

Cold shooting sends Blue Raiders to loss against Cardinals

Middle Tennessee faced its second nationally-ranked opponent of the season.

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee struggled to its worst shooting effort of the season and it could not recover from a 24-6 Louisville run which eclipsed both halves, as the Blue Raiders dropped a 67-44 decision to the No. 13/15 Cardinals inside the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn., Thursday night.

The Blue Raiders, who entered the game receiving votes in both the Associated Press and ESPN/*USA Today* Coaches Polls this week, hung with the higher-ranked UofL squad through the game's opening 16 minutes. Sophomore Emily Queen tallied the team's first four points for the second-straight contest and MT built a pair of four-point advantages, the last coming at 7:02 on a 3-pointer from junior Jackie Pickel for a 17-13 lead.



Pickel's trey, her only field goal of the contest, signaled one of just six on the evening for the Lady Raiders, who ranked No. 1 nationally in 3-pointers made per game with a 10.2 average coming into the tilt.

Queen continued her hot start by matching her season high of 11 on a basket before Pickel's 3-pointer. She scored seven-straight points for Middle Tennessee (5-2) during one 7-2 spurt and

opened 5-of-7 from the field. The Lady Raider pairing hit their respective triples, Queen's coming at 8:49, from the same left-wing spot on the floor.

Louisville (6-1), however, would not go away quietly and scored the next five points to take an 18-17 lead on a Monique Reid layup with 5:11 to play in the half. First-team preseason All-America Angel McCoughtry drilled a 3-pointer at 3:20 to give the Cards a 26-24 edge, one they would not relinquish the remainder of the game. Deseree Byrd also hit a triple, followed by a Candyce Bingham jumper with 18 seconds left in the frame to widen the margin to seven, 31-24, as the teams entered the intermission.

Five more points by UofL began the second half and the visitors built their advantage to as much as 17, 47-30, on another McCoughtry basket at the 13:09 mark. Louisville used the 24-6 streak to pull away before junior Chelsia Lymon ended the spurt at 12:15 with a corner 3-pointer to pull MT back within 14, 47-33.

McCoughtry then scored five points in another 11-0 run, helping the Cardinals to a game-best 25-point lead, 58-33, with 6:54 to play.

Middle Tennessee chipped away at the lead and Queen set a new season high following a 3-pointer at the 5:49 mark. One possession prior, Queen stole a mid-court pass and raced towards the hoop. Her shot went high, but junior Dana Garrett kept the ball in the Lady Raiders' possession and MT found Queen again for the trey.

Becky Burke attempted a corner 3-pointer for Louisville, but Pickel put her hand solidly on the ball and blocked it out of bounds. The gap shrunk to as low as 17, 61-44, on Alysha Clark's final field goal with 2:07 to go.

McCoughtry led all players with a double-double effort of 24 points and 13 rebounds. She finished 10-of-16 from the field and 11 of her 13 boards were on the defensive glass. She also swiped a game-high seven steals, but struggled to a 3-of-8 foul shooting night.

Bingham (14 points), Byrd (11) and Keshia Hines (11) joined her in double-figure scoring, giving UofL four starters above the double-digit plateau.

Clark paced the Blue Raiders with 18 points, including 8-of-11 from the charity stripe. Queen added a career-high tying 17 points, hitting a team-best seven field goals and 3-of-6 from 3-point territory. Clark also grabbed a team-high nine rebounds, finishing just shy of her third-straight double-double.

MT will next play its next two games on the road, beginning at 4 p.m. Sunday in Cullowhee, N.C., against Western Carolina in a rematch of last season's first round Postseason WNIT contest. The Blue Raiders will then stay in-state and face No. 7 Tennessee next Thursday at 6 p.m. (CST) in Knoxville, Tenn.

MT Quotes vs. Louisville

Coach Rick Insell

On taking Alysha away

"They're really long, have good lateral quickness and a good basketball IQ. They're similar to LSU except last Sunday we executed and tonight we didn't. They just out played us tonight, no ifs ands or buts about it. Offensively, defensively, rebounding, shooting percentage, you're not going to win

games like that. Plus we had 23 turnovers. That's just not our game. It wasn't anyone in particular, it was a team loss. We'll have to get back here tomorrow and work hard. We've got another big game on Sunday."

On difference in rebounding between the two halves

"They're really athletic and we only got one shot. We didn't make our free throws. We were down seven at half and Anne Marie (Lanning) was 1-of-9 from the floor. If she makes those and her free throws and we're up seven instead of down. And you can't do that against a team as good as Louisville. They're well coached and have some great players. When they got us down they slowed us down and gave it to Angel McCoughtry and Candyce Bingham and it was tough for us to defend. Jackie Pickel did really well on McCoughtry tonight. She pressured her all over the floor and frustrated her. Bottom line she's overachieved this week. We put her on (LSU's Allison) Hightower Sunday and McCoughtry tonight and has played very well against them.

