Blue Raiders rally for 3-2 win over Duke

Clark, Kozon named to all-tournament team

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ARLINGTON, Texas - Freshman Stacy Oladinni notched the biggest kill of her short career to give the Blue Raiders (9-0) a 3-2 win over Duke after trailing 2-0 in the match. In the fifth set leading, 14-9, freshman Brynne Henderson served and when the ball came back to the Blue Raider side Oladinni, assisted by junior Leslie Clark, hit the kill to clinch the match. "I think in the difference in this match was we had a simple game plan for Duke and could not execute it. It had nothing to do with Duke, it had to do with our serving and blocking," head coach Matt Peck said. "At the end of the second set I told the girls I'm not sure you can turn this match around. As you notice in games three, four, and five we started hitting our short serves but we started getting them out of system and they weren't hitting to system. That changed the whole complexion of the match and gave us a lot of confidence." No. 13 Middle Tennessee trailed 2-0 before rallying to win the match. Clark and sophomore Izabela Kozon were each named to the all-tournament team after guiding the Blue Raiders in the win and posting career highs. Clark had 66 assists which is a career high for her while Kozon had a career high 21 kills. Junior Ashley Mead also posted a career high in kills with 21. Adding assistance to the Blue Raider offense was senior Ashley Asberry with 15 kills. Kozon hit .513 in the match as Middle Tennessee had a team total of 73 kills, 70 assists, 56 digs and 9.5 blocks. Middle Tennessee also had 19 more kills than Duke who notched 54 in the match with eight team blocks. "Honestly, this is the best thing that could have happened to us this time of year. We were challenged by a very good athletic team in a big match got down 2-0. We showed a lot of composure and had three freshmen on the court a lot," Peck said. "I'm ok with that and I think it is a great win for our program. Duke has a very storied history and is a very prestigious program and university and it is a great win for Middle Tennessee." In the third set, which began the rally for the win Middle Tennessee hit .586 as a team with 19 kills. Middle Tennessee traded points with Duke to begin the match but the Blue Devils took a 19-16 lead late in the first set. The Blue Raiders could not stage a rally dropping the first set 25-20. This is just the second time this season the Blue Raiders have lost the first set in a match. Middle Tennessee trailed

most of the second set keeping it within one until the Blue Devils pulling ahead mid-way through, 15-11. The Blue Raiders could not stage a rally and would only score four more points in the set falling 25-15. Middle Tennessee rebounded in the third set taking a 13-9 lead after a block assist by Cheatham and Oladinni, which capped a four-point run. Duke called a time out and the Blue Raiders would score three more points taking a 16-9 lead and forcing the Blue Devils to call their final time out. Clark served eight straight points during the rally for Middle Tennessee. Middle Tennessee held on for the 25-14 and closed the gap in the match 2-1. The Blue Raiders picked up right where they left off in the third match taking an early 12-7 lead in the fourth set. Duke closed the gap late making it a one-point game 23-22.The Blue Raiders held on for the 25-22 win and force a fifth set. This is the first fifth set match for the Blue Raiders this season and the first time they have dropped the first two sets. At the fifth set break the Blue Raiders led 8-5 and were on a five-point rally, 9-5, behind the serve of Asberry. The Blue Raiders will be back in action on Thursday, Sept. 18 when it travels to Athens, Ohio to play Ohio University at 7 p.m. **UT Arlington/Hilton Invitational All-Tournament Team**

- Leslie Clark (Setter) - Junior - Middle Tennessee

- Izabela Kozon (Outside Hitter) - Sophomore - Middle Tennessee

- Jourdan Norman (Middle Blocker) - Senior - Duke
- Rachael Moss (Outside Hitter) - Junior - Duke
- Raegan Daniel (Setter) - Sophomore - UT Arlington
- Gisela Kloss (Middle Blocker) - Senior - South Carolina State

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