

## Middle Tennessee battles for second SEC win of the season

**Blue Raiders have topped LSU and Alabama from the SEC this year**

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**MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -** Middle Tennessee fought to the end and came away with a 77-67 victory over visiting Alabama Sunday afternoon in a women's basketball contest televised live regionally on Comcast/Charter Sports Southeast (CSS) from the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn. The Blue Raider victory, in front of a season-high 5,017 spectators, is the second this season against a Southeastern Conference (SEC) opponent. MT also defeated LSU during the campaign.

The hard-nosed affair remained close through the opening 28 minutes with the Crimson Tide pulling within one, 42-41, at 12:39 on a Daleisha Carn layup. Middle Tennessee (6-4), on its next possession, found sophomore Emily Queen in the left corner for a 3-pointer. The trey started a 9-0 Lady Raider run and provided the first double-digit lead for either team with MT ahead, 51-41. Juniors Alysha Clark and Chelsia Lymon each hit a pair of free throws during the spurt.



Free throws keyed Middle Tennessee's effort to stay in front, as it connected on eight charity tosses

over a four-minute stretch late in the second half after Alabama (6-3) cut the deficit to eight. Clark's final set, as part of her 11-of-14 effort from the foul line on the evening, came at 3:15 and helped push the margin back to 14, 71-57, with 3:15 to play.

The Crimson Tide attempted one last comeback, trimming the lead to six, 73-67, behind a 10-2 run with 23 seconds remaining. The spurt was capped by a three-point play from Tierney Jenkins. However, junior Jackie Pickel and Lymon drained a pair of free throws each to ice the victory.

The first half featured three early ties, the last coming at 9-9 with 14:05 on the clock. Middle Tennessee then rattled off an 11-4 surge following a Pickel steal and layup to give the Blue Raiders a 20-13 edge at 9:47.

The Lady Raider advantage remained as high as seven following a pair of Queen charity tosses with 6:14 to play in the session, but again Alabama attempted to overtake MT by scoring nine of the final 14 points in the half to make it a 31-28 home lead at the break.

Middle Tennessee converted 29-of-38 free throws on the game, compared to 11-of-18 for Alabama. The Blue Raiders also held the Tide to just 33 rebounds, 16 below their average entering the game.

Clark led all scorers with 29 points on 9-of-13 field goals in addition to her free throws. Queen added 15, Lymon chipped in 13 and Pickel finished with 11 as MT placed four starters in double figures. Brandi Brown, the other starter, contributed nine points and a game-high eight rebounds to go along with her game-best two blocked shots.

Jenkins paced Alabama with 15 points and six rebounds, while Carn posted 13 points.

MT will return to action for its second of a three-game homestand at 7 p.m. Tuesday when it will play host to Austin Peay inside the Murphy Center.

### **MT Quotes vs. Alabama**

#### **Head Coach Rick Insell**

##### *On breaking the losing streak*

"Breaking the slide feels good. Those kids I have play hard every night. We've already played three of the top 10 teams in the country so I'm very proud of all of them. We had to cut down on our turnovers, we still had 17 but we probably only had six unforced turnovers. Plus, we have to make our free throws down the stretch to put the game out of reach and we didn't do that so we have to fix that."

##### *On aggressiveness off the players tonight*

"We knew Alabama would over-pursue. They're very aggressive and use a lot of players and we felt we could use that against them, attack to get some cheap fouls and we did. Sometimes we were lucky because we went to the basket and they fouled us. And we went threw a stretch there where we made some free throws. But we had a stretch too where we missed six in a row and you can't win big games and championships missing free throws. You can't do it."

##### *On the team's rebounding*

"The last two teams we've played out of the SEC, one's (Tennessee) averaging 50 rebounds a night and the other one (Alabama) 49. That's big. We won't see anyone like that in our conference, so we emphasized that we needed to rebound well. Brandi Brown had eight tonight and against Tennessee

she had seven. Chelsia Lymon had seven and so did Alysha Clark, so that's a good day's work from those kids."

*On how gratifying the win was without many forced turnovers*

"The win was gratifying because we needed a win right now. With the stretch we've been through we needed this and it didn't matter if it was Alabama or whoever. It just so happened we played a very good team. This Alabama team will not be at the bottom of the SEC this year. They played us just as hard as LSU and Tennessee so they'll win a lot of games."

### **Alysha Clark**

*On snapping the losing streak*

"It was big for us. We needed to get back on track because we haven't been playing like ourselves the last few weeks. It's been frustrating everyone because we've been making mistakes that take ourselves out of the game, especially back at home in front of our crowd."

*On aggressiveness of the last few days of practice*

"It was a big wakeup call. The coaches said it was really on them to make us work hard in practice. I mean we've been working hard but it was nowhere near the way it's been the last few days. If we get after it playing with each other then that's only going to help us on the court. I think for the first time we really worked hard in practice and took it out on the floor."

