we had in the first half was because of her."

**MT Guard Keisha McClinic:** "Mostly we wanted to pick up our defense and that was what we were able to do. We knocked down some big shots and ran the floor in transition. We won a lot of transition points.

"We didn't have a lot of intensity in the first half and we didn't take care of the ball. In the second half we only had one or two turnovers and that was a big change in the game."

**MT Forward Jennifer Justice:** "I think Keisha's threes and Patrice's threes really picked us up and gave us a lot of energy in the second half. In the first half, we had a lot of turnovers. I think we only had one or two in the second half and that really turned the pace around for us."

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*Printed on July 29, 2014*

*Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/1634>*