Records shatter as Middle Tennessee runs past North Texas

Brown sets career 3-point mark; Blue Raiders tally single-game record

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Senior Brandi Brown became the program's all-time leader in 3-pointers made, but it was just one of many school records which fell Saturday afternoon, as Middle Tennessee defeated North Texas 119-51 in Sun Belt women's basketball action inside the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The Blue Raiders used a 28-0 first-half run after trailing early to put the Mean Green away and never look back. Among the 28 consecutive points was an 11-0 spurt in under a minute, capped off by Brown's record triple from the right wing at 16:36.

The Preseason First Team All-Sun Belt selection began her solid day by connecting on the first Middle Tennessee (15-5, 10-1 Sun Belt) points, a 3-pointer from the right corner at 19:10, after North Texas had jumped out to a 4-0 lead.

Brittany James then gave the Mean Green their largest lead on a jumper at 18:30 for a 6-3 edge, but senior Jackie Pickel answered with a layup 57 seconds later to start the 11-0 stretch. As the next minute passed, Brown lined up for the record-breaking shot and hit nothing but net to surpass Heather Prater (1993-96) for the all-time Blue Raider mark with her 225th career 3-pointer at 16:36.

Middle Tennessee continued to swarm defensively, forcing numerous turnovers by North Texas (6-16, 3-8 Sun Belt) over the course of the next five minutes, while not missing many opportunities of its own on the other end to mount the 28-0 run. The Blue Raiders converted 9-of-12 field goals and all five free throws during the stretch before Niq'ky Hughes ended the drought with a 3-pointer at 11:19.

The points continued to add up for MT, as Pickel and Brown hit back-to-back 3-pointers, pushing the advantage to 40, 51-11, with 7:50 remaining in the period. The Mean Green sliced the deficit to as close as 37, 56-19, for the closest margin the remainder of the stanza, but Anne Marie Lanning capped the Blue Raiders' first half scoring with a 3-pointer with 28 seconds to play before Torrian Timms closed the session with a layup for a 64-26 halftime score.

The 64 first half points are the second most in school history, trailing only the 67 netted against Maryville Dec. 6, 1976. It is the second-straight game in which Middle Tennessee has posted at least 60 in the opening 20 minutes against North Texas, topping the 62 scored in last year's meeting.

The Blue Raiders also hit a dozen first half 3-pointers, tying the school record set at New Orleans Jan. 28, 2006.

Middle Tennessee did not let up on the pedal in the second half, quickly jumping out to a 43-point lead on a Lymon 3-pointer with 16:39 to play. The teams would trade baskets over the next two minutes with All-American Alysha Clark against giving the Blue Raiders a 43-point edge, 79-36, with 14:56 left.

Clark's basket ignited another long Middle Tennessee run, this time a 23-0 spurt covering the next four minutes. Fittingly, Brown capped this streak again with a 3-pointer, increasing the Blue Raider advantage to 100-36, a 64-point margin, with 10:45 to go.

Tamara Torru and Hughes then combined to tally seven of the Mean Green's next nine points, closing the visitors within 59, 104-45, at 6:12. Middle Tennessee would go on a 15-2 spurt in the next four-and-a-half minutes, with a pair of Kortni Jones free throws extending the lead to a game-high 72 points, 119-47, with 1:54 remaining.

A basket each by Torrian Timms and Raquel Cuffie provided the team's final points and 68-point margin.

The Blue Raiders set a single-game school record with its 119 points, surpassing the 116 set in the aforementioned Maryville contest. The 68-point victory is the third-largest in school history, falling five shy of the standard of 73 set in a 105-32 triumph at Alabama-Huntsville Feb. 3, 1988.

Middle Tennessee also tied its school standard for 3-pointers, nailing 20 from behind the mark. The total equals the Blue Raider effort at Louisville Dec. 9, 2009, and is one shy of the NCAA all-time record.

Hughes paced North Texas with 19 points on 9-of-13 field goals, while Timms hauled in a game-best 12 rebounds, including nine on the defensive glass.

Middle Tennessee was led by 28 points from Pickel, who had an all-around solid outing, adding seven steals, six assists and five rebounds in just 29 minutes. She drained 6-of-8 3-pointers, inching up the career 3-pointers list herself with 217 for third place.

Brown added 27 points in 30 minutes behind a 7-of-8 effort from long range and 10-of-13 overall from the field. The seven triples matches her career high, set against North Dakota State Jan. 2, 2007.

