Raiders Survive ODU, 86-71

Holt scores 27, Horton 23 in sixth straight victory

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Amber Holt scored 16 of her 27 points in the second half and freshman Jackie Pickel knocked down three critical 3-pointers midway through the second half, helping Middle Tennessee pull away for an 86-71 victory over Old Dominion Tuesday night at Murphy Center. The visiting Lady Monarchs had every answer in the first 31 minutes of the contest until Pickel hit her trifecta of 3-pointers in five trips down the floor. The ODU defense then had to push further out on the floor, opening up the lane for Holt, who netted nine points over the final 10 minutes of the game. Senior Krystle Horton also had a big night for Middle Tennessee (9-3), coming up just one rebound shy of a double-double. The Murfreesboro, Tenn., native scored a season-high 23 points with nine boards, hitting 8-of-14 from the floor. Pickel's last two 3-pointers sparked a 10-1 run to give Middle Tennessee a 75-65 advantage with 2:58 to play, but Old Dominion (3-6) cut the lead to just five with consecutive baskets before perhaps the biggest play of the game - an intentional foul call on ODU's Jazzmin Walters with 1:35 left. Freshman Chelsia Lymon stepped to the line and buried two free throws and Holt converted a lay-up on the ensuing possession, sending the Blue Raiders to their sixth straight victory. Senior Chrissy Givens tallied 16 points and also contributed eight rebounds and six assists. Holt added eight boards in the contest and was 10-of-12 from the line, while Horton made seven free throws and Givens four. The Blue Raiders were 28-of-356 from the charity stripe in the game, as ODU

committed 33 fouls. The Blue Raiders struggled mightily in the first half to shake the athletic and aggressive Lady Monarchs. Middle Tennessee shot just 32 percent from the field but found success on the offensive glass, grabbing 12 boards after missed shots and converting them into nine points. Horton scored 12 points, Holt added 11 and Givens had 10 at the break. In the second half Middle Tennessee found more open shots and converted 61 percent from the floor while committing just seven turnovers over the final 20 minutes. Middle Tennessee returns to the court Wednesday, December 27, hosting arch-rival Western Kentucky at Murphy Center at 7 p.m. Fans who purchased tickets to the Motor City Bowl may purchase 2-for-1 tickets to either or both the men's (2 for $10) and women's (2 for $7) games against Western Kentucky with proof of purchase. **POSTGAME NOTES AMBER FEELING AT HOME:** Amber Holt, who led the Blue Raiders with 27 points in the win over Old Dominion, has been particularly impressive at Murphy Center. In six games at the Glass House, Holt is averaging 22.2 points and 8.3 rebounds, and has tallied 26 or more points on three occasions. Against the Lady Monarchs, Holt also played all 40 minutes and knocked down a career-best 10 free throws. **HORTON COMES UP BIG:** Senior Krystle Horton picked an excellent time to have her best game of the season. The Murfreesboro native poured in a season-high 23 points to go along with a game-high nine rebounds in 34 minutes. Horton's 23-point outing went down has her most points in a game since registering 24 in a win over Arkansas State in last year's SBC tournament. It was also the ninth 20-point game of Horton's career. **GIVENS PASSES TUCKER:** With six made field goals tonight against Old Dominion, Chrissy Givens moved into sole possession of ninth place on Middle Tennessee' all-time list. Givens went into the ODU contest tied with Sherry Tucker with 541 career made field goals. The Monroe, La., native now has 547 field goals and needs 32 more to surpass Stephanie Capley for eighth place. **PICKEL STAYS HOT:** Freshman Jackie Pickel has turned out to be quite a weapon for Coach Rick Insell from behind the arc. For the year, Pickel has knocked down 16 three-pointers and is shooting an impressive 37.2 percent from long range. In her last two outings, the Cleveland, Tenn., native has made 7 of 12 attempts, including a 3 for 5 outing tonight against ODU. **FORCING MISTAKES:** A key to the Blue Raider victory over ODU was their ability to force turnovers and turn those mistakes into points. Middle Tennessee's pressure forced 29 Old Dominion turnovers and the Blue Raiders came away with 39 points. Over the past three games, the Blue Raiders have caused 85 turnovers (28.3) and tallied 119 points (39.7) off those miscues. **GETTING OFFENSIVE:** The Blue Raiders have been racking up points at an impressive clip over the past three games. During that span, MT is averaging 94.0 points a game compared to just 62.6 by the opposition. **QUICK HITTERS:** Middle Tennessee won its fourth straight against a non-conference opponent ... MT made more free throws (28) than ODU attempted (22) ... MT is now 27-3 under Rick Insell when leading at halftime, including a perfect 9-0 this season ... Chrissy Givens has 20 assists in her last three games ... The Blue Raiders are now a perfect 5-0 in December this year ... MT now has nine wins before January for the first time since the 2003-04 campaign (MT has never won 10 games before January in school history). **POSTGAME QUOTES**

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Rick Insell

On the game

"[Old Dominion is] the type of team that will make you play. They are very athletic. We did not execute. We were playing the scoreboard and putting sloppy shots up. We have not done that all year long but did it tonight and were able to overcome it. We are very thankful for where we are right now. No one is hurt and we are able to get home for Christmas." **On the play of senior forward Krystle Horton**

"[Krystle Horton] is a player and I have known that since I have been here. We need to get her onto that next plateau. If we can get her there, people are going to see a first-team all-conference player. I am very happy to have her." **On the team's play thus far this season**

"We are 9-3 and are happy with it. We have probably played the toughest schedule of anyone in the country. We will go home and then start getting ready for Western Kentucky." **Freshman Guard Jackie Pickel**

On her play

"Sitting there I knew we were struggling offensively. When he called my number I had to be ready. The first shot is a definite key to how I play. If I hit my first shot I will have the best confidence in the world to shoot it whenever I am open." **On the Freshmen contribution to the team**

"I think it all boils down to [Coach Insell] giving [the freshmen] confidence. I think it is huge that we have the opportunity. He lets us make mistakes because when he gives us the confidence we can do it." **Old Dominion Women's Basketball Head Coach Wendy Larry**

On her thoughts about Old Dominion's performance

"We did a lot of good things. We competed really hard. We attacked the basket well. We were better with some of our shot selections." **On being called for 11 offensive fouls**

"The offensive fouls at the very beginning of the game were frustrating. Bottom line, you have to learn how to adjust. We didn't. As a result they got 39 points off our turnovers. You can't beat good teams that way, especially a good team like this. [Amber] Holt and [Chrissy] Givens are pretty good. Especially when you give them ten free throws a pop, they are really good." **On her thoughts and adjustments needed for the next game**

"We had great effort against a very good team, but we have to connect better. We have to adjust to the officials. We can't give up 11 turnovers to offensive fouls. Those kinds of things put us over the edge. We've got to do a better job taking care of the basketball and making every possession important."

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