

Blue Raiders pull out tough 3-2 win

Defeat Miami (Ohio) to advance to second round of dance

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WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. -

Middle Tennessee pulled out a nail-biter over Miami (Ohio) 3-2 (25-23, 23-25, 21-25, 30-28, 15-13) in the first round of the 2008 NCAA Tournament.

Sophomore Izabela Kozon led the Blue Raider attack throughout the night posting a career high 25 kills. Kozon also added 13 digs and two block assists to add depth to the Blue Raiders. Middle Tennessee has played five-set matches in the first round the last three years, beating Louisville the two previous times. The Blue Raiders had 68 kills as a team for an attack percentage of .200 with junior Ashley Mead and senior Ashley Asberry adding 13 and 12 kills respectively.

Defensively, Asberry added six block assists with freshman

Stacy Oladinni and junior Janay Yancey also adding six block assists each. Middle Tennessee had 13 total blocks on the night with Miami posting 11. The RedHawks had 70 kills for a .211 attack percentage led by Maria Leahy with 17 kills. Michele Metzler and Megan Griffin added 15 kills each and Emily Schroeder notched 13. Junior Ashley Waugh led the passing as she was one shy of her career high with 24 digs. Junior Katie Brush added depth to the passing with 13 digs of her own. The Blue Raiders started the match by taking a 5-3 lead after a kill by Asberry. Miami rebounded going on a 9-1 run to take an 11-6 lead. The RedHawks continued to control the set taking a 15-7 lead at the halfway mark. Middle Tennessee continued the battle and thanks to two kills by Kozon tied the match at 23. Then a third straight kill by Kozon gave the Blue Raiders the 24-23 advantage and then they took the set on a kill by Oladinni. Miami rebounded quickly from the loss in the first set jumping out to a 5-1 lead to begin the second set. The Blue Raiders continued to struggle falling behind by six, 8-2, which forced them to use a timeout to regroup. The RedHawks continued to control the match taking a 15-8 lead at the halfway point. Middle Tennessee remained in single-digits late in the set trailing 18-9. The Blue Raiders came back to life after a timeout cutting the Miami lead to four-points, 20-16, after kills by Oladinni and Asberry. The Blue Raiders started a rally outscoring Miami



12-2 to take a 21-20 lead. Middle Tennessee put up four straight points to tie the match after a block by Asberry and Oladinni and then took the lead after a kill by Asberry. Ohio would not give up and regained control to take a 24-21 advantage before winning to tie the match at 1 and force a fourth set. After two sets, Kozon was the only Blue Raider in double figures as she had 13 kills for a .333 attack percentage. Middle Tennessee had 28 kills as a team for a .115 attack percentage as Miami had 24 kills with a hitting percentage of .162. Each team had six total blocks with Asberry leading the way for Middle Tennessee with four block assists. Also on defense the Blue Raiders had 32 digs with Waugh leading the way with 13. Miami jumped out to another quick lead to begin third set, 8-3. The Blue Raiders kept the set close while Miami won the race to 15, 15-10. Middle Tennessee started to string points together closing the gap to two-points late, 19-17, after a block by Oladinni and Asberry. The Blue Raiders then tied the match at 20 but Miami took control again. The RedHawks allowed Middle Tennessee to score one more point as it took the win and a 2-1 lead in the match. Middle Tennessee took its first significant lead of the match after an ace by Asberry, 9-4, in the fourth set. The Blue Raiders extended their lead to seven after a kill by Mead. A kill by Kozon helped Middle Tennessee win the race to the halfway point as it maintained a small lead, 15-13. Miami continued to fight tying the match at 18 before a kill by Yancey gave the lead back to the Blue Raiders, 19-18. The two teams continued to trade points before tying the set at 22. The Blue Raiders pulled out the fourth set after winning three straight points. Mead got the kill twice to tie the set to keep Middle Tennessee alive. Then a block by Oladinni and Yancey gave them the lead before an ace by Clark sealed the win. After four set the Blue Raiders had a hitting percentage of .197 with 58 kills as the RedHawks had 63 kills for a .225 attack percentage. Leading the Middle Tennessee assault was Kozon with 23 kills followed by Mead and Asberry with 11 and 10 kills respectively. The Blue Raiders won the race to eight after a block by Oladinni and Yancey gave them an 8-6 advantage. The two teams traded points with Middle Tennessee keeping the lead and pulling ahead by two, 11-9. Middle Tennessee led 13-10 but Miami would not give up tying the match at 13. The Blue Raiders took the win after a kill by Clark and a block by Yancey and Mead. The Blue Raiders will be back in action on Saturday, Dec. 6 at 4 p.m. when it faces the winner of Louisville and host Purdue in the second round of the NCAA Tournament. **Middle Tennessee Postmatch Quotes**

Head Coach Matt Peck:

Opening Statement...

"To start with, I don't feel like we played a good match tonight. Our best hitter was negative and there were other players struggling also. We have to be better tomorrow. I think we came out a little nervous and flustered. With as poorly as we played, I am very happy with the result. The first round is always the toughest." **Senior Middle Blocker Ashley Asberry:**

On slow start to match...

"It was hard. I am human like everyone else. My teammates really helped me. They got on me and told me to keep going at it and to keep my head up." **Freshman Middle Blocker Stacy Oladinni:**

On what Coach Peck was telling the team to do during timeouts while trailing...

"Every time we went over there we were expecting to be yelled at and we did. He just told us to keep working and get back in it and anything can happen from there." **Sophomore Outside Hitter**

Izabela Kozon:

On career high kills...

"Every time I get out there, I try my best. When I struggle, my teammates step up. Tonight, they struggled and I stepped up. There are no individuals, tonight, the team won."

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