

February 15, 2009

Blue Raiders pour in near records in Pink Zone game

Team finishes three shy of all-time record for single-game points

Athletic Communications

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee shot a season-high 63.6 percent from the field, torching the nets from all 10 players, as it tallied the second most points in school history in a 113-58 triumph over North Texas Sunday afternoon during the annual WBCA Pink Zone game inside the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The Blue Raiders approached all-time school records for field goal percentage and total points, while setting both in the Rick Insell era (2005-present). MT finished just shy of the program mark for field goal percentage (66.1 percent vs. Chattanooga, Jan. 16, 1985) and points (116, vs. Maryville College, Dec. 6, 1976). Both totals Sunday are the second highest in school history. The 113 points are also the fifth most scored in NCAA Division I this season.

Middle Tennessee (22-4, 14-0 SBC), which won its 17th straight and had the league's East Division clinched prior to playing Sunday due to a Western Kentucky loss Saturday, began its scoring barrage with a season-high 62 points in the first half. The 62 points are the third highest all-time and the most since they posted 61 against ULM Dec. 17, 2006.

The Lady Raiders shot 23-of-35 (65.7 percent) in the first half and 19-of-31 (61.3 percent) during the second 20 minutes, while also converting 13-of-25 (52.0 percent) from beyond the 3-point arc and 16-of-22 (72.7 percent) on the foul line.

The 55-point margin of victory is also the sixth highest in school history and the greatest gap since a 49-point win at New Orleans Jan. 28, 2006. It also is the biggest margin of victory for the Blue Raiders against a Sun Belt Conference opponent since they began play in the league in 2000-01.

Junior forward [Alysha Clark](#) again finished as the team's leading scorer, contributing 30 points on 12-of-14 field goals and 6-of-8 free throws, to follow her record performance of 50 points at Troy Wednesday. She added a game-best nine rebounds, six assists, three steals and two blocked shots while playing a team-high 36 minutes.

Classmate [Brandi Brown](#) dominated from outside, hitting 6-of-9 field goals, all from 3-point territory, while leading all players with eight assists and three blocked shots. She also was 3-of-4 from the charity stripe to finish with 21 points.

Four other Blue Raiders reached double-figure scoring, led by [Anne Marie Lanning's](#) 17 and [Chelsia Lymon's](#) 14. [Jackie Pickel](#) and [Dana Garrett](#) each added 11 with Garrett's effort a career high.

All 10 MT players tallied points in the game, as [Shytoria Davis](#) (four points), [Emily Queen](#) (two), [Molly McFadden](#) (two) and [Tina Stewart](#) (one) also reached the scoring column.

North Texas (9-16, 5-9 Sun Belt) was led by Tricia Lee, who netted 29 points on 8-of-13 from the floor and 9-of-13 on the foul line. Amber Jackson chipped 12 points, while Brittany James hauled in a team-best four rebounds.

Middle Tennessee cleaned up on the glass, holding a 40-to-22 advantage against the Mean Green, who were leading the conference in overall offensive boards per game. The Blue Raiders held NT to just nine offensive caroms.

The game started with MT tallying the opening six points before North Texas responded and claimed a slim, 11-10, edge on a Jackson jumper with 15:57 to play. The Lady Raiders then exerted their strength by rattling off a 26-0 spurt over the next seven-and-a-half minutes, which was capped by a Clark layup at 8:31, for a 37-11 lead.

North Texas did not reach a dozen until Lee hit the back-end of two free throws at 8:22. Middle Tennessee continued to cushion its advantage, by forcing 15 first half turnovers and increasing the lead to as high as 33 two times in the final 1:07. The Mean Green had 28 total ball changes in the contest, which MT turned into 34 points. Clark capped the first stanza with a layup at the 38 second mark to push the halftime lead to 62-29.



Junior Brandi Brown nailed six 3-pointers, while handing out eight assists, swiping three steals and blocking three shots to finish with 21 points in the win Sunday. (Bradley Lambert)

The Mean Green came out to score the first five points of the second half, pulling within 28, 62-34, with under a minute passed. However, the Blue Raiders would not let the visitors get any closer the remainder of the game and increased their margin passed 40 on a pair of consecutive 3-pointers from Lanning.

The lead then reached 50, 96-46, on a Clark foul with 7:59 remaining. Brown buried her final 3-pointer at the 4:50 mark, pushing the team's total over the century mark for the second time this season.

