Blue Raiders advance with 3-1 win over UALR

Peck records 700th win

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky. - Middle Tennessee battled to the end but pulled out a 3-1 (25-15, 21-25, 25-14, 25-23) victory over Arkansas-Little Rock to hand head coach Matt Peck his 700th victory. The Blue Raiders hit just .194 in the match with 53 kills but outhit UALR who had 36 kills for a .103 attack percentage. "After the first game I was expecting us to shake them off pretty quickly and they proved me wrong. In the second set, I looked over and it looked like we were the ones who had lost the first set. We have had a problem with that this season and we need to solve it tomorrow," Peck said. "UALR is a very tall team and when our offense is predictable we are not too hard to defend. We need to do a better job with our serves, ball control and staying in system tomorrow." Senior Ashley Mead led the Blue Raiders with 18 kills with a .282 attack percentage while junior Izabela Kozon added 10 kills. The Blue Raiders had three less blocks than UALR who had 13 total but senior Janay Yancey led the team with five block assists. Senior Leslie Clark tallied 42 assists on the night and 12 digs while senior Ashley Waugh had a team high 15 digs. Kozon recorded her fourth straight double-double with 11 digs. "I guess it is a good sign when only two of our attackers (Mead and Yancey) had a good match and we won in four so I am pretty sure tomorrow we will have a couple more players step up," Peck said. The two teams traded points to begin the match with neither taking more than a two-point lead until the Blue Raiders pulled ahead by four-points, 14-10 at the halfway mark. The Behind the serve of Clark, Middle Tennessee scored eight straight after that to make it 22-10. Middle Tennessee allowed UALR to score just five more points in the set as it cruised to a 25-15 win. The Blue Raiders started the

second set off slow letting UALR take a 14-7 lead after two reception errors by Kozon. UALR then had two more service aces to increase its lead to 10-points, 18-8. Middle Tennessee started a rally and closed the gap to five, 23-18, forcing UALR to call a timeout. The Blue Raiders kept fighting making it a three-point game, 24-21 as the Trojans used their final timeout. Middle Tennessee could not hold out for the win as it fell to UALR 25-21. The Blue Raiders had a .357 hitting percentage after the first set but it fell t0 .250 after the second set loss. Mead led the team in kills with nine while Oladinni and Kozon each had five after two sets. The Blue Raiders and UALR battled in the third set and after three big blocks by the front row took a three-point lead, 13-10. Middle Tennessee continued to pull away taking a seven-point lead, 18-11. Middle Tennessee took a late 10-point lead, 24-10, and needed just one to take a 2-1 lead in the match which it got after a kill by Cheatham. The Blue Raiders took a 7-4 lead in the fourth set after a kill by Yancey. UALR trailed 12-7 but did not give up tying the fourth set at 18 after going on a 9-5 run. UALR then took a two-point lead, 21-19 late but the Blue Raiders won two straight to tie it at 21. A block by Clark and Wistrick gave Middle Tennessee a 24-23 lead and a chance at match point. The Blue Raiders won the match on an attack error by Bucur to advance to the semifinals of the Sun Belt Championships. Middle Tennessee will face Western Kentucky in the semi-finals on Friday, Nov. 20 at 7 p.m. In the other semi-final match Florida International will play New Orleans at 5 p.m.

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