

Clark powers Blue Raiders past LSU

Junior forward finishes with a career-high 37 points and 12 rebounds

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BATON ROUGE, La. - Junior transfer Alysha Clark netted her second-straight double-double in leading a second-half Middle Tennessee charge as the Blue Raiders scored a 79-75 road victory against LSU Sunday afternoon inside the Pete Maravich Assembly Center in Baton Rouge, La. Clark finished with a career-high 37 points, one more than her previous best, and 12 points for her 41st career double-double and third while in a MT uniform.

Clark tallied 21 of her game-high markers after the intermission, including the team's first six points to open the second stanza and 12 of the team's final 23 to help Middle Tennessee (5-1) close strong. Sophomore Anne

Marie Lanning, who recorded a career-high 21 points Friday against Arizona and was held to just one triple in the first half, knocked down three more shots from 3-point territory in the second half to finish with 16 points.

Junior Brandi Brown added three treys of her own, while sophomore Emily Queen contributed one in helping MT finish with a nine-to-four advantage from behind the arc. The Lady Raiders also scored on 10-of-11 free throws and limited the Tigers to just 13-of-21 from the charity stripe.

Middle Tennessee overcame an 11-5 Tiger spurt to end the first half, which broke the sixth tie during the opening 20 minutes and LSU (1-3) went into halftime with a 37-31 lead.

Clark kept the Blue Raiders within sight of the Tigers early, netting 16 of the team's first half points. She also grabbed six rebounds, including four on the defensive glass, during the opening stanza.



Clark tallied six consecutive points for MT over the final stretch of the opening half.

Queen had the hot hand early, matching LSU's Allison Hightower, the Tigers' leading scorer, bucket-for-bucket as the pair hit the first two field goals for either team to start the game. Hightower, however, ended the half 6-of-8 from the field and 3-of-4 from the charity stripe, to lead the Tigers with 15 points at the intermission.

LSU also used its overall advantage at the foul line during the first 20 minutes, attempting 17 first half tosses to four for Middle Tennessee in securing the six-point halftime edge.

Hightower finished as LSU's scoring leader with 19 points, while LaSondra Barrett came off the bench to pour in 15 markers.

MT evens the all-time series at 2-2 against the Tigers and has defeated LSU in each of the last two meetings, including a win over then-No. 8 LSU inside the Murphy Center a year ago.

Middle Tennessee will return home for a 7 p.m. Thursday matchup with Louisville inside the Murphy Center in the first of four December games to be played in Murfreesboro.

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening statement

"Well, this is the first time we've been in here. Van (Chancellor) is a good friend of mine. I have known him for many years. He agreed to play us and we appreciate it. We were trying to get games, so we called Van down here and we agreed to a three-year contract. We come back again next year. We appreciate him and LSU for allowing us to play them. We played hard today and they played hard. We just ended on the upside."

On extended conversation with Van Chancellor after the game

"He was concerned about me calling that timeout. There is no disrespect. I have lost two games in my 40 years of coaching where my kids try to contest a 3-point shot, it goes in and they go to the free throw line to force overtime. I just wanted to make sure they knew we didn't care if they scored a three or a two, we were still going to win the game. It was nothing towards his team. I hope he understands that."

"There was no celebrating or laughing in the huddle because we had to fight for every point today."

On halftime adjustments to score more 3-pointers in the second half

"We changed our offense a little bit at halftime, but they did more on the perimeter against us than any team has done the last three years. They shut down our three. We knew we had to keep moving and they would get a little bit tired. (Allison) Hightower was doing so much offensively, plus she was having to guard all of our best offensive players, especially Jackie Pickel. She did do that, but I think she got a little tired too."

On comparison of LSU from last year to this year

"The team last year had a (All-American Sylvia) Fowles that didn't play. This team has more talent. I think they have the right crew and experienced coaches that can bring them along. They are going to be a very, very tough team at the end of the year."

"Do I think they have a chance at getting back to the Final Four? Absolutely because they have the

coaching staff and athletes to do it. They're young with a bunch of freshmen. They are all very talented. The big thing is they need to pull together as a team and good things will happen to them."

On returning to LSU next year

"We bring in a top recruiting class on top of these girls. We don't lose anybody. I'm telling you, it will be a heck of a game. People need to come out and see that game next year."

On thoughts at halftime after trailing by six

"We didn't panic and we were very methodical in the locker room as a coaching staff. We were down to Indiana recently and came back to win that one as well. We didn't want to rip and roar, but we had some early second half turnovers where they scored right off of them. That put us in a bigger hole, but we came back.

