

October 20, 2009

Blue Raiders win battle with Hilltoppers 3-1 Team wins three tight sets; Kozon knocks down 14

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky. - Middle Tennessee had to battle throughout the night but stayed tough to take a 3-1 (25-23, 26-24, 20-25, 26-24) win over rival Western Kentucky on Tuesday night.

The Blue Raiders knocked down 53 kills in the match for a .289 attack percentage on its way to extending its win streak to five-matches.

Junior **Izabela Kozon** had a team-high 14 kills while senior **Ashley Mead** added 11.

Middle Tennessee had just five blocks in the match while the Hilltoppers had nine total but overall the block was instrumental in keeping the Blue Raiders alive.

The Blue Raiders had 40 digs in the match with senior **Ashley Waugh** notching 12.

Service errors hurt Middle Tennessee overall as it had 17 while WKU had just six but it did have 10 service aces to offset the errors a little.

"I am a little disappointed in our serving we had 17 service errors and that is almost a game of serving that the other team is winning a game based on their serving," head coach Matt Peck said. "We did pull out the match and it was really good for me to see that when those games were tight we were fighting at the right time."

It is just the second time since Peck took over the program in 2004 that Middle Tennessee has won two matches against WKU. It is the first time during his reign the Blue Raiders have won the first two meetings.

"It is huge to get the monkey off our back. We have won here before in 2006 but we have come in here before and played some poor matches. If you look at the stats we totally controlled the match but if you look at the score it doesn't look that way," Peck said.

The two teams traded points to begin the match and were tied at 12 halfway through the first set. The Blue Raiders then started things rolling and took a 24-22 lead after a WKU player hit a ball out of bounds. A kill by Oladinni put the set away and gave the Blue Raiders a 1-0 lead in the match.

Middle Tennessee carried the momentum from the first set into the second taking an early 6-2 lead but the Hilltoppers battled back two within one-point, 10-9. WKU kept fighting and pulled ahead of the Blue Raiders by two, 21-19, late in the set.

The Hilltoppers needed just one point to win the set but Middle Tennessee won three straight to tie the match at 24. Then Mead had two straight service aces to hand the Blue



Junior Izabela Kozon had a team-high 14 kills in a 3-1 win over rival Western Kentucky. ()

Raiders the win and a 2-0 lead in the match.

Yancey went 7 for 7 in the first two sets for a 1.000 hitting percentage while Mead had six kills for a .333 attack percentage. As a team, the Blue Raiders had four blocks while WKU had one and notched six more kills than the Hilltoppers with 29. The Blue Raiders also had a hitting percentage of .423 with just seven errors in 52 attempts.

The two teams battled throughout the third set with the Hilltoppers taking a late two-point lead, 18-16. Middle Tennessee tied it at 20 but then WKU won five straight points to take a 25-20 win and force a fourth set.

WKU took control early in the fourth set taking a four-point lead, 5-1, which forced the Blue Raiders to take a timeout. Middle Tennessee fought back and took a three-point lead of its own, 14-11. The Blue Raiders then extended it to six, 19-13 late in the set.

WKU did not give up and cut the Blue Raider lead to one-point, 21-20. With the set tied 23, the Hilltoppers won the next point to take the lead. Then Middle Tennessee won two straight to take a 25-24 lead and a kill by Kozon clinched the win.

Middle Tennessee will continue its four-match road swing this weekend when it travels to Louisiana to face UL-Lafayette, UL-Monroe and New Orleans. The Blue Raiders will first face UL-Lafayette on Friday, Oct. 23 at 7 p.m.

Printed on March 21, 2010

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/41752>