

# Four Score in Double Figures in 76-62 Victory

## Blue Raiders win fourth straight at home over arch-rival

December 27, 2006 · MT Media Relations

### MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee started the game with a 10-0 run and rode the wave until the very end, downing arch-rival Western Kentucky, 76-62, Wednesday night at Murphy Center. The Blue Raiders improved to 10-3 overall this season and 3-0 in Sun Belt action and have won seven straight overall. Middle Tennessee forced 34 turnovers and turned them into 37 points. WKU turned the ball over 22 times in the first half, including six miscues in the first four-plus minutes of the game when the Blue Raiders raced to the early 10-0 lead. The Lady 'Toppers took just 16 shots in the first half because of so many turnovers. Johnna Abney knocked down four 3-pointers in the first 20 minutes and Krystle Horton scored 10 points, leading the Middle Tennessee offense. Chrissy Givens and Amber Holt combined for just 10 points in the half, but the Blue Raiders led, 36-22, despite the lack of offense from the team's top two scorers. The Blue Raiders stretched the lead in the first half to as many as 13 points with 5:21 to play, but

WKU hit seven straight and cut the lead to six after a circus shot from Tifany Zaragoza as the shot clock was about to expire. But Middle Tennessee responded with 10 of the final 12 points of the half, including Abney's fourth trifecta of the half and another 3-pointer from Jackie Pickel for the 14-time halftime edge. In the second half the lead was never less than double figures and Middle Tennessee



stretched it to as many as 19 points at 46-27 with 15:08 remaining. WKU cut it to 46-36 after two free throws from Brienne Brown, but Givens converted an old fashioned 3-point play and Horton drove for a lay-up to push the lead back to 15 points. Givens and Holt came alive on the scoring ledger in the second half, combining for 25 points. Givens finished with 19 and Holt 17 and both players grabbed seven rebounds. Horton scored 14 points and Abney had 13. Middle Tennessee returns to the court Tuesday, January 2, hosting North Dakota State at Murphy Center at 7 p.m. The Blue Raiders resume Sun Belt Conference action on Saturday, January 6 against Troy, also at home. **NOTES**

**RICK INSELL LIVE SET TO BEGIN JANUARY 15:** Middle Tennessee's weekly radio show with the head coach, Rick Insell Live, will begin Monday, January 15 at 6 p.m. at Bluesboro in downtown Murfreesboro. The one-hour program is hosted by the voice of the Blue Raiders, David Reed, and allows fans in the audience as well as those listening to ask questions of the second-year coach. Shows will run each Monday until the end of the season at Bluesboro on January 15, 22 and 29 and February 5, 12, 19 and 26. **GIVENS WEIGHS IN ON MALE PRACTICE PLAYERS:** Senior Chrissy Givens submitted her opinions on the NCAA proposal to ban male practice players on the NCAA Double-A blog. Givens' comments were posted December 21 and may be found at [http://www.doubleazone.com/2006/12/guest\\_blog\\_middle\\_tennessees\\_c.html](http://www.doubleazone.com/2006/12/guest_blog_middle_tennessees_c.html). Givens and a Blue Raider newcomer also do a blog at GoBlueRaiders.com about every two weeks with links on the women's basketball page. **Middle Tennessee Head Coach Rick Insell**

#### **Opening Comments**

"I thought the Christmas break had a large effect on the way both teams played tonight. We did not run our offense very well, which had to do with Western [Kentucky], but also had a lot to do with the Christmas break as well. Neither team played very sharp tonight. I have seen every game Western Kentucky has on film and they are a lot sharper than they showed and we are a lot sharper than we showed. We were able to squeeze out a win and we will be happy with it. You can't be very disappointed when you have four players in double figures and win by 14 points over Western Kentucky. They have a fine team and I think you will see the two of us battle again this season not only in the regular season at Bowling Green, but the tournament as well." **On Middle Tennessee's 10-3 record**

"I really thought realistically, we had a shot to be 11-2 at this point. We played Maryland close to the end and played well enough to beat Georgia, but we lost a game we probably should have won to South Dakota State. Western [Kentucky] will get a chance to see that South Dakota State is a good team when they play them later in the season. South Dakota State has beaten Virginia, Southern California and some other strong teams as well. They came in and beat us on our home court. We were still a little down after losing to Maryland a few days before. We should have won that game and I think we are about where we should be." **On the Sun Belt Conference**

"The Sun Belt Conference is the ninth toughest conference in the nation. Middle [Tennessee] and Western [Kentucky] are the two teams that are not afraid to go out and play top 10 teams. You have to give the two of us a pat on the back for carrying the RPI for the conference. All the teams in the conference should do this so the Sun Belt can get two or even three teams in the NCAA tournament. With the talent this conference has, it is very possible to get three teams in the NCAA tournament. Arkansas State, Louisiana Lafayette and Florida International are just a few of the others teams that can win any game they suit up." **On the difficult preseason schedule helping to develop players for conference play**

"I think the difficult schedule will help both teams. It is a shame that we had to come into this game over Christmas break and play a rival like Western [Kentucky] and none of the students were in town. If you look at both schools, these two teams draw more than any other school out there and none of the students were able to see this game." **Middle Tennessee Senior Guard Chrissy**

## **Givens**

### **On Middle Tennessee's 10-0 point run coming out in the first half**

"Johnna Abney came out and hit a couple three's and Krystle Horton got some big rebounds early that gave us a lot of momentum coming out in the first half. That is what carried us throughout the game. This was an ugly game and us jumping out early got them down and allowed us to keep them down the rest of the night." **On the emerging of different players for Middle Tennessee**

"Many people don't realize, for many great players it is hard to play with another great player. For me, however, I think it makes things easier. Teams cannot simply focus on me like they might have in the past. They have found, if you leave Johnna Abney open, she is going to hit the three. Krystle Horton's agility makes her an unbelievable post player. Everyone knows about Amber Holt and her talent. And Starr Orr is developing and learning that she is the best player on our team. This makes me better playing with better players." **Western Kentucky Head Coach Mary Taylor Cowles**

"We are going to be spending a lot of time in the gym, working on our pressure defense, handling the basketball. The frustrating part is that the last two days in practice and even after the South Alabama game, we started working on Middle Tennessee knowing what we were going to see from a press standpoint." "When you get back on your heels and throw the ball over your head, it obviously is a whole lot easier to play defense. I am not taking anything away from Middle Tennessee because they have utilized their defensive efforts against other teams, of course forcing Georgia into 22 turnovers." "I am not very proud of what we demonstrated tonight as a Lady Topper basketball team. It was just a frustrating effort, the lack of effort that our team put on." "If we had turned the ball over 15 times instead of 34 times, then maybe it would have given us 59 shot attempts. We want that number around 60 or 65, that's a great number of shot attempts. When you turn the ball over 34 times, you're simply just giving away those opportunities."

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*Printed on July 25, 2014*

*Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/23281>*