"What we were trying to do was isolate Alysha. We moved her to the high post, which allowed her to operate because that brought the other post out and freed up room for Anne Marie (Lanning). They were doubling with their two posts on Alysha in the first half and she couldn't get open. We needed to get her open and moving her there, she was able to do that."

On team's ability to come from behind

"They (the team) never panics. We know we are undersized in almost every game we play, but these kids have big hearts and big motors and they are a joy to coach."

On late-game situations

"Two of our kids (Brandi Brown and Pickel) have been playing for three years for me. Anne Marie and Emily (Queen) started as freshmen. They are not truly juniors and sophomores, but more like seniors and juniors. And then, Alysha transferred in from Belmont and sat out all of last year, but in practice, she had to guard (graduated senior and the nation's leading scorer) Amber Holt. That didn't do anything but help her game. She got her chance this year to step up for Amber and knew what was expected of her. It made it easier on us because the same things they (LSU) were doing to Amber last year, they were doing to Alysha this year."

On defense during last possession

"We didn't play anything special. There is nothing fancy or special about Middle Tennessee. If we have something that's working, then we're not going to change it up. That is our philosophy. If someone is hitting the basket, then we'll go to them every possession. If we have a defense that is working, then we will stay with it and not experiment. We're old-school.

"We knew Hightower was going to get the ball, but Jackie (Pickel) did a great job on her."

Alysha Clark

On continuing to score despite double teams

"Coach just told me to keep taking it in there strong. At the beginning, I was worried about them blocking my shot. He pulled me out and said I had touched the ball three times and all three times the shot went over the rim. He reminded me to just go up there and take it hard and don't be afraid they might block your shot. If they block your shot, they block your shot. I just kept going at them."

On having success in the last couple minutes

"They were coming before I could catch and turn. He got on me and said I need to stop and find my player quicker. I had to know they were coming behind, but my teammates let me know who was

sagging and what was coming. I knew I had to go through and snatch it (the ball) hard because they were coming through hard, as well."

On surprise LSU didn't double-team her earlier

"No, not really. It just shows their coach has confidence in them as defensive players. I respect that. I knew when they brought it, I just had to find the open player."

Newspaper Box Score Middle Tennessee vs LSU 11/30/08 1:00 pm at Maravich Center (Baton Rouge, LA) At Maravich Center (Baton Rouge, LA) MIDDLE TENNESSEE 79, LSU 75 MIDDLE TENNESSEE (5-1) Clark, Alysha 14-20 8-9 37; Lanning, Anne Marie 5-7 2-2 16; Brown, Brandi 5-6 0-0 13; Queen, Emily 5-12 0-0 11; Garrett, Dana 1-1 0-0 2; Stewart, Tina 0-0 0-0 0; Pickel, Jackie 0-1 0-0 0; Lymon, Chelsia 0-5 0-0 0. Totals 30-52 10-11 79. LSU (1-3) HIGHTOWER, Allison 8-12 3-5 19; BARRETT, LaSondra 5-12 5-7 15; KELLY, Andrea 3-3 0-0 8; JONES, Courtney 3-8 0-0 7; MORRIS, Kristen 3-4 1-2 7; HUGHES, Destini 2-6 0-2 5; EASON, Latear 2-6 0-0 4; TURNBOW, Taylor 2-7 0-1 4; GRAHAM, Katherine 1-2 2-2 4; BLACK, Swayze 0-3 2-2 2. Totals 29-63 13-21 75. Middle Tennessee..... 31 48 - 79 LSU..... 37 38 - 75 3-point goals--Middle Tennessee 9-17 (Lanning, Anne Marie 4-4; Brown, Brandi 3-4; Queen, Emily 1-4; Clark, Alysha 1-2; Pickel, Jackie 0-1; Lymon, Chelsia 0-2), LSU 4-8 (KELLY, Andrea 2-2; HUGHES, Destini 1-3; JONES, Courtney 1-2; EASON, Latear 0-1). Fouled out--Middle Tennessee-None, LSU-None. Rebounds--Middle Tennessee 34 (Clark, Alysha 12), LSU 27 (HIGHTOWER, Allison 6). Assists--Middle Tennessee 22 (Lanning, Anne Marie 6), LSU 13 (BARRETT, LaSondra 3; HUGHES, Destini 3). Total fouls--Middle Tennessee 19, LSU 14. Technical fouls--Middle Tennessee-None, LSU-None. A-3015

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