

Five Players Hit for Double Figures in 82-58 Triumph

Blue Raiders run winning streak to 17 games

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Five Middle Tennessee players scored in double figures and the 19th-ranked Blue Raiders hit 51 percent from the floor in defeating Denver, 82-58, Wednesday night at Murphy Center. The Blue Raiders extended their school-record winning streak to 17 games. Senior Chrissy Givens led all scorers with 16 points and added four assists, while freshman Brandi Brown netted 15 points off the bench for Middle Tennessee (20-3, 12-0 Sun Belt). Amber Holt tallied 13 points and eight rebounds and Jackie Pickel scored 10 points off the bench as well. Starr Orr scored 11 points and grabbed three rebounds. The Blue Raiders forced 24 Denver turnovers and converted those into 28 points. Middle Tennessee also recorded 18 assists as a team and hit 10 3-pointers, the ninth time this season the Blue Raiders have made double-figure trifectas in a game.

Denver started the game fast

and led 10-7 at the first media timeout, but the Blue Raiders scored 10 of the next 14 points and never trailed again. Holt netted 11 points in the first half, but Middle Tennessee committed nine turnovers in the opening 20 minutes and took only 30 shots despite leading 37-23. Middle Tennessee opened the second half with a 13-4, including a Johnna Abney 3-pointer, one of three trifectas in the game for the sophomore, and two Givens buckets, including a 3-pointer of her own. The Blue Raiders extended the lead to as many as 31 points with five minutes to play. Middle



Tennessee equaled its best start in conference play in school history and also currently owns the nation's third longest winning streak at 17 games. The Blue Raiders finish their three-game homestand Saturday at 3 p.m. against South Alabama. **POSTGAME NOTES**

MAGIC NUMBER REACHED: Middle Tennessee defeated Denver on Wednesday night to record its 15th 20-win season in school history. The Blue Raiders ran their record to 20-3 overall to secure the program's fourth straight 20-win campaign. **17 STRAIGHT:** The Blue Raiders ran their winning streak to a school-record 17 in a row with Wednesday's win over Denver. The current streak is the third longest nationally behind North Carolina (23) and Duke (22). Stanford has 16 wins in a row and can tie the Blue Raiders on Thursday night when it takes on UC-Santa Barbara. **27 SBC HOME**

WINS IN A ROW: Middle Tennessee's home dominance of Sun Belt foes continued against Denver, as the Blue Raiders won their 27th in a row versus league foes at Murphy Center. The last time Middle Tennessee dropped a conference home game was February 5, 2004, in double overtime against Western Kentucky. Overall, the Blue Raiders have won 31 of their last 32 home conference games and head coach Rick Insell is a perfect 16-0 at the Glass House against SBC competition.

ABNEY MOVES UP: Sophomore Johnna Abney connected on three 3-pointers in the win over Denver to move into eighth place on the all-time list at Middle Tennessee. Abney surpassed Cortney Neeley on the list by running her career total to 108. **DEEP THREAT:** Freshman Brandi Brown, who has scored 15 points off the bench in back-to-back games, nailed three 3-pointers to run her season total to 57. The 57 treys rank tied for 10th on the single-season list and stands just 20 shy of the freshman record of 77 established by Johnna Abney last year. Over the past 10 games, Brown is averaging 3.6 made 3-pointers per contest after making just 1.6 per game during the season's first 13 games. **SOLID SHOOTING GAME:** In the win over Denver, Middle Tennessee recorded its best shooting game since December 17 against Louisiana-Monroe. The Blue Raiders made 50.8 percent of their shots against the Pioneers for their seventh 50 percent or better percentage game of the season. The Blue Raiders are a perfect 7-0 in those games with four coming at home and three on the road. **LYMON SETS PERSONAL-BEST:** Freshman Chelsia Lymon established a new career-high in steals in the win over Denver. Lymon registered five steals in just 16 minutes of action to best her previous high of four set against No. 8 Georgia earlier this season. Lymon also started the game for the Blue Raiders, just her second starting assignment of the season. **GAME TIME CHANGE:** The Blue Raiders' February 15 home game against Florida International will tip off at 5:30 p.m. instead of the previously advertised time of 5 p.m. **QUICK HITTERS:** With tonight's win, Rick Insell joined Lewis Bivens as the only two coaches in Blue Raider history to win 20 or more games in their first two years on the sidelines ... Krystle Horton made her 101st career start to move into eighth place all-time while she played in her 118th game to jump into a tie for second on the all-time games played list (school record is 124 set by Patrice Holmes from 2002-05) ... Middle Tennessee has outscored its last two opponents in the second half of play by a combined 96-63 ... Amber Holt equaled her career-high with four assists against the Pioneers ... Middle Tennessee has scored 80 or more points in five straight home games ... Junior Starr Orr tallied 11 points against Denver for her fifth double-figure game of the season and first since netting 10 at New Orleans on January 13 ... Freshman Jackie Pickel recorded her fifth double-figure scoring game of the year and her first since pouring in 13 points against Troy on January 6 (all five games have come at Murphy Center).

