Holmes hits last-second gamewinner for upset win

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DALLAS, Texas - Senior Patrice Holmes hit a 10-footer with 1.6 remaining for her third game-winning basket in the last four games, giving Middle Tennessee a 60-58 victory over 21st-ranked and fifth-seeded North Carolina State in the first round of the NCAA Tournament at Reunion Arena.

Holmes tied her season-high with 28 points, but none more important than the final two to help the Lady Raiders advance to the second round of NCAA play for just the third time in school history and second straight year.

Middle Tennessee led 26-25 at halftime, but the Wolfpack used a 15-4 run to take a 10-point lead with only 10 minutes to play. But the Lady Raiders picked themselves up off the deck once again, putting together a 12-0 spurt to take the lead with 5:03 remaining.

The teams traded buckets down the stretch, with N.C. State's Tiffany Stansbury's putback in the lane tying the score at 58 with less than 30 seconds left in the contest.

The Lady Raiders held the ball until 10 seconds were on the clock before running the final play, with Chrissy Givens hitting Holmes in the lane on a curl, and the senior knocking down the game-winner.

Holmes netted 12 of her points in the first half, including opening the game with two long three-pointers, more than 22 feet on each one. She scored the first six points of the second half, as well, before getting some help during the run that got Middle Tennessee back in the game.

With the Wolfpack leading 44-34 with 11:49 in the game, the defense turned up the pressure, helping the Lady Raiders get transition baskets to cut the deficit. Holmes had four points, while Ciara Gray, Chrissy Givens and Tia Stovall all added one bucket. Two free throws by Givens with 5:03 left gave Middle Tennessee its first lead since halftime, and set up the final five minutes of nip-and-tuck between the two teams.

Horton and Stovall each scored 11 points in the win, but their post defense, especially Horton and freshman Lakira Boyd, on N.C. State's leading scorer, Stansbury, was a major factor in the outcome. Stansbury finished with 16 points, but worked for all seven of her baskets.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE VS NC STATE FIRST ROUND, NCAA TOURNAMENT DALLAS, TX; MARCH 19, 2005

CAROLINA GIRLS: For the second straight year, Middle Tennessee pulled an opening round upset of a nationally-ranked team from the ACC. In 2004, the Lady Raiders downed No. 12 North Carolina and this year they took care of No. 21 North Carolina State. Middle Tennessee is now 5-4 all-time against teams from the ACC.

HOLMES HITS GAME-WINNER ... AGAIN: Miss March was at it again Saturday in Dallas, TX. For the third time in the last four games, senior Patrice Holmes hit the game-winning shot to allow the Lady Raiders to keep advancing in the postseason. Last week at the Sun Belt Conference tournament, Holmes hit a twisting shot in the paint with 12 seconds left to give Middle Tennessee an overtime win against host North Texas, 59-58. On the very next night, the Bishopville, S.C. native nailed a three-pointer with 45 seconds remaining to give the Lady Raiders a victory over conference rival Western Kentucky. On Saturday against No. 21 ranked NC State, Holmes took a pass from Chrissy Givens in the paint and dropped an eight-footer with one second left to give Middle Tennessee the victory.

LOVING TEXAS: Middle Tennessee has been loving life in the big state of Texas this season. The Lady Raiders have played six games in the Lonestar state and are a perfect 6-0. Middle Tennessee went 5-0 in Denton this season and is currently 1-0 in Dallas.

HOLMES ON A ROLL: When the lights come on in the postseason, senior Patrice Holmes puts it in another gear. In five postseason games this season, Holmes is averaging 19.6 points, 6.0 rebounds, 3.9 steals, and is shooting 50.6 percent (41-81) from the field and 34.4 percent (11-32) from the three-point line. Holmes owns eight 20-point games this year and three of them have come in the last four outings.

STRONG AT THE LINE: Middle Tennessee has been proficient at the free throw line during the postseason. In five games, the Lady Raiders have made 83.3 percent (45-54) of their shots from the charity stripe, including 8-of-11 in the win over NC State. For the season, Middle Tennessee is shooting 65.5 percent at the line.

THIRD HIGHEST OUTING: Senior Patrice Holmes' 26 points against NC State went down as the third most ever scored by a Lady Raider in the NCAA Tournament. Kim Webb owns the record with her 33-point outing against Western Kentucky in 1985 and the number two spot belongs to Alice Lawrence who had 27 points in that same game.

24 AND COUNTING: With today's win over NC State, Middle Tennessee ran its record on the season to 24-8. That marks equals the second most wins in a season by a Lady Raider team in school history. The most wins ever recorded were 26 by the 1982-83 squad. Also reaching the 24-win mark was the 1995-96 team and last year's 2003-04 club. The 48 wins over the past two seasons marks the most victories in a two-year span in Lady Raider history.

PALMER MAKES THE CALL: Dick Palmer, the voice of the Blue Raider football and men's

basketball teams, called today's Middle Tennessee-NC State NCAA Tournament game. Palmer was filling in for the departed Neil Price who left after the Sun Belt Tournament to take job with Host Communications. Prior to today, the last time Palmer called a women's basketball game was during the 1980-81 season when he called all the women's games. Today's game marked Palmer's first NCAA Tournament contest since he called the men's second round loss to Virginia in 1989.

IN THE PAINT: Middle Tennessee's victory over NC State is the biggest upset in the tournament to date as the Lady Raiders were a No. 12 seed and the Wolfpack at No. 5 seed ... The Lady Raiders are in the round of 32 for the second year in a row ... MT is now 20-3 this season when leading at the half ... The Lady Raiders' current seven-game winning streak matches its longest of the season ... Middle Tennessee ran its record to 4-8 all-time in the NCAA Tournament and two of the wins have come over the past two seasons ... Freshman Lakira Boyd equaled her career-high with five rebounds in the win over NC State ... The Lady Raiders defeated NC State despite being outscored on the bench 16-2 ... Patrice Holmes' 11 made field goal against the Wolfpack was a season-high and the most for the senior in a game since she hit 12 shots against Tennessee State on Dec. 15, 2003 - a span of 57 games.

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