Raiders defeat WKU, 68-60

Squad pulls out back-and-forth affair before 6,968 fans on "Think Pink" Day

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Starr Orr and Emily Queen both grabbed offensive rebounds in the final two minutes, setting up Amber Holt's 10-footer off the glass as the shot clock expired, sealing a 68-60 Middle Tennessee victory over Western Kentucky Sunday at Murphy Center in a game that had three ties and eight lead changes in the second half. The Blue Raiders (16-10, 11-4 Sun Belt) led by eight at halftime, but Western Kentucky scored 14 of the first 16 points after the break to take a 46-44 advantage five minutes into the second half. But Middle Tennessee's Chelsia Lymon hit a 3-pointer from the corner to squelch the run, one of three trifectas and 18 points for the sophomore. The game was nip-and-tuck the rest of the way with no team leading by more than four until Holt's kiss off the glass with 26 seconds remaining. That was all set up by the great work on the boards by Orr and Queen. With the Blue Raiders ahead, 62-60, with 1:56 remaining after WKU's Crystal Kelly hit two free throws, Holt missed a 3-pointer but Orr grabbed the long rebound. Holt then had a short jumper rattle around the rim, but Queen, a freshman, from Ashland, Ky., went high to grab her fifth rebound of the game. She kicked the ball back out and the Blue Raiders ran the shot clock down to 10 before calling timeout. The coaching staff set up a play for Holt but it was covered. Lymon drove down the

lane but had her shot blocked by Dominique Duck out of bounds with four seconds left on the shot clock. Holt received the inbounds pass on the block, took one dribble and elevated for the 10-footer that she kissed off the glass for the last of her 12 baskets in the game. WKU's Amy McNear threw a post pass out of bounds on the ensuing possession before Holt was fouled with 14 seconds left and knocked down the 1-and-1. Queen grabbed a long rebound after a missed 3-pointer, raced down the court and made a layup for the final points in the eight-point victory for Middle Tennessee. Holt led the Blue Raiders with 28 points and eight rebounds while Lymon, all 5-foot-5 of her, grabbed a career-high seven boards. Middle Tennessee was outrebounded, 40-33, but did a much better job keeping the Lady 'Toppers (19-7, 12-2) off the offensive glass. WKU had just 13 offensive rebounds to 14 for the Blue Raiders, unlike the first meeting when Western Kentucky won the offensive board totals, 17-6. Kelly led WKU with 20 points and 11 rebounds, while Duck scored 16 points and Arnika Brown came off the bench for 12 points and nine boards. The Blue Raiders put together a 20-6 run midway through the first half to build a 30-18 advantage thanks to 10 points from Holt during the run. But the Lady 'Toppers cut the deficit to four at 32-28 with 3:06 remaining due in large part because of offensive rebounding. Brown scored four of WKU's points in the 10-2 run. Middle Tennessee responded with a pair of Jackie Pickel 3-pointers to build the lead back to eight at halftime, 40-32. Holt scored 18 in the half on 8-of-19 shooting and Lymon netted seven as well, including three free throws when she was fouled on a 3-point attempt early in the game. The Blue Raiders hit the road next week for a two-game swing, taking on Denver Thursday at 6 p.m. CT and then Florida Atlantic Saturday at 4 p.m. CT. Middle Tennessee returns home for Senior Day on Saturday, March 1, taking on Troy at 3 p.m. **POSTGAME NOTES**

RAIDERS HANGING ON TO THE BALL: Middle Tennessee committed a season-low six turnovers in the victory over Western Kentucky, the third game in the last five the squad has posted single digit turnovers. The Blue Raiders have only 50 turnovers in the last five contests, including eight versus UALR and nine against South Alabama. Middle Tennessee is averaging just 13.6 turnovers per game this season, ranking in the Top 15 in the nation. **LYMON LOVES THE RED:** Chelsia Lymon has enjoyed two of her best games this season against her home-state team, Western Kentucky, after pouring in 18 points and grabbing a career-high seven rebounds in Sunday's victory. The Georgetown, Ky., native was 6-for-10 from the field, including 3-of-5 from 3-point range, and added two assists and two steals in 33 minutes of action. In the first meeting with WKU this season, Lymon scored 12 points, including 7-for-8 at the foul line, in just 15 minutes of playing time. She has averaged 15.0 points per game this year against WKU. **RAIDERS IMPROVE REBOUNDING TOTALS:** One of the biggest reasons for Western Kentucky's 85-81 victory in January was a 40-18 rebounding margin. Middle Tennessee improved greatly on that number this time around, losing the battle of the boards just 40-33. Amber Holt grabbed eight rebounds and Chelsia Lymon added a career-high seven boards along with Emily Queen's five rebounds. Seven of the eight players on the squad grabbed at least one rebound in the contest. **HOLT MOVES UP SCORING LISTS:** With her 28 points against WKU, senior Amber Holt moved up the single-season and career scoring lists at Middle Tennessee. Holt now has 691 points this season, passing Chrissy Givens (667, 2006) for third place and Tawanya Mucker (671, 1988) for second place. Only Givens (768, 2007) stands in her from the top of the list. Holt needs 77 points to move into first place. Holt now has 1,258 career points, surpassing Jonelda Buck (1,233 points, 1996-99) for 15th place and Kay Willbanks (1,236 points, 1984-87) for 14th place on the career scoring list. Holt needs 91 points to move past Heather Prater (1,348 points, 1993-96) for 13th place and 94 points to surpass Tia Stovall (1,351 points, 2003-06) for 12th place on the all-time list. **TIDBITS:** Middle Tennessee upped its all-time record against Western Kentucky to 20-22. The Blue Raiders lead the series, 11-9, since joining the Sun Belt before the 2000-01 season, and Middle Tennessee is 7-2 at home since moving into the SBC ...

