Lady Raiders Drop Heartbreaker in Double OT to Western Kentucky

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's Lady Raiders (14-6, 4-3 Sun Belt) dropped a heartbreaker 70-68 in double overtime to Western Kentucky (10-11, 4-3 Sun Belt) Thursday in the Murphy Center.

Junior guard Patrice Holmes had a chance to tie the game and force a third overtime as time expired, but her jumper missed the mark and gave the Lady Toppers the win. Western Kentucky's Carla Bartee scored the eventual winning bucket for the Lady Toppers when her running jumper was good with four seconds left to play.

In regulation, Middle Tennessee fought back from a 15-point deficit with nine minutes left to play in the game. The Lady Raiders began to chip away at the lead but couldn't drop below double digits and found themselves down by 10 (54-44) with 2:21 left.

In the final two minutes the Lady Raiders went on a 10-0 run that began with a Tia Stovall jumper to make the score 54-46 with 2:12 left. Middle Tennessee pulled within two points on three straight steals and conversions to make the scored 54-52 with 57 seconds remaining.

Senior Keisha McClinic was fouled by Western Kentucky's Tiffany Porter-Talbert and drained two free throws to tie the game at 54 with 38 seconds left to play. Western Kentucky answered on a lay-up by Camryn Whitaker with 15 seconds left and then freshman Krystle Horton forced overtime when she returned the favor with a lay-up of her own with three seconds on the clock.

It was a classic back-and-forth match-up in the first overtime with neither team leading by more then two points in the five minutes allotted. Western Kentucky again found themselves with the lead with 59 seconds left to play off a Porter-Talbert jumper, but Middle Tennessee answered at the free throw line. McClinic was fouled with 29 seconds left to play and calmly drained two at the charity stripe to make the score 61-61 and force a second overtime.

Overall there were nine ties in the game and Middle Tennessee out rebounded Western Kentucky by 15 (47-32). The Lady Raiders were also 14-of-24 from the free throw line.

Middle Tennessee had two players record double-doubles as Horton had 19 points and 10 rebounds and Stovall had 12 points and 12 rebounds. Holmes added 16 points and McClinic tied her career-high in steals with eight and now has 77 on the season.

Middle Tennessee hosts Sun Belt East rival Florida International on Saturday. Tip-off is set for 2 p.m.

NOTES:

DOUBLE OT: The Lady Raiders played their second overtime game of the year and the first multiple overtime contest since 1997 when they went to two overtimes against Western Kentucky on Thursday night. Middle Tennessee is now 13-15 in overtime games all-time, including a 1-1 mark this season. The two overtimes against WKU marked the first time since 1993 the Lady Raiders have played a multiple overtime game against a conference opponent. That year, MT defeated Tennessee State in two extra periods, 105-103.

PLAYER OF THE GAME: Members of the media voted senior Keisha McClinic as the Alexander Automotive Family Player of the Game. McClinic had nine points, nine rebounds, eight steals and four assists. The eight steals matched her career-high.

DOUBLE TROUBLE: Despite the heartbreaking defeat to WKU, Middle Tennessee had two players record double-doubles. Freshman Krystle Horton tallied a team-high 19 points to go with 10 rebounds to notch her fifth of the year and her first at home since the second game of the season. Sophomore Tia Stovall came off the bench to record her first double-double of the year with 12 points and 12 boards. It was Stovall's second career double-double.

STOVALL HAS BIG NIGHT: Sophomore Tia Stovall added spark off the bench on Thursday night with 12 points and a career-high 12 rebounds in 41 minutes of action. Stovall, who had just her second career double-double, also added two steals and equaled her personal-best with three blocked shots.

TIDBITS: Middle Tennessee's 28 turnovers against WKU went down as a season-high and the most since registering 31 against South Carolina State on Dec. 14, 2002 ... The Lady Raiders grabbed a season-best 47 rebounds and won the battle of the boards by an amazing 15 caroms, but still lost the game to WKU ... Patrice Holmes equaled her career-high with three blocks against the Lady Hilltoppers ... Holmes also matcher her personal-high with nine turnovers.

NEXT UP: The Lady Raiders will host Florida International on Saturday, Feb. 7. Tipoff is scheduled for 2 PM CST.

Quotes:

MT Head Coach Stephany Smith: On the last two minutes of regulation "We pressured [WKU] in full court and turned up the heat. They just kept turning it over. You are just talking about a team with a lot of fight in them and didn't want to lose this basketball game."

"This rivalry dates back way before I showed up on the scene. But, this epitomizes what a rivalry is supposed to be about."

"There is absolutely nothing wrong with our confidence or our physiological state of mind. We just played a very good basketball team, fought extremely hard and came up on the short end of the stick. We made an extremely impressive run to close out regulation. We had several opportunities to win it. We have got to start taking better care of the basketball. Twenty-Eight turnovers will get you beat every night of the week. We made poor decisions at poor times. We were looking for something when we didn't need to look for it."

MT Forward Tia Stovall: "I could tell the clock was running down. Whenever the clock is running down, [WKU] gives the ball to Porter-Talbert. I was just running, because my job is to get back in the paint on transition defense. She drove the lane, and I saw an opportunity to take a charge. I just didn't want here to score because that would have been the ball game."

"We turned on our panic mode. I think we play better when we know the game is on the line. I have no idea why we don't come out as strong as we end. I guess we need to fix that."

WKU Head Coach Mary Taylor Cowles: "I don't really think in our defensive plan that there was anything specific we wanted to do with Patrice Holmes. She is such an incredible player. It seems like the more people try to key on her, the more competitive she becomes. She wants to win. You can tell that just by watching her. I felt like as a team, overall there are something things we can take away from this game and pick up on in [Middle Tennessee's] half court offensive set. I feel like Porter, our senior captain, did a nice job on Holmes to start out."

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