Clark powers Middle Tennessee to win over South Alabama

Lady Raiders improve to 3-0 in Sun Belt play

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MOBILE, Ala. - A first half double-double from Alysha Clark and conversions on its initial seven field goals helped carry the Middle Tennessee women's basketball team to an 80-57 victory at South Alabama Sunday afternoon in Sun Belt Conference action inside the Mitchell Center in Mobile, Ala. The Blue Raiders finished with 12 3-pointers, setting an arena opponent record for a single game.

Middle Tennessee (11-4, 3-0 SBC) also extended its East Division lead to a game-and-a-half over the Jaguars, remaining the only undefeated team in the division. Clark's first half double-double of 12 points, 11 rebounds, was achieved within the opening 16 minutes. She eventually stretched the marks to game-high honors of 23 points and 18 rebounds, grabbing the most caroms by a Lady Raider this season. She also tied for the team high with three steals in helping MT to a 12-to-5 edge in the category and helping the Blue Raiders force 17 turnovers while posting a season-low 10 ball changes themselves.

Clark, however, was not the only MT player scorching the nets, as Brandi Brown lit up the scoreboard from behind the arc on her way to 17 points. She tallied 5-of-7 from behind the 3-point line among her 6-of-8 overall field goals.

Jackie Pickel also contributed from long range, registering 4-of-7 from 3-point territory, for 14 points, while Chelsia Lymon added 11 points on the strength of 3-of-4 triples. Lymon also handed out a team-high six assists. The Lady Raiders finished with an almost 2-to-1 assist-to-turnover ratio.

Jessica Starling paced the Jaguars with 18 points on 5-of-14 field goals, including 3-of-7 from downtown. South Alabama (11-4, 2-2 SBC) was limited to just 27.4 percent (17-of-62) from the field and 28.1 percent (9-of-32) from behind the 3-point line.

The Blue Raiders quickly built a double-digit advantage behind the Brown treys early for a 16-6 lead at 16:52. The Jaguars responded with a small 5-2 run to pull within seven, 18-11, over the next three minutes but would not get any closer the remainder of the game.

A 18-of-35 (51.4 percent) field half shooting spree helped carry MT to a 19-point, 47-28, edge heading into the locker rooms. Lymon rattled home a top-of-the-key 3-pointer as the buzzer sounded giving the Lady Raiders a season-best tying 47 points at the half for the second time in three games. Middle Tennessee also attained the high-water mark Dec. 28 at Tennessee Tech.

In the second half, MT never had to look in the rearview mirror. USA cut the deficit to 15 on two occasions, the last coming following a Starling triple at 15:32 for a 50-35 score. However, the Blue Raiders outscored the hosts 22-7 over the next eight minutes as the lead swelled to a game-high 30 points, 72-42, on a pair of Clark charity tosses.

Middle Tennessee will return to action when it makes its 2009 debut inside the Murphy Center for a 7 p.m. Wednesday contest against Florida Atlantic.

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