POSTGAME NOTES

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Middle Tennessee head coach Rick Insell

On the bench play

"I was more proud of that than anything we did tonight. When Chrissy[Givens] got in foul trouble and I took Krystle [Horton] out and Amber [Holt] out, those other kids went in there and did a great job. I thought Lakira Boyd did a good job. I thought Jackie [Pickel] did a good job. When we took the three

horses out, so to speak, those other young ladies came in there and didn't drop off any. I was proud of that." **On performing well in the second half**

"We don't really consider ourselves a second-half team, but we played better in the second half. I don't like to get into that type of stuff." **Senior guard Chrissy Givens**

On being a target for opponents

"Everyone's going to play 14, 15 points better than they really are, and we're going to get everyone's best because we put ourselves in that place to where we're the ones everyone is trying to come after. We get everyone's best shot and then look up at the score at halftime and we're still up. Then we go out there and put it together in the second half. We have to bring that both halves." **On**

coming out of the game

"For me, it's good to see that they can keep up while I'm sitting on the bench. That let's me know that I don't have to come out and do everything because they can keep it up. I actually enjoyed my time on the bench." **Sophomore point guard Johnna Abney**

On playing without Givens, Holt and Horton

"I don't know if it's really pressure. We just know we have to pick up and do it when they're out because they're a big key to our team. We have to step it up and play even harder." **Denver head coach Pam Tanner**

On the play of Middle Tennessee

"If this game was only 10 minutes long, we might have won the game. It's a 40-minute game. Middle Tennessee played like the nationally-ranked team that they are. They have multiple weapons in all phases of the game." **On handling Middle Tennessee's press**

"I thought we handled their press relatively well except for a couple of possessions. The good news is we didn't have multiple possessions consecutively where we struggled. For the most part, we handled it well. We had five kids that competed tonight and we didn't get a lot of production out of the others. Hats off to Middle Tennessee. They are the 19th-ranked team for a reason. They are relentless. They don't get too frustrated when things aren't going their way and they find a way to come back into games pretty quickly." **On if Middle Tennessee is the best team in the Sun Belt**

"Middle Tennessee is the team to beat in this league. Until somebody beats them in the Sun Belt Conference tournament, I don't think you can say anything other than that they are the best team in this league. Until somebody steps up and knocks them off, they are the best team in the Sun Belt. They are solid in all five spots and they have great role players too." **On the play of Denver in the first half**

"The first part of the game was pretty solid for us. Once they started rolling, it's like a chain reaction. It's a good thing. We learned a lot of about ourselves in the last week. We had to play the two best teams in the league with Middle [Tennessee] being the best. I think we learned in spots, we can play with anybody, but Middle plays 40 minutes and we played 10." **On the type of game Middle Tennessee presented**

Tennessee presented

"The type of game we saw tonight, we can't duplicate in practice with out second or third five. We've got seven games, three of which are on the road. We have an opportunity to control our own destiny. If we can win all those home games, than we have a chance to be competitive in this league and finish in the top eight and possibly host a home game during the tournament. In February, you're either a team playing for something or a team playing for nothing and we want to be playing for something."