Clark chipped in 20 points, while matching Pickel for the team-best six assists and equaling Lanning for the team-high of six rebounds.

It is the second time in the last three games - also at Western Kentucky Jan. 24 - three Blue Raider starters have scored at least 20 points.

Lanning poured in 12 points, including nine from 3-point territory, while Lymon contributed nine to round out the starters' 96-point outing.

Jones set a career-best with eight points, including the first two treys of her Middle Tennessee career, while Dymon Raynor grabbed a career-high tying five boards and blocked a career-best tying two shots.

Sophomore Molly McFadden grabbed a career-high four rebounds, while her three points equals her career best.

The Blue Raiders scored a season-high 53 points off 34 Mean Green turnovers. Middle Tennessee shot 43-of-86 (50.0 percent) from the field, 20-of-34 (58.8 percent) from 3-point land and 13-of-15 (86.7 percent) from the foul line to garner the convincing win.

The three-game homestand will conclude at 7 p.m. Wednesday when the Blue Raiders play host to Troy inside the Murphy Center. The Trojans will enter the contest with an 11-9 overall and 4-7 Sun Belt ledger.

Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes
Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening comments
When we shoot and hit threes like we did today, we can play anybody in the country. If we can maintain that for another 10-to-12 games, that is going to be the difference in our basketball team. We are passing the ball a lot better now and we are getting a little healthier. That is the bottom line. Jackie felt better today, Brandi felt better today and Anne Marie felt better today. Alysha's been banged up all year too and so has Chelsia. When we feel good, we can play a little better so I was real proud of them.

On the 40-point lead
We talked about it a bunch. The day after we came back, they were remembering it. It is pretty tough. We did not really work Jackie, Brandi, Alysha and Chelsia that day; we worked the freshmen. And it was a pretty intense workout. That is what we talked about. They played with a little more intensity today. We went after more rebounds, a few more deflections and was able to finish a little better.

On the comfort level of playing at home
I think it is these people; it is our fans. Our girls talk about that all of the time. Every time you

interview them they talk about the fans. Those fans hang around, they talk to them and the girls go up in the crowd and sit with them. Our fans feel like this is their team and that is what I wanted when I came here. The kids like to play in front of those people.

On the league race
I am not approaching it any different. We are talking about the NCAA Tournament right now. We are talking about having some tough games on the road with the two Florida trips, Mobile and Troy. Those have always been our toughest trips. People might think it is Little Rock, Arkansas State, Denver and North Texas, but it has not been. It has been those trips. I do not know if it is because we are a little fatigued at the end of the year, but it is always been at the end of the year that we have to take those trips. The only time we did not falter in going down there was when we did not have to take it at the end of the year. We know what we have to do and we know we still have a tough conference schedule left. We will have to play a really tough game Wednesday night against Troy.

Brandi Brown

On setting the all-time 3-point record
It is just an honor. We are not focused on records; we are focused on winning. But it is an honor to do something like that.

On being in a good place in the last month of the regular season
I think getting the younger girls some experience is going to help us out a lot, and they played really well tonight. We have had a few practices where they have had really good opportunities to step in there and show what they are capable of.

Jackie Pickel

On today's game approach and what was said at halftime
Coach mentioned that last time we had a 40-point lead and only ended up winning by 18, and if we are going to be a great team, we have to go out there and play our game no matter what the score is. He always brings up UConn and how they never let go of anybody. If they have a 30-point lead, they are still diving on those balls and that is the kind of team we want to be and what we want to be remembered as.

On the reason for playing so well at home
Those people out there that are yelling and getting on their feet is the reason. It is such an honor to play in front of this crowd because women's basketball is not a top priority in a lot of schools. I think we are very fortunate here because when we travel around the Sun Belt and play in front of crowds of just a couple hundred and it is very disheartening. The seniors were talking about how we only have a couple of more games to play in front of this crowd. It is just fun.

North Texas Postgame Quotes
Head Coach Shanice Stephens

On the game
Our team was just overwhelmed. It was disappointing to have that kind of showing. Middle Tennessee is a great team. But we gave them a leg up with not being able to handle the pressure. Thirty-four turnovers, getting out rebounded and letting them shoot 50 percent from the field and 58

percent from 3-point. It was just a really disappointing showing tonight.

On a lot of clean looks at the basket for MT

They got some incredibly clean looks. To shoot 58 percent, you have to have daylight. Our game plan was not to give them daylight. We kept one down on Clark and people were just falling asleep. They had some really good movement on the perimeter and was really just too easy for them.

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