

Blue Raiders pull out comeback win

Squad posts 33rd straight home conference victory, overcoming nine-point second half deficit

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

After falling behind early in the game and trailing by seven at the half, it took 10 minutes in the second half for Middle Tennessee to tie the game and the Blue Raiders pulled away from there, defeating Florida Atlantic, 79-63, Thursday night at Murphy Center in a game much closer than the score indicates. Middle Tennessee (9-7, 4-1 Sun Belt) ran its home conference winning streak to 33 consecutive games with the victory, but for the first half and some of the second half, that streak looked in jeopardy. The Raiders were outplayed considerably in the first half by the Owls (4-9, 0-4), who led for most of the opening 20 minutes, building an advantage to as many as seven points at 28-21 with 4:31 left. FAU outrebounded the Blue Raiders, 28-19, including three straight rebounds in the final 10 seconds of the half, though the



Owls were unable to convert the three chippies and took a 36-29 lead to the break. Middle Tennessee hit just 1-for-12 from 3-point range in the opening half and shot just 29 percent overall, including 2-of-10 from Emily Queen. But the Raiders responded with a much higher degree of intensity in the second half, forcing 18 FAU turnovers and turning those into 25 points. Middle Tennessee also hit the boards, winning the battle of the glass after the break, 21-12. Queen was a big part of that effort, grabbing a career-high 15 rebounds and Amber Holt added nine. One of the turning points of the half may have been a hard foul on Queen by Carla Stubbs with 11:13

remaining. The Owls lead was evaporating quickly before the foul, but the Blue Raiders responded with a 13-2 run afterward, holding FAU scoreless for 4:25 during the stretch. Holt's turnaround jumper in the lane with 9:51 left tied the score at 51, bringing the raucous crowd to its feet. Florida Atlantic committed eight turnovers over the next six minutes and the Blue Raiders took full advantage, pushing the lead to 66-53 with 4:53 remaining. Queen had a layup and two free throws, Holt added two more buckets and Chelsia Lymon hit a pair of baskets as well, including one of the team's three 3-pointers in the contest. Holt led all scorers with 29 points and added a career-high eight steals as well as four assists to go along with her nine rebounds. Queen scored 14 points with her 15 boards as well. Lymon came off the bench to net 10 points and Anne Marie Lanning added 12, including a big 3-pointer from the wing during the comeback early in the second half. Holt was 11-for-15 at the foul line, Queen went 6-for-8 at the charity stripe and the Raiders hit 26-for-33 as a team, as Middle Tennessee went to the free throw line more than 30 times for the second straight contest. Middle Tennessee plays three of its next four games on the road, starting Monday at Arkansas State at 7:05 p.m. **RADIO SHOW ON THE MOVE:** The Rick Insell Radio Show is making a move for the rest of the year, starting with the next show. All of Insell's shows will take place at Coach's Grill at 127 SE Broad Street, starting with the next show on Tuesday, January 15, at 6 p.m. The show will then take place every Monday for the rest of the season at 6 p.m. **POSTGAME**

NOTES

ALMOST A TRIPLE DOUBLE: Senior Amber Holt nearly posted an unheard of feat, the triple-double, and almost did it not with assists but steals. Holt scored 29 points, grabbed nine rebounds and recorded a career-high eight steals, coming up just short of the triple-double. It was Holt's 10th game this season with more than 27 points and the eighth contest in which she totaled nine or more rebounds. Holt's eight steals are the most since Chrissy Givens broke the school record for thefts in a game with 11 last season at New Orleans (01/13/07) and tied for the fourth most in a single game in Blue Raider history with eight other players. **QUEEN KEEPS HITTING THE BOARDS:** Freshman Emily Queen grabbed a career-high 15 rebounds in the contest, her third double-digit rebounding effort in the last five games. Queen's effort tied Amber Holt for the most rebounds by a Blue Raider this season. She added 14 points as well for her second double-double in as many games. In the last five games the Ashland, Ky., native has averaged 10.0 rebounds per game and has averaged 7.4 boards since being inserted into the starting lineup nine games ago. **LYMON PROVIDES A SPARK:** Sophomore Chelsia Lymon gave the Blue Raiders a much-needed spark in the second half, scoring seven of her 10 points, handing out two assists and making two steals in 16 minutes of action. Lymon hit of the team's three 3-pointers in the game during a critical 24-4 run in the second half. More importantly, she committed just one turnover in the second half. It was her third straight double-figure performance and her sixth this season. **HOME STREAK CONTINUES:** Middle Tennessee's home conference winning streak continued with the victory, running the school-record mark to 33 games. Head coach Rick Insell improved to 21-0 at Murphy Center against Sun Belt competition and the Blue Raiders upped their mark to 49-6 at the Glass House since joining the SBC. Middle Tennessee's last home loss came February 5, 2004, a double overtime defeat to Western Kentucky. **HOLT INCHES CLOSER TO CENTURY MARK:** Senior Amber Holt's 29 points moved her within 12 of joining the 1,000-point club at Middle Tennessee. Holt heads into Monday's game at Arkansas State with 988 career points in 50 games, averaging 19.8 per contest as a Blue Raider. Holt can become the 20th player in school history to reach 1,000 points and can also become the fastest player to ever reach the plateau. Priscilla Robinson currently holds the record for fastest to 1,000 points, accomplishing the feat in 55 games in 1990-91 and 1991-92. **TIDBITS:** For the first time this season and just the fourth time under head coach Rick Insell, Middle Tennessee won a game when trailing at the half. The Blue Raiders were down, 36-29, at the break ... The Blue

