

January 11, 2009

Defensive pressure helps Blue Raiders clamp down for eighth-straight win

Queen has second-straight double-double; Clark adds her seventh of the season

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee forced 24 Florida International turnovers, including 19 at halftime, to roll to a 68-35 Sun Belt Conference women's basketball win Sunday afternoon live on Comcast/Charter Sports Southeast from the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The Blue Raiders maintained their defensive pressure throughout the contest and caused Golden Panther Michelle Gonzalez, the team's primary ball handler, into 13 ball changes. MT only coughed the ball up eight times itself, including letting the shot clock run out with 2.6 seconds remaining, for its lowest total of the season.

Middle Tennessee (13-4, 5-0 Sun Belt) scored 25 points off the turnovers and added 21 second-chance points on its way to its eighth-straight triumph.

Neither team shot well from the field with the Lady Raiders holding a slim advantage on field goal percentage, connecting on 27-of-74 (36.5 percent) compared to just 13-of-38 (34.2 percent) for FIU.

MT, however, did place four starters in double figures and [Emily Queen](#) and [Alysha Clark](#) each collected a double-double marking the second-straight contest in which Blue Raider teammates attained the feat. The pairing becomes only the third tandem under head coach Rick Insell, since the start of the 2005-06 campaign, to accomplish the milestone.

Queen finished with a near triple-double of 14 points and 11 rebounds to go along with a career-best seven assists and two steals in 32 minutes. Eight of her 11 caroms came on the defensive glass and helped aid in a 41-35 MT advantage on the boards.

Clark poured in a game-high 18 points and matched Queen on the glass with 11 boards, eight of which were offensive. The double-double is her seventh in a Blue Raider uniform and 45th overall of her career.

[Brandi Brown](#) and [Jackie Pickel](#) contributed 10 points apiece to round out the quartet of starters in double figures. [Chelsia Lymon](#) came off the bench and added an uncontested layup off a half-court steal by Queen for her only points in her first game back after missing the Florida Atlantic contest.

Jasmine Jenkins and Ashley Traugott each tallied eight points to pace Florida International (3-13, 1-4 Sun Belt). Jenkins also grabbed a team-high nine rebounds, while the team's leading scorer Monika Bosilj was held scoreless on three shots in 16 minutes.

Although Middle Tennessee did not have a quick offensive start like it had the previous couple games, the Blue Raiders were able to limit the Golden Panthers' opportunities by forcing nine turnovers in their first 15 possessions to take an 8-2 lead into the under-12 minute media timeout.

The ball did not start flowing through the net regularly for MT until Brown nailed the game's first 3-pointer at 11:33 and Clark added a pair of layups as part of a 7-2 run to give the home team a 15-6 edge with 9:43 to play in the opening stanza.

The lead would reach and stay in double digits following a Pickel layup at 5:24 for a 23-12 score. The Lady Raiders then closed the frame on a 12-6 spurt, capped by a Pickel triple with 17 seconds left, for a 35-18 halftime lead.

Middle Tennessee quickly tallied the opening six markers of the second half to built a 23-point, 41-18, lead on a Brown jumper with 17:58 to play. The Blue Raiders continued to find the back of the net, increasing their advantage to as much as 36, 61-25, on an old-fashioned three-point play by Pickel at the 9:04 mark. FIU would attempt to chip into the deficit, trimming it to 31 a couple times, the last on a pair of Traugott free throws with 1:22 left, but never threatened.

The Blue Raiders will take their eight-game winning streak into Bowling Green, Ky., at 7 p.m. Wednesday to face rival Western



Dana Garrett finished with four points, three rebounds and a steal against FIU Sunday. (Bradley Lambert)

Kentucky.

MT vs. FIU quotes

Coach Rick Insell

On [Emily Queen](#)'s play

"We challenged Emily today and she did a good job. She did a great job defensively as well as offensively. She attacked the basket and had a double-double. This was definitely one of her best games here at Middle Tennessee."

On offensive rebounds

"We've really been working on rebounding. I was really pleased to see that we were coachable and went hard to the boards today."

On team's desire and heart

"I think what a lot of people miss out on is the high school programs these girls come from and the coaches they played for. They are some of the best programs around. That is where they got their foundation so when we get them here we just plug them into our system. They have been winners all their life and those are the kids we are trying to recruit. Maybe they're not 6-5 but they have big hearts and big motors."

On being 5-0 going into the Western Kentucky game

"I feel good about it. I feel better now that Chelsia's (Lymon) back. We used her today a little to run up and down the floor to get back into the swing of things. She was very disappointed we did not use her in the second half but she still needs another day or two to be 100 percent. [Anne Marie Lanning](#) has done a great job filling in. That gives us more confidence knowing she is there. And we also have [Tina Stewart](#) to bring some quickness of the bench. I thought [Dana Garrett](#) had a pretty good game today as well."

