

November 15, 2008

Strong defensive effort lifts Raiders in opener

Blue Raiders score 43 points off turnovers in season-opening victory.

Athletic Communications

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee forced 38 turnovers with 26 before the half in cruising to an 85-47 victory in its women's basketball season opener Saturday evening against Lafayette College in the Preseason WNIT inside the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

MT clamped down on the defensive end, holding a 68-to-36 edge on field goal attempts and forcing the Leopards into 38 ball changes, including seven apiece by starters Cristin Zavocki and Jessica Spicer.

The game started close with the Leopards claiming an early, 6-2, lead at 16:51 of the first half. However, it would be the largest lead the rest of the game for Lafayette (0-1), who stay within two, 12-10, on an Elizabeth Virgin jumper at 13:42 after the Blue Raiders stormed back to take the lead.

The Lady Raiders then would score the next 14 points, capped by a pair of free throws from [Jackie Pickel](#) at 5:42, to take a 26-10 advantage. The Leopards responded with two buckets from Amanda Smith and Lauren Jackson, but they would get no closer than the 12-point deficit the rest of the game.

Three-straight layups by [Chelsia Lymon](#), including the first two from her own steals in the backcourt, increased the Middle Tennessee (1-0) lead to 36-14 with 2:14 to play in the half. [Anne Marie Lanning](#) and [Dana Garrett](#) knocked down a pair of 3-pointers before the stanza ended to give the Raiders a 42-14 advantage entering intermission.

Junior transfer [Alysha Clark](#) heated up in the second 20 minutes, netting 16 of her game-high 27 points in her MT debut. Following an Emily Garner jumper to bring Lafayette back within 29, 53-24, at the 16:08 mark, Lymon connected on a pair of charity tosses to kick start an 18-4 Blue Raider spurt and build a 43-point advantage, 71-28, with 9:30 to play.

Clark scored nine-straight points for the Lady Raiders during the run and finished 9-of-15 from the field, including knocking down her only 3-point attempt, and was 8-of-11 from the foul line.

[Emily Queen](#) gave MT its largest lead of the game at 48 points, 78-30, with 6:41 left, before Lafayette mounted the next five points, four of which were scored by LaKeisha Wright. [Jackie Pickel](#), who earned her first career start tonight, halted the Leopard scoring with a 3-pointer.

Lanning and Lymon each finished with 16 points, while Pickel added 11 in addition to Clark's game-high 27 points. Clark was also tied Queen as the top rebounder for MT, gathering eight boards, five of which were on the offensive glass. Five of Queen's caroms were defensive.

Garner led Lafayette with 13 points and a game-high tying eight rebounds, featuring seven on the defensive end. Wright netted 10 points, including hitting all four of her field goals.

The win was the first season-opening win for MT since defeating Tennessee Tech, 65-52, in 2003 and the first under head coach Rick Insell, who was coaching in his 100th career game for the Blue Raiders. Insell now has a 73-27 (.730 winning percentage) through his 100 games on the MT sidelines.

The victory also gave the Lady Raiders consecutive home-opening triumphs following an 89-62 win versus Tennessee Tech a year ago.

MT advances to the second round of the Preseason WNIT to face No. 4/7 Oklahoma at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Lloyd Noble Center in Norman, Okla. Lafayette enters the Consolation Bracket, hosted by Western Carolina Friday-Saturday in Cullowhee, N.C., with an opponent yet to be determined.



Anne Marie Lanning hit four 3-pointers among her 16 points in the win over Lafayette College Saturday. (Bradley Lambert)

MT Quotes vs. Lafayette Coach Insell On sluggish offensive start "I thought Lafayette was really aggressive. They knew we were going to shoot the three with our post players and they defended that too. Then we came to our senses and knew that low post entry pass was open and when they tried to stop that we got them in foul trouble. They had to take out Jessica Spicer and then we made a run."

On rebounding in the second half "At halftime I think we were getting out rebounded so we talked about that. I was happy with the turnovers but again we got out rebounded. But we rebounded better offensively in the second half. Alysha (Clark), Emily (Queen) and Brandi (Brown) rebounded well. We have to let Brandi loose inside. She scores a lot down there so we have to get it in her hands more often."

On tonight's defense "We like to call our defense organized chaos. We can't really predict where we're going to be, but our kids have a good basketball I.Q. and when a team breaks our press a time or two we're able to figure them out. I think that's what happened the first few possessions they were able to do some things but we stepped up in the lane and got some deflections."

On team's balance "I thought [Anne Marie Lanning](#) came off the bench and gave us a big spark. She did the same thing the other night in our exhibition. Then [Emily Queen](#) came in and played well when [Alysha Clark](#) went out."

