Four players in double figures push Middle Tennessee past Troy

Blue Raiders win seventh straight

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Four starters scored at least 14 points and a hot-shooting first half lifted the Middle Tennessee women's basketball team to an 84-51 victory over Troy Wednesday night in Sun Belt action inside the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The Blue Raiders scorched the nets during the opening 20 minutes for the second-straight game, knocking down 20-of-36 from the field, including eight 3-pointers, to jump out to a comfortable lead early.

Sarah McAppion posted the game's first bucket 46 seconds in, but Middle Tennessee (16-5, 11-1 Sun Belt) responded with the next nine - five from senior Jackie Pickel and four via redshirt senior All-American Alysha Clark - over the next three minutes to claim a 9-2 edge. Pickel drained her second consecutive triple at 14:07, giving MT its first double-digit advantage, at 11, 17-6.

Junior Anne Marie Lanning then took control, tallying the Blue Raiders' next eight points before senior Brandi Brown drained a pair of 3-pointers of her own to cap a 14-2 spurt, covering just over three minutes, to open a 31-8 lead with 10:53 to play.

Tenia Manuel halted the run, registering the Trojans' first points in nearly four minutes, but the

Middle Tennessee seniors continued to dominate the scoring column, with Dana Garrett notching a set of back-to-back layups and Pickel adding a jumper following a Chelsia Lymon steal for a 46-14 advantage with 6:18 remaining.

Alyce Shearing then kicked off seven consecutive points for Troy (11-10, 4-8 Sun Belt) before Lanning closed the half with a 3-pointer to send the teams into the intermission with MT ahead, 49-21.

The two teams traded baskets during the opening six minutes of the second period and Lymon recorded her only field goal of the game, from behind the arc, to give the Blue Raiders a 65-32 cushion at 13:32.

The Trojans, however, did not back down and used an 8-0 run, featuring five points by McAppion and a 3-pointer from Brittnie Davis to pull within 25, 65-40, with 11:20 left.

Over the course of the next six minutes Middle Tennessee pushed its lead back to 30, 77-47, on a Clark layup. The margin swelled to a game-high 34, 84-50, with 1:07 to go on a Molly McFadden jumper.

Brown finished with a game-high 19 points, including four 3-pointers to tie for game-high honors with Lanning. Lanning's four triples were part of an 18-point outing. Clark chipped in 15 points for her 45th consecutive double-figure scoring game and a team-best seven rebounds.

Pickel added 14 points, while Lymon had just four, but swiped a game-high seven steals and tied Clark for the game best of six assists.

The Blue Raiders finished with 23 assists on their 32 field goals and forced 26 Troy turnovers. Middle Tennessee converted the miscues into 33 points and used a 34-to-12 edge in the paint and 14-to-3 difference in bench scoring to hold off the Trojans.

Davis paced Troy with 15 points, including one-half of the team's half-dozen treys. McAppion finished with 10 points, while Donette McNair hauled in a game-high 13 rebounds. Thirteen of her 16 caroms came on the defensive glass.

The Blue Raiders, winners of seven straight, will hit the road for their next game, a 3:30 p.m. Saturday tipoff in Mobile, Ala., against South Alabama.

Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes
Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening Statement
Probably the difference in the game was early turnovers and also us getting out of the gates quick again. AC (Alysha Clark) was not in real good shape tonight. She missed a couple of practices with a stomach virus, and we did not know how much we would get out of her tonight, but she had a yeoman's effort with 15 points and seven rebounds.

Thoughts on playing better lately
Right now we are playing with a lot of confidence in each other. They know that each of them has each other's back. They do not get caught up in missing a shot or a defensive assignment.

Kortni (Jones) is coming in a giving Chelsia a break and she needs it. What does that say about her, playing with one arm and having seven steals and six assists.

Thoughts on the seniors
They are soaking in every minute of playing time that they have left in front of this crowd and on this floor. Just look at their body language. One of the reasons that AC came and played tonight was she knows she only had three games left on this floor.

On the quick start
We knew that AC was a little sick. We just played with a little more urgency. Brandi had four more threes. She not just sliding thru that record, she is sprinting thru it.

With a team that has as many personalities as this one does, they all get along great. In 35 years of coaching, I have never had a team as close as this one. They also have a mindset now of what I want, and they are already getting in it.

Brandi Brown

On shooting threes
As much as we practice and shoot, I think they should always fall. That is just my take on it.

Anne Marie Lanning

On winning streak
After we lost at Little Rock, it was like it always is when we have adversity. We know we have to get it all back together.

As bad as I hated to lose at Little Rock, it showed us what we had to work on. It showed that we needed people to step up and do what we needed to do.

We are just clicking on all cylinders right now. It has to do with our practices. We are working on our transitions and we shoot for 30 minutes every day.

Everybody knows us as a defensive, pressing team, and I think they might come in a little intimidated at first, but our main focus has been team discipline. It has really been working with Jackie, Chelsia and Alysha on getting so many steals.

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