

Blue Raiders win Subway Classic with dominant play

Givens named tournament MVP

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MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. -

Chrissy Givens scored 18 first-half points and helped Middle Tennessee build a 25-point lead early in the second half en route to a 79-61 victory over host Minnesota in the championship game of the Subway Classic Sunday at Williams Arena.

Givens, voted the tournament's most valuable player, was almost unstoppable in the first half, going 9-of-14 from the field, leading the Blue Raiders to a 14-point halftime lead.

Givens and teammate Starr Orr were both selected to the Subway Classic All-Tournament team.

Freshman Chelsia Lymon came off the bench in the opening minutes of the second half and provided an offensive spark, knocking down a pair of 3-pointers and a lay-up to help extend the lead to 57-34. Orr followed with eight consecutive points of her own, including another pair of trifectas, stretching the Middle Tennessee advantage to 65-38.

Minnesota made a run during the half when Middle Tennessee went without a bucket for more than six minutes, but the Golden Gophers never got closer than 14 after the break.



Givens led all scorers with 25 points while adding seven rebounds and seven assists in 40 minutes of action. Orr, in one of her best games as a Blue Raider, added 14 points, eight rebounds, six assists, and three steals.

Senior Krystle Horton scored the first three baskets of the game for the Blue Raiders and Johnna Abney knocked down a pair of 3-pointers, as Middle Tennessee quieted the crowd of 5,639 en route to an early 12-6 lead. Givens scored the next eight on a host of short jumpers and lay-ups for a 20-12 MT advantage with 7:51 to go in the half.

All of this was in the midst of an 18-4 run over a seven-minute stretch that put the Blue Raiders ahead, 34-14. The Blue Raiders built the lead by out-hustling the Golden Gophers, with one series of plays seeing Amber Holt make a steal but miss a break-away lay-up.

Not to be discouraged, Holt came racing back down the floor, made another steal falling out of bounds, saved the ball to Orr, who executed a 2-on-1 with Givens for another lay-up. The Blue Raiders built a 32-14 advantage at that point and led 38-24 at the halftime break even after a cheap lay-up at the buzzer by Minnesota's Kelly Roysland.

Givens had 18 in the first half and the Blue Raiders forced 18 Minnesota turnovers in the first 20 minutes and also limited the Golden Gophers to just 35 percent shooting from the floor while shooting 58 percent themselves.

The Blue Raiders return home Friday, hosting Chattanooga at 7 p.m. at Murphy Center. Middle Tennessee plays the Tennessee Lady Vols next Sunday at Thompson-Boling Arena in Knoxville, Tenn., at 3 p.m. CT.

POSTGAME NOTES

GIVENS, ORR MAKE ALL-TOURNAMENT: Senior Chrissy Givens and junior Starr Orr were both named to the All-Tournament team at the Subway Classic and Givens was awarded the Most Valuable Player trophy as well. Givens posted games with 23 and 25 points in wins over Maine and host Minnesota, respectively, and tallied 20 rebounds, 13 assists and six steals in the two contests. Orr was all over the floor in both outings, netting 12 points versus Maine and a career-high 14 against Minnesota as well as grabbing 15 rebounds with 11 assists and four steals in the two games. It marks the first time Middle Tennessee has won two games in a tournament besides the conference championships since December 21-22, 2000, at the UCF Classic in Orlando, Fla., and just the 15th time in 52 in-season tournaments in the history of the program that the Blue Raiders won a pair games. **DEFENSIVE INTENSITY A MAJOR FACTOR:** Middle Tennessee turned up the pressure again Sunday versus Minnesota, forcing the relatively young Golden Gophers into 31 turnovers in the game, including 18 in the first half. Opponents have committed 98 turnovers in four games so far this season, an average of 24.5 per outing, while the Blue Raiders are turning the ball over just 14.3 times per contest. For 30 minutes against Minnesota, Middle Tennessee played as intense and aggressive as possible, forcing the bulk of the mistakes by Minnesota with 12 of the turnovers coming on steals. The Blue Raiders have 36 thefts in the four outings, an average of nine per game. The squad also drew seven charges in the victory over Minnesota. **ORR NETS CAREER-HIGH:** Junior Starr Orr had the best back-to-back games of her career over the weekend at Minnesota after being inserted into the starting lineup. The Danville, Ala., native had never posted back-to-back double-figure scoring games until putting up 12 points versus Maine and then a career-high 14 against Minnesota. It was also just the 10th and 11th career starts for Orr, who came to

Middle Tennessee with impressive stats at the high school ranks that included more the 4,000 points. But Orr's biggest contribution in the team's two victories at the Subway Classic came in other areas, where she grabbed 15 rebounds, handed out 11 assists and made four steals in the two games. Twelve of her 15 rebounds came on the offensive glass, helping the Blue Raiders to 43 offensive boards in the two outings. **SQUAD GETS HOT AT THE RIGHT TIME:** Middle Tennessee has shot the ball poorly from the field early in the season after ranking 23rd nationally last season in field goal percentage at .450. But the Blue Raiders got hot at just the right time, hitting a scalding 54 percent from the field in the 79-61 victory at Minnesota Sunday in the championship game of the Subway Classic. Middle Tennessee burned the nets for 58 percent from the floor in the first half and never looked back. Senior Chrissy Givens was 9-of-14 in the first half and 12-for-22 in the contest while junior Starr Orr hit 6-of-10 for a career-high 14 points. **TIDBITS:** The Blue Raiders win over Minnesota ended an 11-game nonconference winning streak at Williams Arena for the Golden Gophers and was just the second nonconference loss for UM at home under fifth-year head coach Pam Borton. The other loss came in December 2004 to top-ranked LSU ... Middle Tennessee recorded 22 assists as a team in the game, the most since tallying 22 against Arkansas State on February 16, 2006, and the most since February 7, 2004, versus Florida International when the Blue Raiders had 25 assists ... With the win Middle Tennessee improved its all-time record to 5-2 against teams from the Big 10 Conference, including one victory over a team from the league in each of the last three seasons (Wisconsin - 2004, Penn State - 2005) ... With the victory over Maine on Saturday, Middle Tennessee is 11-4 in neutral-site games in the last three-plus seasons, including wins over Wisconsin, Penn State, North Carolina and N.C. State and six victories in the Sun Belt Championships.

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