[Anne Marie Lanning](#) On teams balance "I think it's good that we had the experience of Alysha (Clark) getting in foul trouble early on because that's going to happen later in the season. It's unfortunate it happened to Alysha but it's good it happened tonight instead of in a big game."

On second half rebounding "Coach Insell told us at the beginning of the game we needed to rebound more so it was really the whole game, not just the second half."

On shooting well tonight "In practice this last week I haven't been making the shots so it was a huge confidence booster to come out and hit some threes tonight."

Chelsea Lymon On tonight's defense "We worked really hard the last couple of weeks on pressuring them and keeping them on one side of the floor. We wore them down because we were playing our style of play. We were running the court and playing pressure defense and then when they got across half court they only had about 10 seconds to run their offense."

On rebounding against Oklahoma "I think it's going to be a point of emphasis this week with the big Paris twins. So we'll have to change up something. I'll bet we'll have a lot of guards getting rebounds this game because the post players will have a lot of work to do."

Lafayette College Head Coach Tammy Smith Opening Statement "We knew coming in here how talented Middle Tennessee is and by all means they fit that bill. We have to take this as a learning experience. We have to learn from this and move on. Like I said, they are very talented. I thought when we were able to keep our composure, we were able to do some good things and stay with them. But then we kind of let that slip for 10 minutes in the first half, which really hurt us."

On Middle Tennessee forcing Lafayette College into 38 turnovers "We spent a whole week trying to prepare for this. You can't prepare for how quick their foot speed and hands are. We did our best. That really hurt us with that 10 minute spurt in the first half. We brought it down to 12. That pretty much killed us after that point."

On shooting 58 percent from the floor "When you turn the ball over you are not going to get that many looks. For them to score 43 points off our turnovers, that was pretty much the ball game. We have to do a much better job at the foul line also. We were 5-for-15 and in close games that is not going to work either."

On the positives from Saturday's loss to Middle Tennessee "(Emily Garner) did a nice job for us. We had three freshmen in there at times, which did a nice job for us. We got in early foul trouble too. To have two of our key players sitting down early on the bench really hurt us."

Newspaper Box Score Lafayette vs Middle Tennessee 11/15/08 7 p.m. at Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Murphy Center) At Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Murphy Center) MIDDLE TENNESSEE 85, LAFAYETTE 47 LAFAYETTE (0-1) Garner, Emily 6-9 1-2 13; Wright, LaKeisha 4-4 2-6 10; Smith, Amanda 3-4 0-0 6; Serowoky, Amanda 2-2 1-2 5; McGorry, Sarah 1-4 1-2 3; Virgin, Elizabeth 1-2 0-0 2; Zavocki, Cristin 1-4 0-2 2; Spicer, Jessica 1-4 0-0 2; Jackson, Lauren 1-2 0-0 2; Cullen, Laura 1-1 0-0 2; Niquette, Brooke 0-0 0-0 0; Malone, Meaghan 0-0 0-1 0; Downey, Melissa 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 21-36 5-15 47. MIDDLE TENNESSEE (1-0) Clark, Alysha 9-15 8-11 27; Lymon, Chelsia 7-11 2-2 16; Lanning, Anne Marie 5-6 2-2 16; Pickel, Jackie 3-9 2-3 11; Queen, Emily 4-11 0-1 8; Brown, Brandi 2-8 0-0 4; Garrett, Dana 1-2 0-0 3; McFadden, Molly 0-0 0-1 0; Davis, Shytoria 0-3 0-0 0; Andrews, Abby 0-0 0-0 0; Stewart, Tina 0-3 0-0 0. Totals 31-68 14-20 85. Lafayette..... 14 33 - 47 Middle Tennessee..... 42 43 - 85 3-point goals--Lafayette 0-3 (; Zavocki, Cristin 0-2; Spicer, Jessica 0-1), Middle Tennessee 9-23 (Lanning, Anne Marie 4-5; Pickel, Jackie 3-8; Garrett, Dana 1-1; Clark, Alysha 1-1; Stewart, Tina 0-1; Brown, Brandi 0-4; Queen, Emily 0-1; Lymon, Chelsia 0-2). Fouled out--Lafayette-Wright, LaKeisha, Middle Tennessee-None. Rebounds--Lafayette 27 (Garner, Emily 8), Middle Tennessee 36 (Queen, Emily 8; Clark, Alysha 8). Assists--Lafayette 11 (Spicer, Jessica 4), Middle Tennessee 20 (Lymon, Chelsia 4; Lanning, Anne Marie 4; Pickel, Jackie

4). Total fouls--Lafayette 20, Middle Tennessee 19. Technical fouls--Lafayette-None, Middle Tennessee-None. A-3347 Preseason WNIT - First Round

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