

Middle Tennessee clinches Sun Belt's top seed

Blue Raiders will be the No. 1 seed at league tournament

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MIAMI - Middle Tennessee raced out to a 10-point lead in the game's first four minutes and never looked back in earning a 74-54 women's basketball road victory at FIU Wednesday night to clinch the top seed in the upcoming Sun Belt Tournament in the U.S. Century Bank Arena in Miami. The win assures the Blue Raiders of at least a regular-season share of the conference's title.

Junior Brandi Brown ignited the offense in the first half, knocking down her first five shots with the first four coming from 3-point territory. She finished with 15 points and added four rebounds, two assists and two steals in playing the full 40 minutes.



Classmate Alysha Clark surpassed the 30-point mark for the seventh-straight game to lead all players with 32 points in her first game after being named to the Naismith Trophy Mid-Season List earlier in the day. She posted the team's only two blocks, while swiping five steals and grabbing a team-best tying six rebounds.

Clark's six boards were matched by point guard Chelsia Lymon, who added three triples as part of her 14 points to give Middle Tennessee (24-5, 16-1 Sun Belt) three starters in double figures.

Monika Bosilj paced the Golden Panthers with 17 points and Michelle Gonzalez contributed a dozen. Jasmine Jenkins nearly recorded a double-double with nine points and eight rebounds for FIU (6-22, 4-13 Sun Belt).

The Lady Raiders' 10-2 start quickly closed to five, 15-10, on an Ashley Traugott layup at 12:38.

Clark and Traugott traded baskets with just under 11 minutes to play in the half before MT held FIU scoreless for the next six minutes.

During the six-minute stretch, Clark poured in eight of the team's 11 points as the Blue Raiders increased their lead to 22, 34-12, before Jenkins finally put the Golden Panthers back on the board with a layup at 4:30.

FIU again made a small run, bringing the gap to as close as 15 before the half following three free throws by Gonzalez with 1:54 remaining. Dana Garrett hit a running baseline jumper to close the opening half scoring and send the teams into the intermission with MT ahead 41-23.

Bosilj attempted to rally the Golden Panthers herself with 11 of their first 17 points of the second half, but the Lady Raiders would not allow the margin to get to less than 16 during the nine-minute period. The lead again swelled to 23 on two occasions following a 10-3 Middle Tennessee surge for a 69-46 advantage on a Pickel trey with 4:33 to go.

Lymon put the final touches on the final score with a three-point play at the 1:09 mark.

The Blue Raiders will close their regular season with a 3:30 p.m. Sunday tip against Western Kentucky inside the Murphy Center on Comcast/Charter Sports Southeast (CSS). Fans attending the game are reminded of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee's canned food drive, which will have MT student-athletes at each entrance.

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