On MT's defensive pressure

"We don't want a team to play pitch and catch on us. We want to create some havoc in the middle and we have really been working on that in practice. We are doing a better job on the people flashing to the basket. I thought Emily (Queen), Alysha (Clark) and [Jackie Pickel](#) did a good job of that today."

[Alysha Clark](#)

On shooting woes early

"It's frustrating because my teammates get me the ball and I can't finish, but I couldn't stop shooting because that would hurt the team as a whole. So I just needed to keep being aggressive and finally some shots went down."

On balance of team

"I think it's a big strength because it's more than a one person team. When you have four players on a team like this average double figures that can only help you. It puts more pressure on the other team. They have to guard four players instead of just one because we're all capable of scoring double figures on any given night."

On what needs fixed before the Western Kentucky game

"I think we just need to keep working our defense like we have been. We did a better job in the press today. We also need to work on finishing shots. We did not do a good job of that today and that will be big going on the road to their place. Last year we missed a lot of easy shots that could've helped us win the game so we need to do a better job this time."

[Emily Queen](#)

On defensive effort on [Monika Bosilj](#)

"I knew coming into this game I was going to have to be alert defensively and coach challenged me to not even let her catch the ball because if that happened she would be hard to guard. The team did a really good job of helping me out, so it was really a good team effort on her."

On second straight double-double

"I was getting into the lane and getting good rebounds and looking for shots."

On playing Western Kentucky

"This is a game we've had circled since last year. That is where I played all my state tournament games in high school so I love going up there. Plus the rivalry is huge between these teams so I think everyone is going to be really fired up for it. Plus we saw how they celebrated after beating in the tournament so we're highly motivated going into this game."

FIU Assistant Coach Joanne Aluka-White

On the turnovers

"They play tenacious defense for the majority of the game so it is very difficult. Our primary ball handler is Michelle Gonzalez and we wanted to keep the ball in her hands at all times but it's very difficult. They trap and show a lot of help and our girls got rattled by that in the first half. In the second half they calmed down though and took better care of the basketball."

On coming back to MT

"I love Murfreesboro. Of course, being a coach, I am a competitor and I want to win every time I come here and I got to scout today's game. I try to prepare our girls the best I can. It's bittersweet, I want to win of course but it's great to come back to Murfreesboro where I had a great career for the most part."

Newspaper Box Score FIU vs Middle Tennessee 01/11/09 12 Noon at Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Murphy Center) At Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Murphy Center) MIDDLE TENNESSEE 68, FIU 35 FIU (3-13, 1-4 SBC) Jenkins, Jasmine 2-6 4-6 8; Traugott, Ashley 2-5 2-2 8; Carey, Elisa 3-4 0-0 6; Buddy, Cherisse 2-3 0-0 5; Gonzalez, Michelle 2-9 0-1 4; Zeigler, Antonia 2-5 0-0 4; Jekabsone, Liene 0-0 0-0 0; Krajacic, Maja 0-0 0-0 0; Adams, Sable 0-1 0-2 0; Wilson, Asia 0-2 0-0 0; Bosilj, Monika 0-3 0-0 0. Totals 13-38 6-11 35. MIDDLE TENNESSEE (13-4, 5-0 SBC) Clark, Alysha 7-19 3-5 18; Queen, Emily 5-17 3-3 14; Brown, Brandi 4-15 0-0 10; Pickel, Jackie 4-12 1-1 10; Lanning, Anne Marie 3-4 0-0 8; Garrett, Dana 2-4 0-0 4; Lymon, Chelsia 1-2 0-0 2; McFadden, Molly 1-1 0-0 2; Davis, Shytoria 0-0 0-0 0; Stewart, Tina 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 27-74 7-9 68. FIU..... 18 17 - 35 Middle Tennessee..... 35 33 - 68 3-point goals--FIU 3-8 (Traugott, Ashley 2-5; Buddy, Cherisse 1-1; Wilson, Asia 0-1; Bosilj, Monika 0-1), Middle Tennessee 7-24 (Brown, Brandi 2-7; Lanning, Anne Marie 2-3; Pickel, Jackie 1-5; Queen, Emily 1-5; Clark, Alysha 1-3; Lymon, Chelsia 0-1). Fouled out--FIU-Carey, Elisa, Middle Tennessee-None. Rebounds--FIU 35 (Jenkins, Jasmine 9), Middle Tennessee 41 (Clark, Alysha 11; Queen, Emily 11). Assists--FIU 7 (Gonzalez, Michelle 3), Middle Tennessee 13 (Queen, Emily 7). Total fouls--FIU 10, Middle Tennessee 15. Technical fouls--FIU-None, Middle Tennessee-None. A-3227

Printed on May 23, 2012

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/36286>