Clark's double-double not enough at UALR

All-American leads all players with 24 points, 10 rebounds

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LITTLE ROCK, Ark. - Middle Tennessee redshirt senior Alysha Clark outscored her high-scoring counterpart of UALR, Chastity Reed, but her performance alone could not lift the Blue Raiders to a victory as they fell, 63-43, on the road against the Trojans Saturday inside the Jack Stephens Center in Little Rock, Ark.

Clark, who returned to action after missing the last two games, was the only consistent threat on the either end, as she poured in a game-high 24 points and 10 rebounds. She knocked down 10-of-18 field goals and 4-of-5 free throws to counter a Middle Tennessee (9-5, 4-1 Sun Belt) offense, which failed to hit a 3-pointer for the first time in 168 games. The last time the Blue Raiders did not hit a triple was Feb. 7, 2005, against FIU.

She entered the game ranked fifth nationally and second in the conference in scoring, a year after finishing as the top point producer in the country. Reed, the reigning Sun Belt Player of the Week, came into the contest with a slight edge over Clark, placing fourth nationally and tops in the league.

Middle Tennessee, however, did a solid job on Reed defensively, holding her to 4-of-17 from the floor for just 11 points, less than half of her average. Despite not scoring as often as she normally does, the junior led all players with 10 assists, half of her team's total and two more than the combined Blue Raider effort.

Asriel Rolfe and Shanika Butler led UALR (11-5, 4-1 Sun Belt) with 13 points each, while Marian Kursh also added 11 to put four Trojan starters in double figures. Rolfe converted the game's only 3-pointers, draining three from behind the arc, while Butler hauled in a team-high eight caroms.

The game opened with the squads trading baskets and Brandi Brown giving MT a 10-9 advantage on a layup with 14:41 to play in the first half. Butler answered right back 21 seconds later and UALR never looked back, using a 14-4 run covering just over six minutes to crack open a nine-point cushion, 23-14, following a Rolfe layup with 8:25 left.

The lead reached double digits for the first time two minutes later on an old-fashioned three-point play from Butler. The net continued to remain open for the hosts, as Middle Tennessee could manage only six more points the remainder of the half, all from Clark, to trail at the break, 34-20.

Clark registered six of the first eight Blue Raider points to start the second half, helping to trim the deficit to a dozen, 40-28, at the 15:17 mark, but MT would get no closer the remainder of the game. With the Blue Raiders struggling from the floor, the Trojans took advantage and increased their margin to 23, 55-32, with exactly four minutes to go on a Reed free throw, her last point of the contest.

Middle Tennessee's subs came in for the final stretch. Tina Stewart tallied five points, while Dymon Raynor contributed four during the game's last few minutes.

The Blue Raiders will return to action when they return home to the Murphy Center for a pair of games, beginning at 7 p.m. Wednesday against FIU. The homestand will also include a 2 p.m. Saturday tilt against Florida Atlantic.

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