Raiders improved to 33-4 overall at home under Insell and 5-1 this season ... For the second game in a row, Middle Tennessee headed to the foul line with great regularity. The Blue Raiders were 26-for-33 at the charity stripe, the most makes by the team in 2007-08 and the second straight game the squad took more than 30 free throws ... Middle Tennessee improved to 21-4 under Insell when scoring more than 70 points and upped its record to 50-4 under Insell when holding the opponent to less than 65 ... Amber Holt tied her career-high for free throws made with 11 and set a career-high with 15 free throw attempts ... Emily Queen took a career-high 14 shots and tied her career-high with eight free throw attempts. She also played a career-high 37 minutes ... Anne Marie Lanning played a career-high 36 minutes in the contest. **POSTGAME QUOTES**

Middle Tennessee head coach Rick Insell

On tonight's win

"What really gave us a lift was when [Amber] Holt came out in the second half and decided she was going to start playing basketball. We gravitated to that. She was able to get some people open. She had four assists, eight steals, 29 points, nine rebounds. That's a pretty well-rounded game. Emily [Queen] started going to the boards in the second half and was able to put a couple of baskets in and got fouled a time or two. I thought that was the difference in the game." **On Chelsia Lymon**

playing most of the second half

"I thought Chelsia played a good game. I was really, really satisfied with Chelsia's performance at point guard. You've got two guards [Lymon and Johnna Abney] who are totally different, and Chelsia had the hot hand in the game tonight, and that's who we went with." **On struggling in the first half**

"We were not playing our game. Everybody was taking their turn shooting the ball. That's not what we're about. We had some people open and we didn't get them the ball. I thought Emily took a couple of shots she shouldn't have taken, I thought Amber gave the ball up a couple of times she shouldn't, I thought that Johnna should have knocked down a couple of shots, I thought Starr gave the ball up a time or two when she should have taken the easy shot. We can't do that. We're not good enough to do that." **On Florida Atlantic's performance**

"Give [FAU] credit. They came out tonight and played a good solid game. They had a great game plan and they stuck to it and took us out of our offense early, and we were able to do some things in the second half that got some people open and we finished. We're a good basketball team. We didn't finish in the first half. The second half we finished." **On halftime adjustments**

"We didn't discuss a whole lot at halftime, believe it or not. I sent them back on the floor with about eight minutes to go. I just didn't like our body language in there and sent them back out. When we got back on the bench we decided to go to a 22-flex, a three-quarter court flex, and that's what gave them some problems. They were able to throw it in when we were up and run by us. We were not getting any center court help with Amber and Emily. Then we backed them up and Amber and Emily were able to match up with people, and that's why Holt was able to get those eight steals. She was reading their passes and cutting in the lane. Emily was doing a good job running the ball down in a trap down on the sidelines." **Freshman forward Emily Queen**

On the team regaining momentum after a hard foul

"It really wasn't as bad as it looked, but I guess that gave the team a little bit of energy and we went on a run from there." **On struggling offensively**

"Personally, the shots I was missing were right under the basket and that's just a lack of concentration on my part. That's something I can fix. It's something that shouldn't have happened. Other than that, we were getting good looks outside. They just weren't knocking them down. **On FAU's body language in the second half**

"You could tell they were getting a little down on themselves and each other. We were just taking advantage of that situation." **Senior forward Amber Holt**

On regaining control of the game

"We just came out and took our time. The first half was just horrible. So [Insell] got on us. He got on me especially, the way that I started coming out sluggish, and that (our performance) was the teammates gravitating to me. We didn't panic, we just came back and played our game in the

second half." **Florida Atlantic Head Coach Chancellor Dugan**

On having a lead against Middle Tennessee in the second half

"We played hard. They got to the free throw line and did what they did. I am not going to take anything away from Middle Tennessee because they are a great team. When you send a team like that to the line 33 times and we don't get to the free throw line in the second half, its crap." **On what**

happened in the second half

"They turned up their pressure. They came over and cut us off. We didn't even get to the bonus. You sat here and watched the game. Was it the same game in the second half? No. It definitely wasn't. It's hard to coach and hard to play as a player. All you ask is for the game to be called the same way in both halves." **On the adjustments by Middle Tennessee**

"They turned it up. They are the number one team in this league for a reason. We turned the ball over way too many times. We made their press look really good. It's a good press, but we've got to be smarter when we handle the basketball." **On the rematch with Middle Tennessee in Boca**

Raton

"I can't wait to see them. Again, I can't wait to see them."

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