

Lady Raiders Survive Overtime Thriller With Alabama 65-61

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MURFREESOBRO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee women's basketball (10-3) picked up its first win over Alabama (8-5) in school history in an overtime thriller 65-61 Thursday in the Murphy Center.

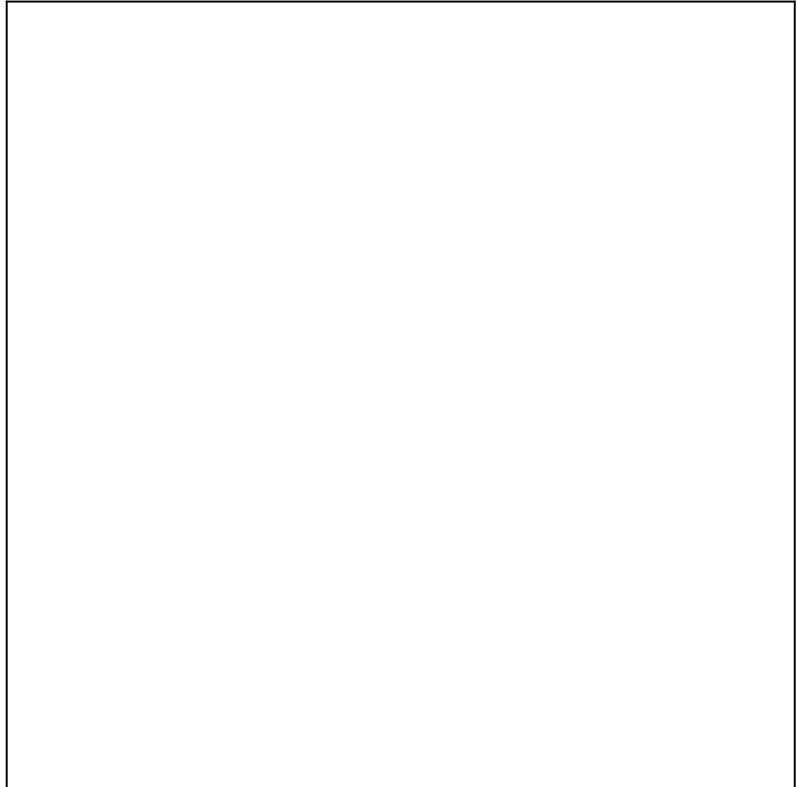
Senior Keisha McClinic's front end of a one-and-one, to tie the game 53-53, with 58 seconds left to play, was enough to force overtime. Alabama scored first in overtime when Kate Mastin hit a lay-up after the Crimson Tide won the tip. Middle Tennessee tied it 55-55 on a pair of Tia Stovall free throws and Alabama regained the lead again on a Tawana Freeman lay up.

Middle Tennessee re-took the lead, 58-57, when Jennifer Justice hit one-of-two free throws and the Lady Raiders never relinquished the lead again. In the final four minutes of the game, the Lady Raiders outscored Alabama 10-4.

Alabama's largest lead in the second half came with 13:05 to play when the Crimson Tide was up by nine, 32-41. Middle Tennessee cut the lead down to one, 47-46, on a monster three-point shot by junior Ciara Gray. Alabama answered with its own three-pointer by Navonda Moore to make the score 49-46.

After falling behind by five with 4:55 left, Middle Tennessee battled back on a key jumper by Stovall and then two big free throws to make the score 51-50. Middle Tennessee's only lead in the second half came off a Krytle Horton jumper that put the Lady Raiders up by one, 52-51, with 1:53 left to play.

Middle Tennessee had to rely on shots from the free throw line, hitting 24-of-38, as the Lady Raiders were a frosty 32.8 percent from the field. The Lady Raiders were also anemic from behind the three-point arch as they were 3-of-10.



Horton scored in double figures for the fifth-straight time as she poured in 20 points in the game, leading all scorers. It was the second time this season she scored 20 or more points this season.

Stovall followed with 17 points and was also 11-of-17 from the free throw line. Junior Patrice Holmes scored 10 points and also had eight rebounds, six assists and seven steals.

Middle Tennessee takes a few days off and will begin Sun Belt Conference play on Thursday January 15 when the Lady Raiders travel to Arkansas State. Tip-off is set for 7:05 p.m.

