

# Middle Tennessee falls on the road at FAU

## Blue Raiders drop first Sun Belt game this season

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**BOCA RATON, Fla.** - The No. 25-ranked Middle Tennessee Blue Raider women's basketball team finished just short in its comeback attempt and dropped a 73-70 decision at Florida Atlantic Saturday inside the FAU Arena in Boca Raton, Fla. The loss is the first for MT in over two months and first this season in Sun Belt action.

Junior forward Alysha Clark, despite not feeling 100 percent health-wise, put the Blue Raiders on her back yet again and registered her 13th double-double of the season with game highs of 32 points and 13 rebounds. The double-double is her 10th in the Sun Belt and 51st overall for her career.

Fellow starters Brandi Brown and Chelsia Lymon joined Clark in double-figure scoring, recording 15 and 13 points, respectively. Both players knocked down three 3-pointers. Brown's trio moved her into fifth place on the school's all-time list with 168.



Breana Turner led three Owls in double-digits with 18 points, two more than Jessica Knurick did. Clara Stubbs rounded out the trio with 13 points.

Florida Atlantic (11-15, 8-8 Sun Belt) jumped out to an early 10-2 lead, from which MT seemed to never recover. The Lady Raiders would score 11 of the next 13 points, capped by a 3-pointer from

Anne Marie Lanning at 13:50, to take the lead for the first time.

The two teams remained nip-and-tuck and the score would be tied five times through the opening half, the last with 7:11 to play on a Clark put-back following a missed 3-pointer from Lymon. FAU pushed its lead back to six two more times before the stanza ended, including a Stubbs layup as time expired for a 39-33 advantage at the intermission.

The Owls kept the momentum going by tallying the first eight points of the second session, building a game-high 14-point cushion, 47-33, on an Andrea Taylor jumper at the 17:22 mark. Lymon then hit a triple to stop the surge and Clark also added a long-range basket 40 seconds later to trim the deficit at the 16:27 mark. Clark's 3-pointer was the first she hit since Jan. 28 against Louisiana-Lafayette.

The FAU advantage would reach 14 two more times, the last coming on a pair of Turner free throws at 9:25 following the media timeout for a 62-48 lead.

Over the course of the next five-and-a-half minutes, Middle Tennessee (23-5, 15-1 Sun Belt) outscored the Owls 15-5 in a run highlighted by treys from Lymon, Brown and Jackie Pickel. Pickel's shot from behind the 3-point arc closed the gap to four, 67-63, with 3:55 showing on the clock.

Clark then attempted to rally the Blue Raiders herself, netting the team's final seven points and grabbing three of the last six rebounds down the stretch.

She converted a layup with 28 seconds to play before the Lady Raiders were forced to foul Knurick with 17 seconds left. After Knurick missed the free throw attempt, Middle Tennessee raced down court and had a 3-point attempt by Brown rim out only to be saved by Pickel. Pickel, then in an attempt to find an open teammate, sent an errant pass to a wide-open FAU defender as the final seconds ticked off.

FAU shot 27-of-53 (50.9 percent) from the field in the game, including a 57.1 percent effort in the first half. MT finished the game with a 25-of-59 (42.4 percent) effort from the floor.

The Blue Raiders trailed at halftime for only the eighth time all season and the first since finding themselves down 28-23 at UALR Jan. 17 before coming back for the overtime victory.

Middle Tennessee will next conclude its regular-season road slate with a 5 p.m. Central tip Wednesday at Florida International in Miami.

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