

# Blue Raider seniors go out in style on record-breaking afternoon

## Final home game for five players

February 21, 2010 · Athletic Communications

**MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -** Middle Tennessee's senior class undoubtedly will go down as one of the finest sets in school history; however, Sunday afternoon the five players raised their game to a new level as they ended their Murphy Center careers with a 100-78 victory over South Alabama in Sun Belt Conference women's basketball action.

The five seniors all played key roles for the Blue Raiders, as several records were tied or broken during the afternoon affair. Middle Tennessee (20-5, 15-1 Sun Belt) won its 20th game of the season for the seventh-straight campaign, extending a school record. The triumph was the 100th overall for this year's senior class and the 64th against a conference opponent, extending a Sun Belt standard for most regular-season conference wins.

The Blue Raiders, who clinched an outright Sun Belt East Division crown with the victory, also tallied at least 100 points in consecutive games, following Wednesday's 106-point outing at Troy, to mark the first time in the Rick Insell era (2006-present) the feat has been accomplished. MT also has now netted at least 90 points in four consecutive games, a mark which it had never posted more than 90 or more in longer than a two-game stretch since Insell took the reigns of the program five years ago.



Senior All-American Alysha Clark closed her home career with a Murphy Center record 47 points, dropping in her final basket with 1:19 remaining to pull the Blue Raiders within a pair of the century mark. The 47 points top her previous arena standard of 45, set in last season's home finale against Western Kentucky. It ties for the third most in a game in Division I this year.

The Mt. Juliet, Tenn., native scored her season-high 47 points on a school record and career-high 22 field goals. Her 32 field goal attempts are also a career best, falling one shy of the MT mark. She added 13 rebounds, eight on the offensive glass, six assists, three blocked shots and three steals in 34 minutes.

Her double-double is her 15th of the season, 32nd as a Blue Raider and 70th of her career, keeping her at seventh on the NCAA's all-time list for career double-doubles.

Not to be out-done, fellow senior Chelsia Lymon registered the first double-double of her career and approached a quadruple-double along the way. She knocked down 13 points, including a 3-pointer with 5:36 to play, on a Clark assist, to become the third Middle Tennessee player this season and the 23rd overall in school history to surpass 1,000 career points.

Lymon's double-double was complimented by a Middle Tennessee-record tying 14 assists, eclipsing her previous career best by five, set against South Alabama in last year's Sun Belt Tournament quarterfinals. The 14 assists tie Jennifer McFall's school record set January 16, 1985, against Chattanooga and also for the sixth most in an NCAA Division I game this season. She added seven rebounds, one shy of a career high, and six steals in 39 minutes.

Senior Jackie Pickel poured in 11 points, including three triples to reach double-figure scoring for the eighth consecutive contest. She moved to 57 points shy of the 1,000-point plateau.

Senior Brandi Brown chipped in just two points, but grabbed four rebounds, dished two assists, swiped two steals and blocked one shot.

Final senior Dana Garrett came off the bench to record seven points and haul in four boards on 3-of-6 from the floor.

Junior Anne Marie Lanning provided a spark, draining a team-high six 3-pointers for her 18 points to finish behind Clark on the Blue Raider leaderboard.

The only other points tallied by Middle Tennessee came on freshman Icelyn Elie's lone shot, a layup with 23 seconds to go, to reach the century mark.

The Lady Jags placed four players in double figures, led by 19 from Shakira Nettles. Christian Shelter contributed 13 points, while Vannessa Simmons and Brittney Rutledge notched 10 apiece off the bench.

Shaniece Brunner collected a team-best seven caroms, as South Alabama (14-14, 9-8 Sun Belt) won the battle on the boards by two, 39-37.

USA jumped out to an early 7-3 lead, as Nettles hit the team's first five points, including a 3-pointer. However, the Blue Raiders responded with a 14-2 spurt featuring eight Clark points and triples by Pickel and Lymon to take an eight-point edge, 17-9, with 14:28 left in the first half.

