

Blue Raiders drop road contest against Lady Tigers

Clark drops 16 and grabs 20 against No. 7 LSU

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BATON ROUGE, La. - No. 24 Middle Tennessee played a better second half after a sluggish start but could not fully recover in dropping a 61-40 decision at No. 7 LSU in a game televised regionally by Cox Sports Television Wednesday night inside the Pete Maravich Assembly Center in Baton Rouge, La. It marked the first win for the Lady Tigers in the last three meetings between the two schools.

The Blue Raiders struggled offensively during the first half, going through a pair of scoring droughts lasting over five minutes. Preseason All-American and reigning Sun Belt Player of the Week Alysha Clark converted 1-of-2 free throws at 12:02 to pull Middle Tennessee (1-1) within three, 13-10.

The Lady Tigers exerted control after both teams returned to the floor at 11:48 after the under-12 minute timeout. LSU's own All-American, Allison Hightower, stepped to the line for three free throws and the hosts never looked back. She drained all three charity tosses to begin a 12-0 spurt until Dana Garrett drove to the hoop for a layup at 6:42.

LSU (2-0) continued to add to its lead, using a pair of Hightower buckets and four points also from



Taylor Turnbow to stretch its advantage to 35-12 at under a minute. The Blue Raiders went into the locker room trailing by 20, however, when Jackie Pickel hit a half-court bomb as time expired to make the score, 35-15.

Pickel continued to blanket Hightower on the defensive end during the second stanza, limiting her to just two field goals in 33 minutes.

Clark, meanwhile, became the focal point of the MT offensive attack as the Blue Raiders looked for ways to get the ball to their All-American. She may not have equaled her total from a year ago, but she found ways to get the ball through the net and finished with a team-high 16 points. Clark tallied six of the team's opening eight points of the second half and added a layup with 7:11 left to cut the deficit to 16, 50-34. It would be the closest Middle Tennessee would get the remainder of the game.

While Clark did not reach her usual scoring output, she hauled in 20 rebounds, including 12 on the defensive end. It is the most boards she has accumulated since becoming a Blue Raider and is tied for the eighth-highest effort in school history. The last Middle Tennessee player to grab at least 20 caroms was Priscilla Robinson at Arkansas State Dec. 1, 1990.

Her double-double is her second straight, 19th of her Blue Raider career and 57th overall as a collegian.

Turnbow finished with a game-high 17 points and added 12 rebounds to lead the Lady Tigers. LaSondra Barrett was the only other LSU player to reach double figures with 10 points.

Middle Tennessee will return to action at 7 p.m. Saturday when it travels to Clarksville, Tenn., to battle Austin Peay. The Lady Gobs represent the third-straight NCAA Tournament foe from a year ago to open the season for the Blue Raiders.

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