Big run sends Raiders into semifinals

Squad uses 23-2 spurt to post 14th straight SBC Tournament victory

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MOBILE, Ala. - It was déjà vu all over again for Middle Tennessee. The Blue Raiders used a 23-2 run in the second half to erase a five-point deficit en route to defeating Troy, 74-51, in the quarterfinals of the Sun Belt Championships Saturday at Mitchell Center. The win moves Middle Tennessee into a semifinal matchup against UALR on Monday at 3 p.m. The Blue Raiders (20-10) used a 23-8 run to break open a close game just seven days ago in Murfreesboro against the same Trojans. In Saturday's contest, Kylie Morrissy hit a 3-pointer and Laura Lee Holman had a breakaway layup to put Troy ahead 40-35 with 14:25 remaining in the contest. The Blue Raiders then put together their 23-3 spurt, with Holt starting the run with a bucket before Brandi Brown scored and then Latoya Barclay hit two straight baskets. Holt had another before a Jackie Pickel 3-pointer from the corner put Middle Tennessee ahead, 56-42. Holt scored twice more and Chelsia Lymon hit a 3-pointer and another basket to end the run. Holt led all scorers with 33 points, including 22 in the second half, while Lymon scored 11 and Barclay had 10. Brown netted nine and Emily Queen posted eight, as the Blue Raiders shot 52 percent from the field, including 58 percent in the second half. Holt and Queen both grabbed nine rebounds and Brown tied her career-high with six. Queen added four assists, feeding Holt in the low post, while Barclay added five assists in 28 minutes of action. Middle Tennessee also forced Troy into 13 second-half turnovers and turned those into 14 points, and limited the Trojans to 36 percent shooting and 21 points after intermission. The first 20 minutes was a half of runs, including a 15-4 spurt that put the Blue Raiders ahead 29-17 with 4:55 remaining in the half. Troy did

not score for more than three minutes during the stretch until Brittnie Davis hit a baseline jumper with 5:12 left before the break. Barclay hit a pair of 3-pointers and Queen had two buckets during the run, which included more than four minutes with Holt on the bench. But Middle Tennessee went cold for the rest of the half, scoring just once, on a Brown layup with 34 seconds remaining. Troy outscored the Blue Raiders 13-2 over the final 4:38 of the half. Amy Lewis scored seven of her 15 first-half points and Morrissy added two buckets during the run. Larelle Roper hit an 18-footer just before the halftime buzzer, cutting the Blue Raider lead to 31-30 at the break. Holt scored 11 points in the half but only one field goal over the final 14 minutes, while Barclay, Lymon and Queen each netted six. The win gives the Blue Raiders 20 victories for the fifth straight season and the 16th time in 32 seasons of basketball at Middle Tennessee. It was also the 14th straight win for the Blue Raiders in the Sun Belt Championships. **POSTGAME NOTES**
Middle Tennessee received the SBC Team Academic Award for the Sun Belt Conference for the 2006-07 academic year prior to the game. Brandi Brown and Jackie Pickel were recognized for being members of the Sun Belt Commissioner's List (grade-point-average of 3.50 or better) and Latoya Barclay and Chelsia Lymon were both honored as part of the SBC Academic Honor Roll (GPA of 3.00-3.49). Amber Holt was recognized for her SBC Defensive Player of the Year and First Team All-SBC awards as well. **HOLT MOVES UP CAREER SCORING LIST:** Senior Amber Holt moved up two spots on the career scoring list with her 33-point effort against Troy in the quarterfinals of the Sun Belt Championships. Holt passed Heather Prater (1,348 points, 1993-96) and Tia Stovall (1,351 points, 2003-06) to move into 12th place on the all-time list. Holt heads into Monday's semifinal matchup against UALR with 1,380 points and needs 73 points to surpass Sherry Tucker (1,452 points, 1992-95) for 11th on the career scoring list. **SBC TOURNAMENT STREAK UP TO 14:** Middle Tennessee won its 14th straight Sun Belt Tournament contest with Saturday's quarterfinal victory over Troy. The Blue Raiders have not lost in the SBC Tournament since falling in the finals of the 2003 tourney to Western Kentucky in Bowling Green, Ky. Middle Tennessee upped its record all-time to 18-3 in the SBC Tournament, including 16 victories in the last 17 games. The Blue Raiders are now 40-16 all-time in conference tournament with 10 tourney titles. **HOLT KEEPS PUTTING UP THE NUMBERS:** Senior Amber Holt posted 33 points and nine rebounds in the victory, her 11th 30-point game of the season, adding to Holt's single-season record for 30-point outings. It was also her 18th contest this season with eight or more rebounds. Holt was 14-for-24 from the field, the 15th game with double-digit field goals made this year, and was also 5-of-6 at the foul line. **BROWN, QUEEN BOTH HIT THE BOARDS:** Sophomore Brandi Brown and freshman Emily Queen were both big parts of the victory with their rebounding efforts. Brown tied a career-high with six rebounds, all in the first half, the second time this season she grabbed six boards in a contest (LSU was the other). Queen had nine rebounds in the contest, her eighth game this season with eight or more boards. It was the most boards she posted since collecting 10 versus North Texas on January 26, a span of nine contests. **RAIDERS POST 20TH VICTORY:** Middle Tennessee posted its 20th victory of the season, giving head coach Rick Insell a 70-25 record in his three seasons at the helm of the program. The win gives the Blue Raiders 20 victories for the fifth straight season. Before the 2003-04 campaign, Middle Tennessee had never had more than two straight seasons of 20 wins. It is also the 16th time in 32 seasons of basketball at Middle Tennessee that the Blue Raiders posted at least 20 victories. **BARCLAY KEEPS COMING UP BIG:** Senior Latoya Barclay continues to play some of her best basketball at the end of the season, scoring 10 points with five assists in the victory over Troy. Barclay hit a pair of 3-pointers in the first half and then two field goals during the 23-2 run for the Blue Raiders in the second half. It was her fourth double-figure scoring game this season and the second in the last three contests. She has averaged 13.7 points per game over the last three outings. Barclay's five assists tied a career-high and was the second

five assist game of the year (at South Alabama, Dec. 22, 2007). **POSTGAME QUOTES**

Head coach Rick Insell

"Troy has a lot better basketball team than a lot people think. I knew from the get-go this year that Troy was very tough and just needed some shots to fall and a little luck. They didn't get that until late in the season but when they started playing well late they would string together four-five wins. I felt like the trip here would get to them with all the travel they have been doing this past week. When we made our run in the second half they were a little run down." **What went wrong in the loss to UALR during the season and what cannot go wrong on Monday night?**

"We shot 29 percent that evening. We took, I believe, 63 shots in that game to UALR's 38 shots. We won't be able to be anyone shooting that percentage. We've got to shoot the ball well and when we do we can work on winning every game." **Senior forward Amber Holt**

What was the difference in the six-seven minute stretch when the offense got going?

"Our defense mainly. We needed to step up on defense and we changed the defense to our match defense which caused us to get on our run there in the second half." **What went wrong in the loss to UALR during the season and what cannot go wrong on Monday night?**

"We got out-rebounded and didn't box out. We need to play better defense in the game which will bring our offense around." **Senior guard Latoya Barclay**

What was different about your pressure tonight?

"At halftime Coach Insell told us we needed to put more pressure upfront and make them think. That's what we tried to do, make them think a bit more." **Do you think there is a target on your back this year?**

"We are the defending champions. We continue to hold the crown and we will continue to hold it."

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