Holmes' 20 Points Leads Lady Raider Charge

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Patrice Holmes' 20 points helped Middle Tennessee (16-6, 6-3 SBC) to a 64-55 come-back win over North Texas (9-13, 5-5 SBC) Thursday in the Murphy Center.

Down by 11 to start the second half, Middle Tennessee outscored North Texas 17-6 in the first eight and a half minutes to tie the came at 38. Holmes tied the game on a lay-up off an assist by sophomore Tia Stovall.

North Texas regained the lead off a Jill Medlock lay-up but the Lady Raiders continued to fight and tied the game again with 6:08 left 48-48. Stovall gave the Lady Raiders the tie when she hit a lay-up and was fouled by Kelsie Edwards and hit the free throw.

Stovall grabbed a defensive rebound and came down the court to score and was fouled. She hit her free throw, and gave the Lady Raiders a 51-49 lead at the 5:37 mark. The first Lady Raider lead since the 16:53 mark in the first half when they were up 5-4. Middle Tennessee never trailed again.

It was the free throw line that was difference in the final four minutes of the game as the Lady Raiders were 6-of-6 from the charity stripe. Overall Middle Tennessee was 20-of-24 from the line for 83.3 percent.

After turning the ball over 14 times in the first half, Middle Tennessee protected the basketball better in the second half, only giving up the ball eight times. The Lady Raiders also had 12 steals.

Middle Tennessee shot a scorching 56 percent from the field in the second half after shooting a chilly 29.2 percent in the first half. The Lady Raiders held North Texas to just eight buckets in the second half for 29.6 percent and 35.5 percent overall.

Holmes' 20 points led all scorers and she also was 2-of-2 from the three-point line in the second half. Freshman Krystle Horton added 19 points and was a perfect 7-for-7 from the free throw line. Stovall added 15 points and also had three assists and three steals.

Middle Tennessee heads back out on the road to take on Denver Sunday. Tip-off is set for 2 p.m. CST.

NOTES:

TURNING UP THE HEAT: After trailing by 11 points at halftime, the Lady Raiders mounted a furious comeback that was keyed by a strong second half defensive effort. In the final 20 minutes, Middle Tennessee held North Texas to just 29.6 percent shooting from the field, gave up only 23 points, and forced 11 turnovers. For the game, the Lady Raiders held UNT to 35.5 percent shooting.

PLAYER OF THE GAME: Members of the media voted junior Patrice Holmes as the Alexander Automotive Family Player of the Game. Holmes led all scorers with 20 points on 7 of 11 shooting to go with seven boards.

STOVALL SHINES: Sophomore Tia Stovall made it back into the starting lineup against North Texas and might be there for good after coming up with some key plays in the comeback victory. Stovall had 15 points, which was her most in a game since registering 17 against Alabama on Jan. 8. The Winchester, Tenn., native also had seven rebounds, three assists and three steals in 27 minutes.

HORTON ON A ROLL: Freshman Krystle Horton continued her march toward freshman of the year honors following another strong effort in the win over North Texas. Horton notched 19 points on 6 of 12 shooting against UNT, while making all seven of her free throws. Over the last three games, Horton is averaging 21.0 points, 6.7 rebounds, and is a combined 61.9 percent from the field (26-42).

GIVENS SETS TWO MARKS: Freshman Chrissy Givens came off the bench in the win over North Texas to set two personal bests. Givens ripped down a career-high eight rebounds, while playing a record 26 minutes. The Monroe, La., native's previous rebound high was four on five different occasions this season.

TIDBITS: The Lady Raiders are shooting 86.5 percent from the charity stripe over the past two games (32-37) ... Stephany Smith is now 37-11 (.771) in the month of February all-time ... Krystle Horton had a career-best four steals against UNT ... The Lady Raiders have now won the rebound battle nine straight games ... Patrice Holmes recorded her 20th career game of scoring 20 or more points.

NEXT UP: The Lady Raiders will travel to Denver, Colo., to face the Denver Pioneers on Saturday. Tipoff is scheduled for 2 PM CST.

Quotes:

MT Head Coach Stephany Smith: "We have some pretty passionate coaches on this staff. We may not have had to say much at the half, but I think everybody got their two cents worth in before we left the locker room. The first half was absolutely the most embarrassing performance of basketball I have ever seen in the seven years I have been here."

"I thought we played good defensively in spurts after the 12 minute media timeout. I thought [UNT] scored on every possession on the floor during the first eight minutes of the game. We played some zone and some man-to-man. No matter what we did, they got free. They knocked down some big

shots. Jamie Armstrong was just solid from 12 feet. Every time she took a shot it went in."

"I felt good about how aggressive we were in the first half. I thought that had a lot to do with us being able to stay in it because we had 11 shots at the free throw line. We only knocked down seven of them, but I thought that was something that was keeping us alive. We did make some huge plays during that stretch by being aggressive and attacking the basket. There were several people that stepped up and made those plays. We were 13 of 13 at the free throw in the second half. So, we did what we needed to do to be successful. Also, I thought Tia Stovall played tremendously."

MT Forward Tia Stovall: "The light came on for me. Kelsie Edwards and I were swapping some hits. Whenever something like that happens, I take it as a challenge. I just saw my opportunity. Throughout the whole game she was saying we were going to lose. I just had to prove to her that we weren't going to lose. Things like that is an influence for me and gives me my ticket to go."

"I think during the first half, we weren't playing like ourselves. Coming out of the locker room, we knew what we had to do. When you know you are not playing up to your ability, that is all you need to push yourself and get yourself focused."

MT Guard Patrice Holmes: On her late game shot "I felt like [Erika Bobo] was overplaying me to my left side. I just crossed over and went to the basket. The coaches have been telling me to go the basket more often. So, I just went to the basket and it went in."

"We have a lot of heart. In the first half, we were very sloppy. I think we turned the ball over 14 times. We gave up ten offensive rebounds. In the second half, we knew we had to pick up the pressure and box out. We just came out and fought hard."

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