Lady Raiders Shock No. 12 North Carolina; Advance to Second Round of NCAA

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NOTRE DAME, Ind. - Middle Tennessee women's basketball, the No. 13 seed, shocked 12th ranked and No. 4 seed North Carolina 67-62 Sunday in the first round of the NCAA Tournament at the Joyce Center at Notre Dame.

- **Audio:** Postgame Press Conference

  For the first time in 21 years, Middle Tennessee will advance to the second round of the NCAA Tournament. The Lady Raiders defeated Jackson State 64-61 during the 1983 tournament to move onto the second round before falling to Louisiana Tech 91-59.

  Middle Tennessee led by 12 with 6:48 to go, but Nikita Bell sparked a 10-0 run by North Carolina. A pair of free throws by Kenya McBee trimmed the lead to two, 60-58, with 3:44 to go, but a bucket by sophomore Tia Stovall put the Lady Raiders back up by four.

  Bell came back with 1:53 left to hit another big bucket to trim the lead to two 62-64, and Tar Heel Candace Sutton had a chance to tie the game with 34 seconds left to play, but her lay-up rimmed out. Freshman Krystle Horton grabbed the rebound and Keisha McClinic was fouled with 26 seconds left to play. After draining her first free throw, McClinic missed the second for the only miss from the charity stripe of the game, as the Lady Raiders were 13-of-14 from the free throw line.

  Junior guard Patrice Holmes put the game out of reach when she was fouled and went to the free throw line with nine seconds left to play. Holmes calmly hit both free throws and gave the Lady Raiders the win.

  Middle Tennessee opened the game slow and found themselves down by seven, 13-6, with 14:34 to play. The Lady Raiders continued to fight and took the lead for the first time, 18-17,

off a Tia Stovall lay-up. North Carolina tied the game at 26 off a lay-up by Camille Little, but a humungous three-point shot by Holmes gave the Lady Raiders the lead again. Middle Tennessee never trailed in the game from that point on.

Holmes led the Lady Raiders with 18 points, including 4-of-11 from the three-point line. Freshman Krystle Horton proved she was a freshman no more, as she was second in scoring with 16. McClinic added 12 points and also had nine rebounds, and Stovall added 12. Only six Lady Raiders played in the game, but every one contributed to the scoring column.

QUOTES:

Head Coach Stephany Smith:

"Even through adversity, during a six-minute stretch of very passive play in the second half, we found a way to change our body language and found a way to win the game. I am really pleased with our overall effort and the opportunity to advance to the second round."

"I sincerely believed - my entire staff believed - that we could win this game. We were selling it to our team."

Junior Guard Patrice Holmes:

On hitting the final free throw: "I was very confident and I had no doubt in my mind that I was going to hit those shots. I would say that those are the biggest shots that I have ever taken."

Senior Guard Keisha McClinic:

On North Carolina's early run: "We did not come into the game thinking that we were going to lose. Our coaches always tell us that the game is full of runs and they made their run early. It was time for us to play our own ball and we were able to get back in the game. We had it in our minds that we could stay with them, and we knew that if we played our hearts out we would be successful."

UNC Head Coach Sylvia Hatchell:

"We have to learn from what happened to us today. We've got to go home and get better. We've got to develop leadership. That is what we're lacking right now."

"So many times, a team like ours feeds off their point guard, like Middle Tennessee feeds off Patrice [Holmes]."

"The game today was an upset because of the seed, but Middle Tennessee deserved to win, because they outplayed us. My hat is off to them because they played really, really well."

UNC Senior Guard/Forward Nikita Bell:

On losing in the first round... "I'm very surprised. I wasn't expecting to lose in the first round. I wasn't expecting to lose at all. Middle Tennessee did a great job. They came out and played hard. I just wasn't ready for our season to be over."

UNC Freshman Guard Camille Little:

On Middle Tennessee being better than advertised... "At the beginning, their effort was a little bit different than ours. Their intensity was more productive than ours early. We came out slow, and then we got into our groove but it was too late.

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