Four players reach double figures as Blue Raiders defeat Ragin' Cajuns

Clark posts 10th double-double of the year with 15 pts., 15 reb.

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee placed four of its five starters in double-figure scoring and all 10 Lady Raiders scored on the evening as MT began the second half of the Sun Belt Conference schedule with an 85-57 home victory over Louisiana-Lafayette Wednesday inside the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The Blue Raiders captured their 11th home victory in 12 contests this season while giving head coach Rick Insell his 90th triumph on the sidelines. The win also extends MT's dominance in the series against the Ragin' Cajuns to 14 straight against zero losses.

All 10 eligible Middle Tennessee (18-4, 10-0 Sun Belt) players scored at least three points, pushing the home team's winning streak to 13 games to remain tied with Oklahoma for the fifth-longest run in the country.

Junior Brandi Brown reached the 20-point plateau for the second-straight game, tallying

a team-high 20 on the strength of four triples. She also led all players with a career-best tying eight assists as part of a team effort of 23 on 35 made field goals.

Classmate Jackie Pickel also connected on four treys as part of her 14 points.

Alysha Clark, the nation's second-leading scorer, was held to 15 points but garnered game-best honors with 15 rebounds. She had her 10th double-double of the season and 48th of her career by halftime. It was the second time this season she posted a double-double in the game's opening 20 minutes, matching the feat at South Alabama Jan. 4.

Chelsia Lymon was the fourth Lady Raider in double digits with 10 points.

Louisiana-Lafayette (3-17, 0-9 Sun Belt) was led by a game-high 27 points from Alexis Green, who nearly scored one-half of the team's total alone. While the Ragin' Cajuns shot 42.3 percent as a squad, Green converted 10-of-14 from the field including a pair of 3-pointers. She also hauled in a team-best eight boards.

MT had opened the game with a 9-0 spurt to never look back. Green buried her first triple at 14:55 of the first half to pull ULL within three, 11-8, but consecutive 3-pointers by Pickel and Lymon helped kick-start a 12-4 Lady Raider run. The lead swelled to as high as 24 in the opening stanza following an Emily Queen jumper with four seconds to play making the halftime score, 50-26, in the Blue Raiders' favor.

Middle Tennessee continued to pour in the points early in the second half, opening the frame with a 19-3 surge, capped by back-to-back jumpers from Dana Garrett, to give the hosts a 69-29 advantage with 12:31 remaining. The margin would reach 37, 75-38, on a Brown 3-pointer at 8:25 before Insell emptied his bench to play the reserves.

The five bench players hit on 9-of-13 from the floor, including perfect nights by Tina Stewart, Shytoria Davis and Molly McFadden. Anne Marie Lanning played the most of the group, seeing the floor for 25 minutes.

The Lady Raiders will close out their three-game stretch against schools from the Pelican State with a 5 p.m. Saturday tip against Louisiana-Monroe inside the Murphy Center. The game will be the first of a MT basketball doubleheader with the men's team to follow 30 minutes later against the Warhawks.

MT Quotes vs. Louisiana-Lafayette

Head Coach Rick Insell

On start of the game
"We talked about getting a good start. We knew we were going to get good looks, but I didn't want us to rush some of those looks. I thought they did a good job of that. I did think a time or two we might have missed Brandi (Brown). When she's open, we need to get her the ball. But, when we're putting the ball in the basket like this we're a pretty good basketball team."

On playing a lot of bench players in the second half
"Most of the people who know a lot about basketball tell you the first five minutes of each half are

important. I wanted to start our regular group in the second half just to get them going. But I didn't want to put Molly McFadden and Shytoria Davis in there together, because they're not going to play with each in crucial games. They're going to play with our starters and I wanted to give them the opportunity to play and get on film. I thought Dana Garrett did a good job too. She's really awesome taking the ball to the basket, and she's done that all year for us."

On getting big leads and getting more experience for the bench
"It allows you to play more kids. They'll be times the rest of this year that we won't have big leads. So when we have a chance to play those kids we need to, especially at home. My thing is that I'm not going to lose the momentum of our team just to get someone some playing time. You earn playing time in practice and those kids have been doing well in practice. So they deserved to play tonight."

On playing with ease
"They know each other better. We see them communicate on the floor. That makes for a good basketball team. Right now they're playing really good together. I'm happy with the way they're communicating and the adjustments they're making on the floor by themselves. They hadn't been doing that early, but we've been doing more lately and that's going to help us become a better team."

Chelsia Lymon

On the fast start
"We talk about getting better as a team defensively. I told everybody before that before the game and we need to from here on out. And the past several games that's been our emphasis."

On the scoring runs during the game
"Momentum wise it helps us get back in a rhythm, especially in the second half. We don't really want to play down to a team's level, we want to keep our same pace. We just try to play our game and not look at the scoreboard."

On four players in double figures again
"On this team we just play. Whoever scores we're happy for them. If we have a shot, we shoot, and if not we pass. It's just as simple as it gets, we just play. And, as you see, we got four players in double figures and didn't really realize it."

Brandi Brown

On confidence right now
"I'm not the kind of player that just goes out and play. I have a lot of stuff going on in my mind. I'm just that type of person. This is definitely the most confident I've been in myself. Anybody playing on this team is going to have confidence the way we've been playing."

Louisiana-Lafayette Quotes

Head Coach Errol Rogers

On team's performance tonight
"We're a young team and it's hard to come in and compete with a team like Middle Tennessee. They're a very good shooting team. Right now in the Sun Belt it's hard for a team like us to compete with a Middle Tennessee or a UALR."

On the positives of tonight's game
"There were moments where we played well, but I would like to see us stretch that over the entire 40 minutes of the game. I just want to see more fight from this team."

On the play of Alysha Clark
"She is a very good player for [Middle Tennessee]. We played zone at the beginning of the game against her. She is a very talented player."

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