On Emily Queen's foul trouble

"I love Emily's aggression. She plays very hard and she's shooting well now. When she goes out it hurts us rebounding, but I don't want her to play safe. I want her to play the way she's playing right now."

Alysha Clark

On Louisville's pressure

"They just sagged off so when I caught the ball it looked like a double team when it really wasn't. But I just wasn't making shots tonight. It wasn't anything they did special. I just didn't make shots."

On 23 turnovers

"I think part of it was impatience, but also we forced some stuff that wasn't there. Turnovers are killing us right now, it's very uncharacteristic of our team. We have to cut that down. It's a good thing and a bad thing because it's nothing the other team is doing, it's what we're doing to ourselves which can easily be fixed."

On Louisville's early second half run

"We had a lot of turnovers there at the beginning of the second half which gave them some easy baskets and fed into their momentum. We knew what they were going to do, it wasn't like they were doing anything special, we just weren't putting the ball in the basket."

Emily Queen

On foul trouble

"It's frustrating. I was really ready for this game, but the whistles started blowing. I tried to keep my head in the game but it was tough, especially toward the end."

On shots not falling for teammates

"I know how frustrating it is because it's happened to me. But they're (Lanning and Pickel) both great shooters. I mean they could come out and go 7-of-7 next game, so they'll get past this."

Louisville Coach Jeff Walz

On Louisville's second half domination

"I can't begin to tell you how excited I am. In the first half it was very ugly offensively for both teams, then in the last five minutes of the first half and the second half we settled down and started moving the ball a lot better and made some good plays. I thought our bench played good tonight and it was

just a very good win for us. Especially after the way we played out in Nevada. We just have to continue to improve and get better."

On Louisville's ball movement

"We moved the ball well. Deseree Byrd - even though she turned the ball over nine times - I thought she did a nice job. This was the toughest team she's played all year. I'm just really excited about that and the way we continue to improve.

On the dramatic defensive change from the first half to the second

"It's not that we made an adjustment. I just thought we started playing harder. It was just a great defensive effort and I'm very pleased with the way we played."

On Angel McCoughtry's leadership

"In the first half, I didn't like her demeanor so I talked to her and told her a senior All-American can't act that way - yelling and screaming and all. In the second half, I liked what she did. I'd see her during deadballs putting her arm around her teammates and encouraging them and I thought she did a good job of settling down in the second half."

On adjusting to MT taking charges early

"I told them you're playing in an environment where you're not gonna get many calls and that we would need to be up by more than 10 points to win the game in the end. I thought we did a lot better job in the second half with body control and adjusting defensively and putting them away."

On Alysha Clark

"We did an outstanding job of following our game plan. What we did well was that we didn't allow her to establish position and catch the ball where she wanted to catch the ball. She had 37 at LSU the other night so she is a great player and I thought we did a very good job defensively."

Newspaper Box Score Louisville vs Middle Tennessee 12/04/08 7 p.m. at Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Murphy Center) At Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Murphy Center) LOUISVILLE 67, MIDDLE TENNESSEE 44 LOUISVILLE (6-1) MCCOUGHTRY, Angel 10-16 3-8 24; BINGHAM, Candyce 6-14 2-2 14; BYRD, Deseree 3-8 2-2 11; HINES, Keshia 5-6 1-2 11; REID, Monique 3-4 0-0 7; JACKSON, Mary 0-0 0-0 0; RADDE, Brandie 0-2 0-0 0; STEPHEN, Tiera 0-0 0-0 0; HOWARD, Janae 0-0 0-0 0; BURKE, Becky 0-3 0-0 0. Totals 27-53 8-14 67. MIDDLE TENNESSEE (5-2) Clark, Alysha 5-14 8-11 18; Queen, Emily 7-12 0-1 17; Lymon, Chelsia 1-5 0-0 3; Lanning, Anne Marie 1-9 0-0 3; Pickel, Jackie 1-9 0-0 3; Garrett, Dana 0-2 0-0 0; Brown, Brandi 0-1 0-0 0; Stewart, Tina 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 15-53 8-12 44. Louisville..... 31 36 - 67 Middle Tennessee..... 24 20 - 44 3-point goals--Louisville 5-12 (BYRD, Deseree 3-3; REID, Monique 1-2; MCCOUGHTRY, Angel 1-2; RADDE, Brandie 0-2; BURKE, Becky 0-2; BINGHAM, Candyce 0-1), Middle Tennessee 6-25 (Queen, Emily 3-6; Pickel, Jackie 1-6; Lymon, Chelsia 1-4; Lanning, Anne Marie 1-9). Fouled out--Louisville-None, Middle Tennessee-Pickel, Jackie. Rebounds--Louisville 42 (MCCOUGHTRY, Angel 13), Middle Tennessee 29 (Clark, Alysha 9). Assists--Louisville 13 (BYRD, Deseree 5), Middle Tennessee 11 (Clark, Alysha 3). Total fouls--Louisville 17, Middle Tennessee 17. Technical fouls--Louisville-None, Middle Tennessee-None. A-4021