Holt Nets 27 in Blue Raiders Victory

Teams wins 18th straight overall, begins conference play 13-0 for first time in school history

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee's defense prevented a basket for the first nine minutes of the first half and then opened the second half with a 13-2 run, as the 19th-ranked Blue Raiders defeated South Alabama, 86-58, Saturday at Murphy Center. Middle Tennessee has now won 18 straight games and posted its 13th consecutive conference victory to open the season, setting another school record. The Blue Raiders (21-3, 13-0 Sun Belt) scored the first 10 points of the game, keeping the Jaguars without a point until the 14:18 mark. Middle Tennessee led 37-26 at halftime behind 13 points from Amber Holt and 11 by Starr Orr. Chrissy Givens played only 11 minutes of the first half after missing all four of her shots. The Blue Raiders opened the second half with a 13-2 spurt for a 50-28 lead, sparked by eight consecutive points from Holt to start the



final 20 minutes, including a pair of 3-pointers. Holt ended the game with 27 points and eight rebounds in 31 minutes of action. Middle Tennessee pushed the lead to as many as 30 points late in the half thanks to Holt's continued efforts and Givens stepping up her game. Givens finished with 16 points, five rebounds, six assists and five steals in 30 minutes, while Orr had 11. Chelsia Lymon came off the bench to score eight points and Jackie Pickel hit a trio of 3-pointers for nine points. The Blue Raiders shot 62 percent in the second half and outscored the Jaguars, 49-32. Shakira Nettles led South Alabama (11-12, 5-8) with 18 points and Monique Jones added 14. Middle Tennessee hits

the road for a pair of games this week, taking on Louisiana-Monroe on Wednesday and then playing at Western Kentucky on Sunday. **POSTGAME NOTES**

CONFERENCE START THE BEST: Middle Tennessee improved to 13-0 in Sun Belt action with Saturday's victory, its best-ever conference start. The 1987-88 squad owned the previous best conference start, winning 12 straight. Only three times in school history before this season had a Middle Tennessee team won double-figure games consecutively to begin conference play, including 12 in 1987-88, 11 in 1995-96 and all 10 games during the 1982-83 campaign. 18 AND COUNTING: Middle Tennessee extended its school-record winning streak to 18 games with Saturday's victory, besting the previous high by three games. The Blue Raiders streak of 18 straight is currently the third longest streak in the nation behind North Carolina (23) and Duke (22). Stanford can tie the 18game streak with a victory Sunday against 21st-ranked California. SBC DOMINATION **CONTINUES:** Middle Tennessee's home dominance of Sun Belt foes continued against South Alabama, as the Blue Raiders won their 28th 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 32 of their last 33 home conference games and head coach Rick Insell is a perfect 17-0 at the Glass House against SBC competition. **HOLT GETS HOT:** Junior Amber Holt enjoyed one of her best days as a Blue Raider on Saturday, netting 27 points with eight rebounds in 31 minutes of action. It was just one point shy of her careerhigh of 28 points set against Maryland in the season opener and her second 27-point effort of the season (Old Dominion on December 19 was the other). The Duluth, Ga., native was 11-for-16 from the field, tying her season-high for makes, and set career-highs by going by 3-of-6 from 3-point range. TRIFECTAS FALLING AGAIN: Middle Tennessee continues to use the 3-pointer as a major offensive weapon, and the shots were falling with more consistency in Saturday's win over South Alabama. The Blue Raiders were 12-for-30 from behind the arc for 40.0 percent, the team's best effort from 3-point range since hitting 40 percent (10-for-25) at New Orleans on January 13. It also marked the 10th time this season Middle Tennessee has made more than 10 trifectas in a game. **TIDBITS:** Senior Krystle Horton played in her 119th career game, moving into second place all alone behind former teammate Patrice Holmes (2001-05), who holds the school record with 124 ... Senior Chrissy Givens played in her 115th career game, tying Cyndi Lindley-Allen (1982-84, '86), Jennifer McFall (1982-85), Janet Ross (1984-87) and Kelly Chastain (1997-00) for eighth all-time ... Krystle Horton grabbed seven rebounds in the game, passing former teammate Tia Stovall (670, 2003-06) and moving into 11th place on the career list with 676 caroms ... Chrissy Givens was 5-for-7 from the foul line, moving the Monroe, La., native into sixth place on the all-time FT made list with 311, passing Holly Hoover (309, 1982-84) ... Freshman Brandi Brown made one 3-pointer in the contest, tying Heather Prater (1994) for made trifectas on the single-season list with 58 ... The Blue Raiders improved to 7-4 all-time against South Alabama, including 3-1 at Murphy Center ... Middle Tennessee continues to stay tied with the 1995-96 team for the best start in school history. The 1995-96 club did not lose its fourth game until Game No. 25 of the season ... The Blue Raiders shot better than 50 percent in the game for the second straight outing, hitting 29-for-57 (.509) from the floor. Only two other times this season has Middle Tennessee connected on more than 50 percent from the field in consecutive contests. **POSTGAME QUOTES**

Middle Tennessee head coach Rick Insell

On taking Chrissy Givens out of the game

"She wasn't doing what I wanted her to do. I love her to death, wouldn't swap her for anybody. But every now and then you've got to let your leader know you've got to hit those one and two-footers. She came back and did what she was supposed to do, got everyone involved, and that's her job. Overall, our whole team is playing better when Chrissy goes out, and when Amber [Holt] and Krystle

[Horton] go out. That's one of the things we've been looking at, and that's going to make us a better basketball team." **On the play of the defense**

"Defensively, we're moving our feet, we're getting in position, we're flagging the ball, all the things we work on in practice. But we will be coming back in Monday and going hard on our defense." **On Wednesday's game**

"[Louisiana] Monroe is a very athletic and very good basketball team. With Chrissy going home, they're going to play extra hard down there, so we've got to be ready. We've got two big games next week." **Senior guard Chrissy Givens**

On being benched in the first half

"I knew I was going to sit out for the rest of the first half. For me to not put in shots and be able to stay out there and play, what is that saying to the younger girls? I should have been sitting on the bench because I wasn't putting the ball in." **On the play of her teammates**

"I am very pleased. It makes us so much better. It's just a confidence builder. With Jackie [Pickel], the younger girls, Brandi [Brown] and Starr [Orr] having to decide, 'Yeah, I'm going to be a player now,' and with me going out, they had to do some stuff that if they didn't do, we wouldn't be in the position we were in." **South Alabama Women's Basketball Coach Rick Pietri**

On his overall thoughts of the game

"Middle Tennessee is really good. There's not much I have to say. They are really good." **On trailing** by 11 in the first half

"In the first four minutes of the game, we are down, 19-4. We battle back and we are down by 11 at the half. In the second half, they go on an 18-4 run. We were in the game at halftime, but we couldn't respond. We were unresponsive in the start of both halves. It's a lot of irony because we went on early runs at our place in both halves, but the end result was the same. Middle Tennessee is really good." On the play of freshman guard Shakira Nettles

"Shakira finished some plays. She was miserable from the free throw line. She did finish some plays for us. When you play a team that presses and extends like they do, you've got to be able to finish plays and make them pay for their defense." **On bouncing back after the tough loss** "We play Western Kentucky on Wednesday, so it's not going to be any easier."

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