Davis tallied the team's final two buckets, both with under a minute to play, for the final margin.

Middle Tennessee will return to action at 7 p.m. Wednesday when it plays host to South Alabama inside the Murphy Center.

Middle Tennessee Home Quotes Head Coach Rick Insell

On today's game

"I still feel like we had a lot of room to improve. We showed on offense we can shoot the ball pretty good. We had six kids in double figures and (Emily) Queen is our primary shooter and she only had two. I'm proud of them. They came out and took care of business and it was a good day to take care of business on [the Pink Zone]."

On scoring a 100 points and the large margin of victory

"It didn't surprise me the way they practiced the last couple of days that we got a 100 points. North Texas is a lot better basketball team than they showed today. At one time the score was 12-11 then we had a pretty good run then at that point we created some turnovers and knocked down some threes. Once we get in a rhythm and once we get to feeling good we're pretty dangerous."

On Emily's injury

"I don't know. It's a foot injury or ankle injury. I can tell you they did not see any breaks. She's going to have an MRI tomorrow and we're hoping to have her back for Wednesday night. The type of team we have, we're so close and everybody feeds off everybody and Emily plays a big role in our program."

On the 26-0 run and team effort

"They wanted to get aggressive with Alysha (Clark) down low and I think that kind of irritated our bunch a little bit. It kind of woke our other kids up."

On [Brandi Brown](#)

"[Brandi Brown](#) is an unbelievable shooter. She has unbelievable range and touch. I'm not surprised at all that she got 21 points today."

On practice and preparation

"I think (assistant coach) Tom Hodges did a great job getting us ready for North Texas. We knew exactly what they wanted to do. I don't think they got into a set today. Our defense knew what they wanted to do and wouldn't allow them to get into their sets. At this time of the year we pretty well know what they want to do. We'll watch anywhere between 15-20 films to look for patterns. Teams develop patterns and usually follow those patterns, even us."

On the team's impressive assists and ball sharing

"We've been sharing the ball and making that extra pass all year. I think we've been going with anywhere between 17 or 18 assists a game so 26 is quite good. The big thing I'm looking at is turnovers. We had 16 turnovers, I would've liked to have that around 12 and we created 28 turnovers so that's pretty good."

[Brandi Brown](#)

On her shooting performance today

"Well they weren't really guarding us. This game they helped in on Alysha so I had a lot of good looks."

On her shooting groove the past few games

"I try not to think about it. I think way too much about everything. I do better when I just don't think about it."

Did you feel like this was a special performance?

"I mean we've had a few games but it wasn't really anything different. We had a lot of threes. Most games they don't leave us that open. It's easy to get to a 100 with all those open looks."

[Anne Marie Lanning](#)

On UNT laying off of other players to guard [Alysha Clark](#)

"We don't take offense. When they do get out on us like Troy did last week then Alysha does what she did last week. So it's really

like they're in a lose-lose situation."

On how fun this season has been

"We get along so well. Our chemistry is so good. I think this year we have more contributors. It was fun last year but it makes it a whole lot more fun because everybody is getting involved."

On clinching the division title and staying focused on the next games before the tournament

"Last year we put ourselves in a situation where we had to win the last five games and now we're kind of looking at it like that too because we don't want to, as Coach said, 'get bored with what we're doing and going through the motions.' So now our main focus is to treat these games like we have to win them."

On Emily's injury

"I think with her we are a stronger team but if we have to I think we can overcome it. I'm pretty optimistic about it though."

On off nights during the 17-game win streak

"I think we have. At Troy he (Coach Insell) gave us three days off and we kind of weren't as focused as we had been. And he's thinking about doing that again, so we'll just have to stay focused. We have had off nights but nothing too huge."

On the win streak

"I don't really think about it. I mean I know we haven't lost a conference game. I just know we're doing great as a team and will continue to as long as we don't let it get to our heads and I don't think we will. We don't have any personalities like that on our team."

North Texas

Head Coach Shanice Stephens

On team's performance

"I am very disappointed with our performance today. We did not execute our game plan, and that's the score."

On going into the final few games of regular season

"Well I was feeling really good. We had confidence building the last few games but then we took a step back with this one. I think we just have to regroup as we face (Louisiana) Monroe at home."

On (Tricia) Lee's career high 29 point performance

"She had a great impact on our team today. She shot it well, took what they gave her and she was very strong for us today."

Printed on May 23, 2012

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/36955>