Blue Raiders Advance to Sweet 16

Blue Raiders extend win streak to 14 as Adams knocks down 22 kills

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. - The Blue Raiders set school history on Saturday night advancing to the Sweet 16 for the first time in Middle Tennessee volleyball history in just its third appearance in the NCAA Tournament.

Middle Tennessee defeated Hawai'i 3-1 (30-22, 30-18, 15-30, 33-32) in the second round of the NCAA Tournament hosted by Louisville to advance to the Penn State Regional of the NCAA Tournament.

This is the first time Hawai'i (27-6) has lost in the second round of the NCAA Tournament. The last time Hawai'i lost in the first round of the tournament was in 1997. Middle Tennessee (35-2) lost in the first round of the tournament in 1995 to George Washington and in the second round to Ohio State in 2006.

Middle Tennessee is one of the most successful teams in the country with just two losses and head coach Matt Peck has led the Blue Raiders to this success in just four years with the program.

"I think the first two games I was in shock. I thought they would play us a lot tougher and I actually was kind of concerned going into game three because Hawai'i is tournament tested and we are not," Peck said.

Junior Ashley Adams led Middle Tennessee with 22 kills for a .306 hitting percentage. Adams also had eight block assists in the match.

Junior Ashley Asberry added assistance with 18 kills for a .556 hitting percentage. Sophomore Ashley Mead also had double-digit kills for the Blue Raiders with 13.

"Ashley Asberry I don't know if she had ten of her 18 kills in game four but she turned it up. I asked her to do that, I said we need you to step it up and what a tremendous effort she had," Peck said. "All along we have told our team the best team is going to win not the team with the best player. I

think this weekend we are really the best team here."

Defensively, senior Alicia Lemau'u and freshman Izabela Kozon led Middle Tennessee with 18 and 15 digs respectively.

Sophomore Sasha McGlothin posted five block assists to help at the net while sophomore Leslie Clark notched 58 assists in the match to further assist the Blue Raiders.

As a team, Middle Tennessee knocked down 69 kills for a .241 hitting percentage with 13.5 blocks while the Rainbow Wahine posted a hitting percentage of .161 with 60 kills and 12 blocks.

Hawai'i was led by Jamie Houston who had 25 kills for a hitting percentage of .246. Jamie Sanders and Amber Kaufman each had 10 kills to add depth to Hawai'i's offense.

Middle Tennessee and Hawai'i traded points to begin the match with neither taking more than a one-point lead until the Blue Raiders pulled ahead by three after three straight blocks by Adams, Kozon and Scott, 9-6. Middle Tennessee continued to make plays keeping a three-point lead midway through the game, 15-12.

Middle Tennessee extended its lead to six guided by Adams who knocked down three kills, 22-16. Hawai'i cut the lead to three, 23-20 as Middle Tennessee took a timeout to regroup. The Blue Raiders came back strong winning three straight points to extend the lead back to six, 26-20.

The Blue Raiders held on for the 30-22 win guided by Adams, who posted a .517 hitting percentage with five kills, to take a 1-0 lead in the match. Middle Tennessee also had five-and-a-half blocks led by Scott with three.

Game two began much like game one with the two teams trading points but the Blue Raiders took and early two-point lead, 6-4. The Middle Tennessee held Hawai'i to just one more point extending its lead to six behind the serve of Clark, 11-5. Middle Tennessee would score three more points before the Rainbow Wahine could notch one of their own, 14-6.

Hawai'i could never get any momentum going in game two as the Blue Raiders continued to extend the lead, 20-12. Middle Tennessee continued to dominate in game two extending take a ten-point lead, 28-18 and then took a 2-0 lead in the match after a service ace by Lemau'u.

Adams led the team both offensively and defensively through two games with 11 kills and seven block assists. As a team Middle Tennessee hit .284 with 30 kills and 12.5 block assists at the intermission. Hawaii on the other hand posted a hitting percentage of .011 with 26 kills and just five blocks through the two games. Houston led the Rainbow Wahine with nine kills and three block assists but had a hitting percentage of .080.

Hawaii came back from the break fighting as it took a 5-2 lead before the Blue Raiders could regroup and tie the score at 5 behind the serve of Kozon. Then a kill by Asberry gave Middle Tennessee its first lead of the game, 6-5. After the two teams traded points, Hawaii regained the momentum taking a three-point lead, 12-9. Hawaii held Middle Tennessee to just one more point while notching two straight service aces to extend its lead to six, 16-10. Late in the game Hawai'i took its lead to 12-points, 27-15 as the Blue Raiders struggle to get their offense going. Middle Tennessee would not score again as the Rainbow Wahine scored eight straight points to force game four with a 30-15 win.

Adams had just one kill in game three as Asberry and Mead stepped up notching four and three kills apiece to lead the Blue Raiders. Middle Tennessee also had no blocks in game three. Hawai'i had 18 kills in the match led by Houston with nine.

Middle Tennessee rebounded to begin game four taking a 4-0 lead and then extended it to five, 10-5. Hawai'i held the Blue Raiders to just one point while scoring seven to tie the score at 14. Middle Tennessee regrouped taking a two-point lead, 18-16 but the two teams again traded points knotting the score at 20. Asberry had two kills giving the Blue Raiders a one-point advantage after each one and then Middle Tennessee pulled ahead by two, 23-21. The score tied again at 24 but the Blue Raiders prevailed again taking a two-point lead, 26-24. The two teams continued to trade points once again tying the score this time at 29. The Blue Raiders prevailed however taking a 32-31 lead on a kill by McGlothin and then clinching the match on an attack error by Hawaii.

Middle Tennessee advances to the Penn State Regional hosted by Penn State where it will play the winner of Washington and BYU on Dec.7 and 8. Washington won the National Championship in 2005.

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