

# Raiders Comeback Falls Just Short, 76-68

## Senior Latoya Barclay scored career-high 17 points

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**NORFOLK, Va.** - For 32 minutes, Middle Tennessee looked out-of-place and out-of-sync Saturday night against Old Dominion. But then the Blue Raiders dialed up the defense, forcing five straight turnovers and cutting the deficit to three points, but Old Dominion pulled away in the end en route to a 76-68 season-opening victory at the Ted Constant Convocation Center. Middle Tennessee (0-1) trailed by as many as 17 points in the second half and was down 68-55 with 6:11 remaining in the game. But the Blue Raiders scored 12 of the game's next 13 points, started by a 3-pointer from Brandi Brown and including a trio of trifectas from senior Latoya Barclay. The 12-1 spurt took just over three minutes, pulling the Blue Raiders with three points at 69-66. After another ODU turnover, Middle Tennessee had the ball with a



chance to tie, but Jackie Pickel missed a 3-pointer from the corner. Lady Monarch Shalida Williams drove to the basket on the other end, hitting Megan Pym for a driving layup and taking the momentum away from the Blue Raiders. Pym had another layup on a putback the next time up the floor and Old Dominion made their free throws over the final minute, just as they had all night. Barclay finished the game with a career-high 17 points, including 15 in the second half, in just the second start of her career. Brown was also a major factor for the Blue Raiders, netting 14 points with four rebounds in 35 minutes of action. "We didn't quit and I'm very pleased with that," head coach Rick Insell said. "I'm not pleased with a loss, but our players did not quit. They stayed in there and kept battling." Everyone on the Blue Raiders had to step into a more prominent role after senior Amber Holt played just six minutes in the first half because of three fouls and then picked up her fourth foul less than four minutes into the second half. The Duluth, Ga., native did play the final 12:26

of the contest without fouling out, scoring 14 points with six rebounds in just 22 minutes of action. "[Amber Holt going out] hurt us, but what we can look at is the fact that Brandi Brown stepped it up and we've been wanting her to do that, not necessarily in scoring as much as she battled in the lane, getting some tips and some deflections," Insell said. Middle Tennessee trailed by seven at the half, but the Lady Monarchs scored the first six points after intermission before the Blue Raiders answered with a pair of 3-pointers, one from Holt and the other from Pickel, who scored nine points in the game on a trio of trifectas. But ODU expanded the lead to 17 points in the second half thanks to the charity stripe, the Lady Monarchs best friend for most of the game. ODU's Tiffany Green hit 6-of-7 in the second half and ODU was 11-of-15 after the break and 27-for-35 in the contest. Compare that to Middle Tennessee, who shot just three free throws after halftime and only 17 foul shots in the game. Anne Marie Lanning grabbed six rebounds and Emily Queen came off the bench to contribute seven boards for the Blue Raiders, who were outrebounded only 44-41 despite a large difference in size at almost every position. T.J. Jordan led four double figure scorers for ODU with 19 points, while Williams had 15, Green added 12 and Jessica Canady scored 13 off the bench. Holt picked up her third foul with 14:10 remaining in the first half in the middle of a 13-0 ODU run and headed to the bench. The Blue Raiders struggled from the field in the half, shooting just 28 percent (8-of-29), and also put the Lady Monarchs at the foul line on numerous occasions. The home team made 16-of-20 free throws in the half. The Blue Raiders made their first two 3-point attempts in the game, the first from Johnna Abney and then another by Brown. But the visitors did not score another bucket for more than four minutes until a turnaround jumper in the lane by Brown. By then ODU had run off 13 consecutive points, including six from Jordan. Middle Tennessee continued to hang tough, chipping away at the deficit that was 15 at one point (30-15). The Blue Raiders put together a 15-7 run over the final seven-plus minutes of the half, capped by a driving bank shot from Holt just before the horn, to cut the deficit to 37-30 at the break. It was Holt's only points of the opening 20 minutes. Middle Tennessee plays its regular season home opener Wednesday versus Tennessee Tech at Murphy Center at 7 p.m. **GAME NOTES**

Senior Latoya Barclay drew the start in the contest, just the second of her career in 81 games ... Barclay scored a career-high 17 points, set career-highs in FG made (6), 3-point FG made (3), 3-point FG attempts (5) and minutes (31) and tied her career-high with nine FG attempts and four rebounds ... Brandi Brown set a career-high after playing 35 minutes ... Middle Tennessee lost its fourth straight season opener and fell to 19-14 all-time in season openers. The Blue Raiders are also 0-3 in season openers under head coach Rick Insell ... Middle Tennessee shot just 22-of-64 (.344) from the field. The Blue Raiders had just one game last season where shot worse, making 20-of-65 (.308) against South Dakota State on November 13. The squad has posted just two other games with a worse shooting percentage under Coach Insell - at Chattanooga on November 18, 2005 (24-of-70, .343) and at Florida International on February 27, 2006 (22-of-67, .328). **POSTGAME**

## **QUOTES**

### **Head Coach Rick Insell**

#### **On the loss to Old Dominion**

"We were a little sloppy at times and both teams did a pretty good job. I thought that both of us got a little tired late but [ODU Coach Wendy Larry] had more people to shuffle in and out of the game than I did. [Old Dominion] is going to have a good team and we are going to have a good team before it is all said and done. My biggest thing is I was looking out midway through the first half and we have three freshmen and two sophomores on the floor. I was excited about that. I am not pleased with the loss but I am pleased that our players did not quit. They stayed in there and kept battling." **On the effect Amber Holt's early foul trouble**

"That hurt us and what we can get out of that is the fact that Brandi Brown stepped it up. We have

wanted her to do that. It is not necessarily scoring as much as she battled in there. She got some tips, deflections and made one big-time move. We know she has a lot of ability but we haven't been able to bring it out of her. She stepped up with Amber going out. Emily Queen is a freshman and came in and battled. I was real pleased with her." **On Old Dominion**

"They have a good team. [T.J.] Jordan is unconscious when she shoots the ball. If she is putting the ball in the hole, they are tough. In transition, teams tend to lose her and we lost her. Two or three times we cut it back to three [points] one time and five points another time, but in both cases we lost people in transition. We had to gamble and it got us back in the game but also took us out of the game. They executed and were able to break us down. The biggest thing we were concerned about was them breaking us down on the dribble because they are quick. [Jazzmin] Walters, Jordan and [Shahida] Williams are good off the dribble and have great vision. It caused us problems." **On Middle Tennessee's non-conference schedule**

"I think our strength of schedule is probably number two or number three in the country. We have Maryland, Tennessee, Louisville, Houston, Arizona and LSU in non-conference. Wendy Larry is one of my closest friends in the coaching business and she has the same type of philosophy as we have - you have to play the better programs to prepare for the [NCAA] Tournament. We have 172 teams documented that said they would not play Middle Tennessee on their floor or our floor. Some of the biggest programs in the country needed games, but Wendy Larry played us. It is not that we are too good but it is the fact that [playing Middle Tennessee] is not an automatic win. That is how you get better and that is why we are playing the people we are playing. We appreciate Old Dominion allowing us to come and play them. They have great fans. They are very knowledgeable basketball people and we had a good time. We didn't like losing but we will take it and build on it."

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