Amber Holt played all 40 minutes for the 10th time this season but the first game since January 24 at Louisiana-Monroe ... The Blue Raiders have made exactly eight 3-pointers in each of the last four games. The squad is 56-for-171 from 3-point range in the last six games. **POSTGAME QUOTES**
Middle Tennessee head coach Rick Insell
On stepping back and shooting the 3-pointer
"We have been working on that. When they go under the pick Chelsia [Lymon] has been backing up and working on her range. She has great range, much like Johnna [Abney] had. She just hasn't been using it. She backed up and she felt good. I think Chelsia played a tremendous game - seven rebounds in the point guard position, two steals and 18 points. It's a tremendous game for a point guard against a team like Western Kentucky." **On the play at the end**
"The play that we drew up didn't work. We got it in the right person's hands. We were trying to isolate Amber [Holt] in low. That was the play where we got the ball into Holt's hands and she made that bank shot. I have seen Amber do that time and time again. That is Amber Holt for you. She is a winner. She wants the ball in the clutch. You very seldom see her miss any free throws or have any turnovers. " **On changing the press in the second half**
"What we wanted to do was slow them up, but they came out in the second half and just blew by us. We went to a flex at the center line then. We missed one more assignment. They flashed [Dominique] Duck in and [Crystal] Kelly went long. Amber missed the pass by six inches. We were playing for that pass there. It was a big shot there that she made off the dribble." **On how important the win was**
"We have had a lot of adversity this year. We needed this type of a win. We needed it for our fans. We needed it more then anything today for our team. We have been practicing good and working hard. The one thing that we have been frustrated with is we couldn't bring our practice into the game. In practice we look great but then we come into the game and we struggle. We couldn't get the two together. After the second half that we put together the other night against South Alabama, we felt pretty good about ourselves. The way we started out today, I said we were back on track." **Middle Tennessee senior forward Amber Holt**
On the final shot
"It was real big. We had been running that play all night and Western Kentucky had been playing it where I couldn't get the ball. It was great having that shot." **On the importance of the game**
"It's a good win. We just came out and played our hearts out. Some of the plays we had let us down, but we just came back even stronger. It's a great win." **Middle Tennessee sophomore guard Chelsia Lymon**
On stepping up her play in the game
"The whole time before the game started Coach [Insell] kept preaching to me about being a leader and doing what I had to do to help the team with whatever area they needed help in. Throughout this game it was very emotional. I had to get everybody controlled and to stick with the game plan. I really didn't think about if it was a big game. I think about what I can do to get my team to play with the same emotion or effort that I or someone else is playing with." **On knowing how important the game was to Western Kentucky**
"It was mentioned but we knew we had to concentrate on what we needed to do. Two days before it was mentioned but nobody thought any further about it. We just kept our game plan, practicing hard, and kept going at it." **On getting the win**
"We needed it. Our confidence is always there. You have to get knocked down to get back up. You have to go through some things to see what you have. We have eight players and all eight players want to be here. We are all sticking together. It is great to play with these girls. I love that we go out there and have fun and we are back on track now." **Western Kentucky head coach Mary Taylor**

Cowles

On today's game

"We had a great college basketball game, but it was a game that I think I learned a few things about our team right now and I think our ladies will too. There were definitely some critical plays that came back to burn us." **On late offensive boards by Middle Tennessee**

"Yes that's very atypical of us and they're a team that can take advantage of them. We did the same at North Texas and thought it won't have an affect on the outcome of the regular season, but it might on the postseason if we don't fix it." **On better second half**

"I really thought for the first 18-and-a-half minutes in the second half our ladies were very intense and worked very well. We were able to take the lead and trade baskets and I thought our mental approach was better in the second half than in the first half. But if Pickel doesn't get those threes at the end of the first half then it's different too. Obviously we've got to learn from those mistakes." **On how tight the game was**

"That's fun competition. That's when you have to play your best. You're challenged to get defensive stops. I wouldn't call that difficult at all because that's when you really have to step up and play. And I didn't see our attitude change." **On how well Chelsia Lymon played**

"There was no discussion of playing off Lymon so the first question is going to be how did she get them? And then second why did she get them? She shoots too good of a percentage from the 3-point line to play off her. And you've got to give her credit, she threw in 18 tonight and those were very important to her team." **Western Kentucky center Crystal Kelly**

On poor rebounding

"We gave up rebounds to guards and that's something that is out of character for us, especially as much as we emphasize rebounding. I think that shows how much it counts. Hopefully we'll see them again and the hustle plays will make the difference in the game." **On losing a big rivalry game**

"It's very heartbreaking for us, but at the same time we're still in first place and we've done a great job securing that." **On letting opportunities slip away**

"We have to capitalize on the stops we do get and that's something we'll have to work on in practice. The conference season's still not over and we still have things to work on. But we're not panicking."

On this game preparing WKU for March

"This game was really good for us just to show us that we can be composed in situations like this. Also we learned that every possession counts and every little thing you have to be willing to get it done." **WKU forward Dominique Duck**

On how tight the game was

"It was really tough, but I felt like we didn't panic. And whether we were up or they were up we stayed composed. I just felt like we had more let downs than they did." **On Chelsia Lymon stepping up big**

"She hit big shots against us at home and I was waiting for her to step up. She's a good player. That's good for Holt that she has a counter part." **On driving to the basket**

"In our first game we had eight charges. Today Amy [McNear] came out in the first half and drove straight to the basket and they called a blocking foul. I feel we were really in charge of our bodies and that's a positive we can take from this game. We learned to be more disciplined." **WKU forward Arnika Brown**

On how WKU fought back beginning the second half

"We just tried our best to keep our composure. We've got to keep working harder."

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