Clark's layup at 10:41 made it a 10-point advantage, 25-15, but South Alabama hung around and benefited from a 14-9 run over the next five minutes to pull within five, 34-29, capped by seven-straight Shelter points. MT quickly turned the tide back in its favor, jumping the margin back to double figures by the end of the half, scoring seven of the final nine points, including a put-back by Garrett as the buzzer sounded to take a 54-38 halftime lead.

Garrett's bucket followed a sequence in which Middle Tennessee missed its previous four shots on the possession within the final 28 seconds and Clark grabbed the offensive rebound off the first three attempts, all 3-pointers, before her own miss was hauled in by Garrett for the short-range jumper.

Two quick buckets and Lady Jag turnovers in the first 37 seconds alarmed the South Alabama bench, forcing a timeout to be called just 38 ticks into the second half. The deficit stayed at 20, 60-40, on a Clark jumper, but USA answered with a 10-4 run, featuring five points from Sarda Peterson, to trim the gap to 14, 64-50, with 16:11 to play.

Once again, Middle Tennessee responded with a 13-2 spurt, covering just over four minutes, as the hosts opened up their largest lead of the game to that point, a 25-point cushion at 77-52, with 12:59 to go.

The pesky Lady Jags did not quit and used a 9-3 streak to close the margin to 19, 80-61, as the halfway point of the second period elapsed. The Blue Raiders would not let the visitors get any closer and built a game-high 28-point advantage, 94-66, following Lymon's record-breaking 3-pointer and Pickel's trey at 5:18.

The lead would hover around 20 points the remainder of the game, dipping to 18 on a Simmons jumper at 1:35, before Middle Tennessee tallied the final four points to reach the century mark.

The Blue Raiders will hit the road for their final two regular-season games. Middle Tennessee begins the stretch at 7 p.m. Wednesday against FIU in Miami, Fla. The Blue Raiders won the first meeting between the two schools this year, 90-58, January 13 in Murfreesboro.

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

#### *On records and senior day*

Big, emotional day. I was concerned about coming in with our focus because of Pink Zone and it also being our Senior Day. It was not the typical Senior Day because these kids love playing here and they love their fans, parents and the fans love them. They are so close to everybody that it was a tough situation. It was even tough on me too. A couple of times I got caught up in the game watching them play.

#### *On having only six turnovers*

We have been working on that. Our turnovers, if you look over the last seven or eight games, have gone down. The other night against Troy, we might have had 18, but we created 32 or something. Many of those 18 were unforced turnovers. Today we took care of the basketball. Anne Marie had one turnover late, but we took care of the ball and I was really pleased with that. We had to shoot the ball pretty good because if we had not it would have been a closer game.

#### *On seniors*

Alysha is a very special player. All of them are, Chelsia, Jackie, Brandi and even Dana coming in for the two years she has been here. They are a very special group. Dana came right in from day one and took it. The other group coming behind them will be different, but somebody will step up. Just like they did for Patrice Holmes, Chrissy Givens and Amber Holt, somebody will step up for this group.

### **Chelsia Lymon**

#### *On hitting the 1,000 point mark*

I really was not thinking about it. I just wanted us to win and play together. I was basically trying to wait, let it come to me and not force anything. I am excited I got to do it in front of the fans and my family. Once Alysha pounded it in my face three times, I just decided to shoot it.

#### *On staying focused during the game*

It was hard. All day yesterday and today I was trying to focus on the game and what is at-hand right now. But even in the back of my mind I knew I was going to have to talk to people. I got a call from one of my family members telling me that there was no pressure, but they wanted me to get 11 points. So those were probably the hardest 13 points I have ever had to get. It was hard to keep that out of the back of my mind and concentrate.

### **Alysha Clark**

#### *On the personal meaning of senior day*

It meant a lot of things. It has been a long time coming and it was special for me because I have not been here all four years. To be a part of a team that is so close, so special and being able to play in this environment is so different. I am truly blessed to have been a part of this and coming up to MT. I would not change it for anything.

---

*Printed on August 1, 2014*

*Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/44066>*