NOTES:

FIRST WIN: Middle Tennessee's comeback victory over SEC foe Alabama marked the first win for the Lady Raiders over the Crimson Tide in seven tries. UA entered the game with a perfect 6-0 mark against MT before the Lady Raiders picked up the overtime victory.

PLAYER OF THE GAME: Members of the media voted Krystal Horton and Tia Stovall as the Alexander Automotive Family Co-Players of the Game. Horton led all scorers with 20 points to go along with eight boards, while Stovall added 17 points and nine rebounds.

MCCLINIC EQUALS CAREER-BEST: Keisha McClinic made her presence felt on the defensive end of the court to help lead Middle Tennessee's overtime win over Alabama. The senior tied her personal-best with seven steals, including five thefts in the second half. McClinic now has 42 on the season, which is only 12 off her career season best mark of 54 set during the 2001-02 campaign.

STAT SHEET STUFFER: Patrice Holmes struggled with her shot all night against Alabama, but she never let that get her down. The junior was only 3-for-20 from the field but she stuffed the stat sheet with 10 points, eight rebounds, six assists and seven steals in 42 minutes. The seven steals matched her season-high and was one shy of her personal-best.

HORTON SHINES: True freshman Krystle Horton continued her steady play against a very big and athletic Alabama team on Thursday night. The Murfreesboro native hit the 20-point mark for the second time this year with 20 points while adding eight rebounds and two assists. Over her last four games, Horton is averaging 17.5 points and 6.8 rebounds. Also during that span she has connected on 58.8 percent of her shots from the field (30-51).

OVERTIME RECORD: Middle Tennessee ran its record to 13-14 all-time in overtime games, including 4-5 at home. Under Stephany Smith, the Lady Raiders are now 2-3 in overtime contests.

STOVALL SETS MARK: Sophomore Tia Stovall set her personal mark in free throws made and attempted in the win over Alabama. Stovall went 11-for-17 at the charity stripe and finished the game with 17 points and nine rebounds. The 11 made free throws were the most by a Lady Raider since Patrice Holmes hit 11 against New Orleans last year.

TIDBITS: The Lady Raider bench was outscored by Alabama, 25-5 ... Middle Tennessee's 20 steals against UA was its most since collecting 20 against Arkansas-Little Rock on Feb. 15, 2003 ... The Lady Raiders shot a season-low 32.8 percent from the field against Alabama, which went down as their worst shooting night since hitting 32.8 percent of their shots against South Alabama last year.

NEXT UP: The Lady Raiders will have a week off before stepping into Sun Belt Conference play on

Jan. 15. Middle Tennessee will open the conference slate on the road against Arkansas State.

QUOTES:

MT Head Coach Stephany Smith:

"First of all, what an unbelievable fan support we had tonight. It was a great crowd, and they were completely behind us. They gave us the extra energy needed to get us over the hump and pull it out. We were very stagnant offensively to start the game. We just couldn't get into an offensive flow. But, our defense held tight, kept fighting and gave ourselves an opportunity to win."

"We were looking to get more action from our high post player. We had not gotten a lot out of our looks, at least not consistently in the offense. Alabama did a really good job of sitting back. We couldn't really get a flow going. So, we wanted to attack more with Krystal [Horton] and Tia [Stovall]. They stepped up. Tia made some really big free throws at the end."

MT Guard Patrice Holmes:

"It was frustrating at times. I just had to keep fighting and get my teammates the ball in position to score."

"I think Tia [Stovall] and Krystal [Horton] are the best two post players I have played with since I have been here. They did a wonderful job of boxing out and doing the things they are supposed to do."

MT Forward Krystal Horton:

"We just had to fight back on defense because we weren't hitting on offense. So, we just had to play better defense. "

"Anytime a player isn't doing so well, another player has to pick up their game. There is always going to be someone their to pick that player up."

Alabama Head Coach Rick Moody:

"This is a tough loss for our team. Middle Tennessee has got a good basketball team. We knew that coming in here. On the defensive end, I thought we played extremely well. We knew Patrice [Holmes] is a great player. We tried as best as we could to not give her the lanes to the basket or open looks. She is a great player, and she had a tough night. So, I hope we can take a little credit for our defense."

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