*On getting to the foul line in second half*

"Coach has been telling us we have to be more aggressive. I think we've been so caught up in running our offense the last few games that it took us out of the game. But tonight we were really aggressive. They were taking it to us so we had to take it to them. Once we attack the basket that really opens everything up. So that's what we've been really stressing in practice."

### **Chelsia Lymon**

*On nice win*

"It makes me feel really good. I'm very proud of everyone. We made a goal of getting back on track and doing the little things right because we've been doing some really stupid things. We've had at least 22 turnovers in the last four games and that's unnecessary. We've been predicating ourselves on not having that many so I feel really good about going into conference play now."

*On how well they broke the press*

"It's very important. I felt very confident giving the ball to Alysha in those situations. I wanted to emphasize just handling the ball and letting the clock play into our favor. We were up with about three minutes to go so I just wanted to make sure I protected the ball and let the clock run down."

### **Alabama Head Coach Wendell Hudson**

*On the play of Middle Tennessee*

"They have a good basketball team also. Don't take anything away from Middle Tennessee. They played well and played hard. They have a good basketball team. They know how to play. They had a home court advantage and a good crowd. That's what you want to play in front of. If you play in front of a crowd like this you can get some energy and play well. They did a good job."

*On the play of Middle Tennessee's Alysha Clark*

"She's a tough player. She's an undersized post player that understands how to play inside. She has those leaning off the backboard shots. She's going to do anything that she can do. She's not trying

to force the ball at any place. She's an excellent free throw shooter because she was 11-for-14 from the free throw line tonight."

*On playing Middle Tennessee tough on the road*

"We had a chance. We hit some stretches there where we didn't shoot the ball very well and didn't play as well as we needed to play. We played hard, but we didn't play as smart. That's what I told the team. We weren't clicking. Middle Tennessee had a lot to do with that. We don't want to take anything away from them. I am proud of the team. They never gave up and the effort was really there. They played hard."

*On how his team can improve*

"This is a learning process for us. The things you have control over is what you got to take care of. I am not going to talk about the officiating, even though they shot 38 free throws and we shot 18 here on their home court. That's a fact in this game. They were 29-for-38 from the free throw line. You play on the road and that's going to happen. That did not determine the outcome of the game. I told the team to look at the turnovers and look at how we played in the first half. We didn't play as well as we needed to play. I thought it was a situation where we grew up a little bit more. We must keep growing."

Newspaper Box Score Alabama vs Middle Tennessee 12/14/08 4:05 p.m. at Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Murphy Center) At Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Murphy Center) MIDDLE TENNESSEE 77, ALABAMA 67 ALABAMA (6-3) Jenkins, Tierney 7-15 1-1 15; Carn, Daleisha 4-6 5-8 13; Russell, Ericka 4-11 0-0 9; Butler, Alyson 3-6 0-0 8; Magee, Dedrea 1-4 3-3 5; Raffington, Varisia 2-6 0-0 4; Williams, Tamara 2-5 0-0 4; Blands, Camilla 1-3 0-2 3; Hancock, Katie 0-2 2-4 2; Strauthers, Courtney 1-2 0-0 2; McCoy, Carmen 1-1 0-0 2. Totals 26-61 11-18 67. MIDDLE TENNESSEE (6-4) Clark, Alysha 9-13 11-14 29; Queen, Emily 5-10 4-4 15; Lymon, Chelsia 3-5 7-9 13; Pickel, Jackie 3-5 3-4 11; Brown, Brandi 2-7 4-7 9; Lanning, Anne Marie 0-3 0-0 0; Stewart, Tina 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 22-43 29-38 77. Alabama..... 28 39 - 67 Middle Tennessee..... 31 46 - 77 3-point goals--Alabama 4-14 (Butler, Alyson 2-5; Blands, Camilla 1-1; Russell, Ericka 1-6; Raffington, Varisia 0-1; Hancock, Katie 0-1), Middle Tennessee 4-14 (Pickel, Jackie 2-3; Queen, Emily 1-3; Brown, Brandi 1-4; Lanning, Anne Marie 0-3; Lymon, Chelsia 0-1). Fouled out--Alabama--Strauthers, Courtney, Middle Tennessee--None. Rebounds--Alabama 33 (Jenkins, Tierney 6), Middle Tennessee 31 (Brown, Brandi 8). Assists--Alabama 14 (Carn, Daleisha 3; Magee, Dedrea 3), Middle Tennessee 10 (Lanning, Anne Marie 3; Brown, Brandi 3). Total fouls--Alabama 29, Middle Tennessee 15. Technical fouls--Alabama--TEAM, Middle Tennessee--None. A-5017 Game televised live on CSS (Comcast/Charter Sports Southeast)

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