Blue Raiders take 3-0 win to advance

Asberry guides team with 14 kills

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MIAMI - A kill by junior Janay Yancey sealed a 3-0 (26-24, 25-23, 25-18) win for the Blue Raiders in the opening round of the Sun Belt Conference Championships on Thursday. Senior Ashley Asberry led Middle Tennessee (25-5) offensively with 14 kills with just one error for a .650 attack percentage. Asberry also had four block assists to add depth to the defense against the Red Wolves (21-12). "Ashley Asberry had a very, very strong match for us and I would go as far to say she won that match for us on offense and defense. I just think we didn't look very sharp and I think whoever we play tomorrow we will look better," Peck said. Junior Ashley Mead was the only other Blue Raider in double figures as she had 11 kills on the night. Yancey ended the match with four kills while sophomore Izabela Kozon and freshman Stacy Oladinni added seven kills each. "It was a typical first round match for us. We drew Arkansas State last year and had a similar match. I just think the anticipation of the tournament and with a high seed playing a lower seed it just had not pretty match written all over it," head coach Matt Peck said. "Looking at the earlier matches from today I don't think we saw a well-played match all-day and I think it will pick up tomorrow. I know we have to pick up our play tomorrow." Yancey recorded four block assists of her own while Kozon and Oladinni each had three as the Blue Raiders recorded eight blocks as a team. Junior Leslie Clark guided the offense ending the night with 41 assists and seven digs. Guiding the defense was junior Ashley Waugh who recorded 12 digs with assistance from Kozon with seven digs. After beginning the match with a 3-0 lead, Middle Tennessee let the Red Wolves into the set and it took control. ASU jumped out 13-8 forcing the Blue Raiders to fight back. Middle Tennessee closed the gap to one a number of times but then the Red Wolves would

pull back ahead, 23-21 ASU. Mead kept the set alive with her kill and then Asberry tied it at 24 with a kill of her own. Middle Tennessee then took a 25-24 lead behind the block of Asberry and Clark before sealing the win after another block by Asberry and Kozon. ASU rebounded from the loss quickly jumping out to a 5-1 lead to begin the second set. The Blue Raiders fought back once again and after trading points back and forth tied the match at 17 after a block by Oladinni and Yancey. Middle Tennessee could not relax as ASU scored three straight points to take a 20-17 lead. The Blue Raiders put together a string of four after kills by Waugh, Oladinni and Yancey and a block by Oladinni and Yancey to take its first lead of the set, 21-20. The two schools continued to trade points but the Blue Raiders pulled out the win after a block by Asberry and Kozon. After two sets, Asberry led the team with 10 kills and no errors for a .667 attack percentage. Asberry and Yancey each had four block assists to lead the team who had eight at the break. Asberry was the only Blue Raider in double-digit kills but Mead added to the offense with five kills. Middle Tennessee had an attack percentage of just .138 with 25 kills while the Red Wolves had 23 kills for a hitting percentage of .097. In the third set, the Blue Raiders changed the tone from the previous sets with a 7-3 lead after two kills by Mead. Middle Tennessee continued to pull ahead taking an eight-point lead mid-way through the set, 13-5. The Blue Raiders never let up taking a nine-point lead, 20-11 late in the set. The Blue Raiders will be back in action on Friday, Nov. 20 when they face six seed Western Kentucky at 6:30 p.m. Live stats will be available on www.goblueraiders.com and web streaming is available through www.sunbeltsports.org.

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