Lady Raiders Survive at New Mexico State 52-51

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LAS CRUCES, N.M. - Middle Tennessee (13-5, 3-2 SBC) survived a barn-burner 52-51 against New Mexico State (8-10, 2-4 SBC) Thursday in the Pan American Center.

Middle Tennessee had the possession arrow point its way with 3.1 seconds left in the game after New Mexico State's Orphee Cherizard missed an attempt under the basket and was tied up by two Lady Raider players. Head Coach Stephany Smith called a timeout and then the Lady Raiders in bounded the ball on the baseline. New Mexico State intercepted a full court pass, but two Aggies collided in an attempt to catch the pass and Jennifer Justice came back and took the ball away and missed a lay-up as the buzzer sounded to end the game.

"I feel very fortunate to come out of here with a win," Smith said. "It wasn't a pretty game here tonight and at sometimes we failed sometimes."

The Lady Raiders led the game by four (52-48) with 1:08 left to play when Aggie Princess Moore drained a three pointer from the top of the key. The shot gave the Aggies a chance to win the game in the waning moments of the game after the Lady Raiders missed a bucket on their next possession.

Middle Tennessee tied the game with three minutes to go when Krystle Horton hit 1-of-2 free throws and took the lead when senior Keisha McClinic pulled down the rebound and hit a lay-up with 2:58 left to play. McClinic proved she wasn't done when she came back down, after a missed New Mexico State basket, to hit another bucket with 1:27 left to play. It proved to be the most important bucket in the game.

"I think in the last four minutes we fought really hard," Smith said. "We came in here after a long trip yesterday and came in here and just got the job done we had to."

Middle Tennessee was 43.1 from the field in the game and New Mexico State was 33.9. The Lady Raiders were also 7-of-8 from the free throw line for 87.5 percent.

New Mexico State attempted 25 three-point shots but only hit four for just 16 percent. The Lady Raiders only hit one three-pointer and took 11.

Horton led the Lady Raiders with 18 points, was 4-of-5 from the free throw line and had five rebounds. Senior Jennifer Justice added 10 points and McClinic continued to play tenacious defense as she had five steals and nine rebounds. Middle Tennessee continues its cross-country road swing as the Lady Raiders take on Louisiana-Lafayette Saturday. Tip-off is set for 2 p.m.

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