

# Pickel notches first double-double; Queen records sixth of career

## Blue Raiders with fourth straight

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### **MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -**

Middle Tennessee women's basketball proved it was more of a team than just All-American Alysha Clark as the Blue Raiders cruised to an 83-54 triumph over Louisiana Sunday afternoon inside the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn. Four players, including three starters, reached double-figure scoring and a pair - senior Jackie Pickel and junior Emily Queen - each had a double-double in the victory.

Clark missed the first game of her Middle Tennessee (8-4, 3-0 Sun Belt) career, snapping a streak of 50. She had started the last 102 games of her career, dating back to her time at Belmont before transferring.

Pickel stepped up to lead the offensive attack, hitting five 3-pointers, including her first three, on her way to a career-high 27 points. She also swiped a career-best 10

steals, one shy of Chrissy Givens' school record set at New Orleans January 13, 2007. The double-double is the first in the career for the Cleveland, Tenn., native, who also contributed five rebounds and five assists in 37 minutes to cap one of her best weeks as a Blue Raider.

Queen added her first double-double of the campaign, and sixth overall of her career, with a season-high 12 points and a season-best tying 13 rebounds. The baker's dozen boards are two shy of a career high for the Ashland, Ky., product.



Fellow junior Anne Marie Lanning was the other starter to reach double figures with 11 behind three 3-pointers. Freshman Icelyn Elie came off the bench to post career highs of 11 points and five rebounds on 4-of-5 from the field and 3-of-4 at the foul line.

Alexis Green and Mercedes Johnson paced the Ragin' Cajuns with 16 points apiece, while Johnson hauled in a team-best seven boards. They were the only Louisiana (4-10, 0-3 Sun Belt) players to reach double figures and Green connected on the team's lone 3-point attempt.

Lyndra Bell put the Cajuns ahead early on an old-fashioned three-point play to start the game before Pickel answered to tie it with her first triple at 17:46. After Pickel hit another 39 seconds later the Blue Raiders never looked back.

Louisiana kept the score within single digits through much of the half until Brandi Brown registered a pair of free throws on a three-shot foul with 2:32 left for a 30-20 advantage. Elie tallied four of the team's last seven points of the half as MT entered the intermission with a 37-24 edge.

The Blue Raiders never let the lead slip again into single digits during the second 20 minutes, opening a 20-point lead, 50-30, on a Pickel trey with 15:11 to play. Dymon Raynor then added a pair of jumpers for a 22-point cushion, 54-32, and the advantage swelled to 25 on back-to-back 3-pointers from Chelsia Lymon with just over nine minutes to go.

Middle Tennessee did not let up offensively or defensively the remainder of the game as the margin grew to as high as 32 following a Lanning 3-pointer with 2:23 left to make the score 80-48.

The Blue Raiders return to action when they hit the road for a pair of games in Arkansas this week, beginning at 7 p.m. Wednesday in Jonesboro, Ark., against Arkansas State. Middle Tennessee then will close the road swing with a 4:30 p.m. Saturday meeting against UALR in Little Rock, Ark.

### **Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes Head Coach Rick Insell**

#### *On playing without Alysha Clark*

We did not plan on that at the beginning of the day. The girls knew they had to step up and some people around here have wanted to see the freshmen and they got to see them today in a crucial situation. You do not want to start experimenting during conference play, but Icelyn, Kortni (Jones) and Dymon did well. There are still some things we need to work on but it gives us an idea.

#### *On Jackie Pickel's game*

We needed our older kids out there and Jackie and Anne Marie stepped up on the perimeter. Jackie's 10 steals and 27 points were big. Anne Marie hit some big shots down the stretch. Emily's play on the boards was big early. So her rebounding, Jackie's hustle and Anne Marie and Chelsia's leadership was the big difference in the ball game.

#### *On the length of Alysha's absence*

We are hoping to have her back this week, but that will be up to the trainers and doctors. Right now she is going to get treatment and I know if she can come back she will and if she cannot she will not. We will just have to go in there and play without her like we did today. We know what our goals are and we cannot back off when AC goes down.

*On the momentum of four straight wins heading out on the road*

This is a big week. Last time we went to Arkansas State, they handed it to us and we had a pretty good basketball team, so right now our mind will be on Arkansas State. After that, we will stay down there and travel on down to Little Rock to prepare for them. We are up for the task. I will take the team and we will go do our job.

*On Icelyn Elie's game*

Emily and Jackie will tell you that Icelyn is a decent player. She guards them everyday and they will tell you that she is a battler. We just need to get her a little confidence and hopefully did that today. That let us know as a coaching staff that we can play her more. She went in, got five rebounds and was 4-fo-5 from the field. That is what we ask her to do. We need someone to give Emily a break every once in a while until she is back to 100 percent.

**Jackie Pickel**

*On having a double-double*

I always try to play as hard as I can, but I knew without Alysha not only are you taking away points, but you are taking away defense, rebounds and leadership. Chelsia and I were talking before the game about being seniors too and we have to show the freshmen that you can be a role player at times, but you also have to step it up when your team needs you. Everyone on our team did it today.

*On playing without Alysha*

If you go back to last year at Florida Atlantic, Alysha was sick and she ended up playing that game, but all day we were worried about her not knowing if she was going to play or not. We were not focused enough then and I think that is the motivation when any player is out. We cannot just sit there and think about her not being there and wish she was and think about all the things that could go wrong we just have to go out and play and be focused. Our younger girls are going to be good. Four years under Coach Insell will probably make them better than us. They show that everyday in practice and we told them before the game that they are going to have to step up and they showed a lot of character in doing that.

**Emily Queen**

*On playing without Alysha |*

I knew I had to go in focused and play smart like coach told me to do. Especially on the boards, that is 10 rebounds from Alysha we were not going to have, so I knew I needed to get in there, box out and get on the boards.

*On playing with a healing knee*

My knee feels good. But like coach said, I am not in game shape. Hopefully, by the end of January, I will be feeling a lot better. But my knee is not really giving me any problems right now.

**Louisiana Postgame Quotes**

**Head Coach Errol Rogers**

*Opening Statement*

We played defense like I thought we would have early in the game. When you turn the ball over 30 times --15 in the first half and 15 in the second half -- a lot of them were unforced turnovers. I think

we did a good job pressing. We had chances in the first half to have the lead or be closer. I was ok with being down 13 at halftime. Middle Tennessee stepped up to another level.

*On Jackie Pickel*

Jackie Pickel played well, but Pickel plays well a lot. We knew coming into the game, it is the type of offense he (MT head coach Rick Insell) runs. That if she gets a good look, there is a good chance she is going to make it. We did not close out on her. She is a good shooter. If you leave a good shooter wide open, they are going to nail it. She played good and consistently.

*On Alysha Clark not being in the game*

As the game went on, they realized they could do this without Clark. You could tell at first they were not shooting. They are so used to having that person in the middle playing. In the second half, they started realizing that they could do this without her.

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