

Defense Carries Raiders to 80-46 Triumph

Holt scores 27, Lanning adds career-high 15 in victory

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MOBILE, Ala. - Amber Holt scored a game-high 27 points and grabbed eight rebounds and Anne Marie Lanning added a career-high 15 points, as Middle Tennessee won their 26th straight contest against Sun Belt competition with an 80-46 victory over South Alabama Saturday at the Mitchell Center. Holt scored 11 of the team's first 13 points of the second half and the Raiders extended a 20-point halftime advantage to as many as 35 at one point. Middle Tennessee's defense forced 26 USA turnovers and turned those into 26 points. Lanning had her best game of the year, going 5-for-7 from the floor and hitting three 3-pointers. She scored the 15 points in just 11 minutes of action. Brandi Brown also netted 12 points for Middle Tennessee (6-5, 2-0 Sun Belt), who won its third straight overall and 20th consecutive regular season Sun Belt contest. The Blue Raiders started very slowly in the contest but put together a 14-2 run over eight-plus minutes to



take an 18-10 advantage in the first half. Brown hit a pair of 3-pointers during the run and USA scored just one field goal in a 13-minute stretch, committing nine turnovers. The Lady Jaguars closed the gap to 29-19 at the four-minute media timeout, but Middle Tennessee finished the half with a 10-0 run, highlighted by 3-pointers from Lanning and Chelsia Lymon for a 39-19 lead at the break. Holt scored 12 points in the half and Lanning added 10. The Blue Raiders also netted 15 points off 15 USA turnovers in the opening 20 minutes. Middle Tennessee dominated all phases of

the game, outrebounding the Lady Jaguars (10-2, 1-1), 35-30, and committing just 12 turnovers compared to USA's 26. The Blue Raiders shot 51 percent from the floor and hit 9-of-19 from 3-point range. "South Alabama started the game really running right by us on the press so we want to more of a contain and made them really work to get the ball up the court and use time off the clock and it worked very well," head coach Rick Insell said. "They're a good half-court team but when we made them take time off the clock they weren't able to get into their sets. "I really thought all of our girls played well and we really executed the offense and got the ball to people in a position to score. One of the reasons they played so well is because they get an extra day off for the Christmas break." Middle Tennessee next hosts eighth-ranked LSU at 7 p.m. on Friday, December 28, at Murphy Center. **POSTGAME NOTES**

Middle Tennessee started its seventh different lineup this season with seniors Amber Holt and Latoya Barclay, junior Johnna Abney, sophomore Brandi Brown and freshman Emily Queen ... Chelsia Lymon tied her season-high with four steals in the game ... Amber Holt tied her career-high with 13 field goals in the contest, the third time this season she has made 13 FG in a game ... Johnna Abney set a career-high with seven assists. Abney's previous high was four on five different occasions, the last coming versus Western Kentucky in December of 2006. Abney's season-high before the USA game was two on six different occasions, the last at Tennessee on December 13 ... Emily Queen tied her season-high with seven rebounds ... Jackie Pickel tied her career-high with two steals, the fifth time in her career she has posted a pair of thefts in a game ... Starr Orr tied her season-high with five rebounds. She also had five caroms at Houston on November 19 ... Latoya Barclay drew her fourth start of the season. She tied career-highs with five assists and four steals in the contest. Barclay also had five assists at New Orleans on January 28, 2006, and four steals at North Texas on February 8, 2006 ... Brandi Brown set a career-high with six assists in the game, eclipsing her previous high of four against Houston on November 19 of this year ... Middle Tennessee handed out 27 assists as a team, the most under third-year head coach Rick Insell and the most in more than seven years. No team from 2000-01 to the present handed out more than 26 assists in a single contest. The school record for assists in a game is 39 against Kentucky on November 17, 1978 ... The Blue Raiders shot a season-best 9-of-19 (.474) from 3-point range in the contest ... Middle Tennessee held South Alabama to just 46 points, the first team the Blue Raiders have held under 50 this season. The last team to score less than 50 against Middle Tennessee was Gonzaga (46) in the first round of last year's NCAA Tournament. **POSTGAME QUOTES**

Middle Tennessee head coach Rick Insell

On passing the first conference road test of the season

"We can't rub a hole in our back right now. We are 2-0 in the conference and I am very proud of that. I'm very proud of the effort we got from our young ladies tonight. They were a class act all the way through. They knocked down shots, they executed our offense and we had a lot of people step up. Emily [Queen] had seven rebounds and that's big. Brandi [Brown] needs to be tough on the rebounds, but if I can get Emily to score like Brandi then we are going to be a lot better. [Emily] is fouling too much early." **On the play of Amber Holt**

"Amber is a work horse. What a player. We've got one right behind her that's just like her in Alysha Clark. Alysha is just like her. It's been a pleasure watching Amber and it's definitely going to be a pleasure watching Alysha." **On having an extra day off for the holidays**

"They were playing for that extra day of Christmas I promised them if they won tonight. They were coming back the 26th unless I thought they played a good game of basketball tonight and came out with a win. Now, we are coming to practice on the 27th." **On the play of Angelique Burtt**

"She did well early. Late in the game, I thought she should have scored when she had the ball. She tried to do some things she shouldn't have. She needs to go ahead and play against the glass. It

doesn't look good, but it wins championships." **On South Alabama struggling with the defensive pressure**

"That's a part of our forté. People know we are going to press. We have several things that we change in and out. When you get comfortable with one part of our press, the next thing you know we are throwing a two-one guard front at you then the next thing you know we are throwing one guard at you and then we are flexing you. You want to keep people thinking. When you have bigger and stronger athletes like Tennessee, it's a little bit different. South Alabama is a good basketball team. Part of it takes time away from other parts of their game because they are trying to prepare getting ready for our press. We feel like we are accomplishing a little bit when we know a team has to spend a little bit of their practice time trying to figure out how they are going to attack each phrase of our press." **On having a break before the LSU game**

"The coaches are not taking off. Look what our players have come through already. I know this morning it came out that our team has the eighth toughest schedule in the country and we are ranked 38th in RPI. That's going to go up after tonight. I think Charlie Crème was talking about South Alabama getting votes for the ESPN Coaches Poll and they were talking about how we weren't going to be a factor this year and this was going to be one of the biggest games of the season in the Sun Belt. I think this motivated our players and our staff a little bit. Allison Clark did a great job putting a scouting report together. I'm real proud of our coaching staff." **On having many fans at the Murphy Center on Friday**

"We want to put another 10,000 in there against LSU and the way to do that is for our Lady Raider supporters to go out and tell others about what's going on. There will be tickets available and you need to get in there and wear your blue. We've got very intelligent women's basketball fans in the Middle Tennessee area. There will be people that will come out to see Sylvia Fowles and will be more to come out and look at our Lady Raider basketball team. We're still a young team, but we are getting better. I'm not satisfied with being 6-5. We probably need to be around 9-3. We'll take wins in baby steps." **Freshman Guard Anne Marie Lanning**

On scoring a career high

"I'm trying to work on my defense. Coach [Insell] knows I can score, but it's my defense that I'm trying to work on." **On picking up the team's first road conference win of the season**

"We weren't on top of things when we first came out. We started picking things up toward the middle of the game. I think we put together a good 40 minutes. I don't think this was our best performance of the season. They came in to this game 10-1 and we put a butt-whipping on them." **On biggest challenge from high school to college**

"I thought it would be difficult to adapt because I need to be more physical. It's a lot different from high school. I can't just go in and shot a lay-up over somebody. I actually have to go in and use my body a different way." **On the offense being executed effectively**

I thought we were patient and we got to where we needed to go."

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