Lady Raiders Remain Perfect with 53-45 Win

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's Chrissy Givens scored 12 points with seven rebounds and six assists, leading a Lady Raider defensive effort in a 53-45 win over Louisiana-Lafayette Thursday night at Murphy Center.

The Lady Raiders held UL to 30 percent shooting from the floor and allowed a season-low 45 points, the third opponent in the last five games to score less than 50 points. Middle Tennessee forced 19 first-half turnovers by the Ragin' Cajuns and held UL to 16 points in the first 20 minutes, with the Lady Raiders taking a 12-point lead into the break.

But UL would not go away, pulling as close as three in the second half at 42-39 with 8:18 to play. But a three-point play by junior Tia Stovall stalled the Ragin' Cajun momentum and allowed Middle Tennessee to win its sixth straight contest and move to a perfect 5-0 in Sun Belt action.

Senior Patrice Holmes nailed a three-pointer as the shot clock expired the next time down the floor and scored on a break-away lineup on a feed from Givens a minute later to put the Lady Raiders ahead, 50-43.

UL would get no closer than five the rest of the way, with neither team scoring in the final 3:22 of the contest.

Givens scored eight of her 12 points in the first half, and led Middle Tennessee in both rebounds and assists in the contest. The sophomore has upped her scoring in league play, averaging almost 13

points per game and grabbing six boards per outing. She hit both of those and turned the ball over just twice.

Middle Tennessee went almost nine minutes with a bucket in the first half but limited the Ragin' Cajuns to just six field goals and 23 percent shooting from the floor. The Lady Raiders did a more-than-adequate job of limiting touches to UL's leading scorer, Anna Petrakova, who came in averaging almost 18 points per game. The senior had just 10 in the contest but grabbed a game-high 12 rebounds.

Middle Tennessee looks to remain perfect in Sun Belt action when the Lady Raiders host New Mexico State Saturday at 2 p.m. at Murphy Center.

QUOTES

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Stephany Smith
"Defense is what we hang our hat on. It is a specialty of ours. I think it is something that can separate us. You saw two different teams from the first half to the second half. Tonight, our defense outscored our offense in the first half, which is why we were up by 12."

"It was a no-brainer that they were going the play match-up zone, and for the most part they did for 40 minutes. They switched to a man-to-man at one point. For the most part, they played a match-up zone for the entire game. The difference was we just didn't make as many shots as we did a year ago. It doesn't matter what defense a team is playing. If you don't make shots, your offense becomes stagnant."

Middle Tennessee Guard Chrissy Givens
"I get hyped and energized from the defensive end. I then become more comfortable and don't turn the ball over. I just feel good when we get it done on the defensive end. It just helps me play better.

"We have been harping on defense pretty hard. Like Coach Smith said in the locker room, defense is our bread and butter. Our defense is what gets our team going."

Middle Tennessee Guard Patrice Holmes
"We had a couple of quick hitters set for me. Fortunately, I knocked them down. In the first half, I thought we were really good defensively. In the second half, I thought we came out a little flat and weren't as aggressive."

GAME NOTES

GIVENS SETS CAREER-HIGH: Sophomore Chrissy Givens, who is playing the best basketball of any Lady Raider over the past couple of games, dished out a career-best six assists in the win over ULL. Givens' previous high was five assists set against New Orleans and Austin Peay.

HORTON RECORDS PERSONAL-BEST: Krystle Horton helped ignite Middle Tennessee's stingy defense against ULL with a career-high five steals. Horton, who had 35 steals last year, equaled that mark tonight after just 18 games. The Murfreesboro, Tenn., native's five steals bettered her previous mark of four steals established on three different occasions.

HOME SWEET HOME: The Murphy Center was once again very kind to the Lady Raiders as they won their eighth of the season at the 'Glass House' to move their all-time mark to 274-86. Since joining the Sun Belt Conference in 2000-01, the Lady Raiders have a record of 25-7 at home against

conference foes to tie Western Kentucky with the best mark in the league during that stretch. With the victory over ULL tonight, the Lady Raiders have now won nine conference games in a row at the Murphy Center (last loss was a double overtime thriller against Western Kentucky on Feb. 5, 2004).

STEALS MACHINE: Senior sensation Patrice Holmes climbed a little closer to the all-time steals record with four thefts in the win over Louisiana-Lafayette on Thursday night. Holmes, who has 24 steals over her past five games, now has 289 career steals to stand just five behind current record holder Kim Webb. The All-America candidate also leads the Sun Belt Conference in steals with 64 on the season.

DEFENSE SPARKS VICTORY ... AGAIN: Perhaps the biggest reason for Middle Tennessee's success the past five years has been its defense. Since 2000-01, the Lady Raiders have held the opposition under 40 percent shooting 67 times and are 56-11 in those games. The win over ULL tonight marked the 10th time this year Middle Tennessee has held the opposition under 40 percent with the Lady Raiders posting a 9-1 record in those contests. MT held ULL to just 30.4 percent shooting, which is the lowest percentage of the season and the lowest since holding Arkansas State to just 27.1 percent on Feb. 19, 2004 - a span of 26 games.

PLAYER OF THE GAME: Members of the working media voted Chrissy Givens the Alexander Automotive Family Player of the Game. Givens finished with 12 points, seven boards, and six assists in 34 minutes.

INSIDE THE PAINT: The 45 points scored by ULL tonight is the fewest allowed by the Lady Raiders since giving up just 41 against ULL on Jan. 25, 2003 - a span of 61 games ... Middle Tennessee was outrebounded tonight (45-31) for the first time in five games ... Krystle Horton connected on just her second career three-pointer tonight and the first of the season when she drained one early in the first half ... Chrissy Givens now has 15 rebounds over her past two games ... MT is now 7-0 all-time against the Ragin' Cajuns ... The Lady Raiders are now 10-1 all-time on Jan. 27 ... With nine three-point field goal attempts tonight, Patrice Holmes moved into third place on the all-time list with 506 attempts for her career (Holmes needs 19 more to tie Sherry Tucker for second place) ... Starr Orr's seven points against ULL was her most in a game since tallying 12 against Florida Atlantic in the second game of the season ... The Lady Raider bench was outscored by ULL's reserves 20-9 ... Freshman Lakira Boyd collected a career-best two blocked shots in the win over ULL.

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