Middle Tennessee remains perfect in Sun Belt play with OT win at UALR

The Lady Raiders move to 7-0 in the Sun Belt

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LITTLE ROCK, Ark. - Middle Tennessee turned to its leading scorer in the second half and overtime allowing the Blue Raiders to pull out a 67-62 overtime triumph at UALR Saturday afternoon inside the Jack Stephens Center. Alysha Clark, the nation's second-leading scorer, helped ensure the MT win and assist the Lady Raiders of the Sun Belt's only remaining undefeated record. The victory also snaps the Lady Trojans' 29-game home winning streak, which had ranked fourth nationally.

Clark struggled throughout the opening 20 minutes, being shutout at the half for the first time this season on four field goal attempts. MT head coach Rick Insell, however, made halftime adjustments after seeing his team trail at the intermission for the second-straight game and kept his offense's strategy in Clark's hands.

The two-time Sun Belt Player of the Week who was averaging 23.6 ppg entering Saturday's tilt, scored on 6-of-10 field goals and 10-of-11 free throws in the second half to help bring the Blue Raiders back and force the extra frame. In overtime, she again was on the receiving end of much of the Middle Tennessee (15-4, 7-0 Sun Belt) offensive attack, burying all three of her shots as the Lady Raiders doubled the Lady Trojan output for the five-point win. MT outscored UALR in the extra time, 10-5.

Clark finished with her eighth double-double as a Blue Raiders, collecting game-high honors with 29 points and 11 rebounds. The double-double was the 46th of her career, as she finished 11-of-13 from the charity stripe with three assists while playing a career-best 45 minutes.

Emily Queen and Brandi Brown had the hot hands early for the Lady Raiders. The pair combined for 19 of the team's 23 first half points, including Brown knocking down a trio of long-range attempts from behind the 3-point arc. Queen tallied eight of the team's opening 10 markers and was 5-of-7 from the field during the first half.

In the second half, it was Chelsia Lymon's turn to convert three treys to complement Clark's inside presence and Middle Tennessee outscored UALR, 34-29, during the second stanza. After taking a five-point, 28-23, lead at the break, the Lady Trojans maintained their cushion until an old-fashioned three-point play by Clark at 11:38 turned a one-point UALR (14-4, 6-1 Sun Belt) lead into a two-point MT advantage at 40-38.

Neither team led by more than five points over the next five minutes until eight consecutive points by the Lady Trojans' Anshel Cooper helped the home team built a seven-point cushion, 54-47, with 6:25 to play. The Lady Raiders did not waver, outscoring UALR 10-3 down the stretch, including 3-pointers from Jackie Pickel and Lymon, to force overtime.

UALR's Kim Sitzmann begun the extra time with a 3-pointer 20 seconds in, but Pickel answered right back with a triple of her own to silence the home crowd. Clark then added the next two field goals before Asriel Rolfe halted the brief Blue Raider spurt with the team's final points at 2:26. Clark closed the game by tallying the final three points to decide the final margin.

Queen and Pickel finished with 10 points apiece and MT shot 23-of-44 (52.3 percent) from the field during the game. The Lady Raiders made 4-of-5 during overtime.

Cooper paced UALR with 22 points, but took a game-high 23 field goal attempts to attain the total. Chastity Reed contributed 17 and Marian Kursh finished with 11.

The Lady Trojans had entered the game winners of 29 straight inside the Stephens Center, ranking fourth nationally. The last time UALR had lost at home was to MT in a 75-62 Blue Raider victory nearly two years ago, Jan. 20, 2007.

The Blue Raiders extend their winning streak to 10 games, currently the eighth longest in the country. Three teams (Auburn, North Carolina and Connecticut) own the longest streak at 17 games.

Middle Tennessee, which has been receiving votes by both national polls the last two weeks, will return to the Murphy Center for three of its next four games. The first game back in Murfreesboro will be at 7 p.m. Wednesday against Arkansas State.

However, earlier in the week, fans and supporters will have a chance to meet and greet with the Lady Raiders as part of the Rick Insell Show at Coach's Grill in Murfreesboro Monday night. The team will be on-hand during the weekly radio show from 6-7 p.m. to discuss the season with fans and sign autographs. Also, those in attendance will have the opportunity to ask questions live to Coach Insell. The show can be heard live from 6-7 p.m. on WMOT 89.5 FM and on tape-delayed basis from 8-9 p.m. on WGNS (100.5 FM, 101.9 FM and 1450 AM).

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