# Middle Tennessee drops 76-66 setback to Chattanooga in Insell's debut

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**CHATTANOOGA, Tenn.** - Middle Tennessee began a new era in women's basketball with a tough 76-66 loss against Chattanooga in Rick Insell's debut as the Blue Raider head coach here Friday. An estimated crowd of 1,544, more than 500 of which made the trip from the midstate to support the Blue Raiders, watched as the Lady Mocs (1-1) used a second-half spurt to take control of the game and secure the victory. "I was excited about it being my first collegiate game during the day but I'm more disappointed to lose my first collegiate game," said Insell, who spent 28 years building a national high school dynasty at Shelbyville High School before being named the seventh women's head coach in Middle Tennessee history last May. "This isn't about me, it's about our young ladies and I thought they put forth great effort tonight, we just didn't win the game," Insell said. "Chattanooga is a very good basketball team and we knew this would be a tremendous challenge. It's our first game and I told our players and our coaches that we can't be too up if we win and if we can't be too down if we lose. I would be disappointed if we were in midseason form right now because there would be no room for improvement. As you all saw tonight, we have plenty of room for improvement." Chrissy Givens led Middle Tennessee in what was a career night for the junior guard from Monroe, La. She tied her career high of 18 points, pulled down a career-best 15 rebounds and dished out seven assists, also tying a career high in that category. Krystle Horton was the only other Blue Raider in double figures with 14, while freshman Johnna Abney finished with eight points. "It's disappointing because I know we can play better," Givens said. "It wasn't as much as what Chattanooga did to us as what we did to ourselves. We just have to keep improving, and we will." The game was tied 28-28 at the intermission as Middle Tennessee stormed back from a sluggish start to get back in the game. The Blue Raiders were down 15-3 seven minutes into the game, but Horton led a furious comeback and ignited a 20-9 run during a seven-minute span to send Middle Tennessee into the half with the momentum. The second-half remained tight and hotly-contested until Chattanooga erased a 32-32- tie at the 16:04 mark with a 12-2 run during a four-

minute stretch to take a 44-34 lead with 12:01 remaining. Middle Tennessee got to within six on several occasions down the stretch but could not overcome the deficit as Chattanooga took advantage of its trips to the charity stripe. The Lady Mocs were 20-of-28 from the line in the second half and were able to curtail Middle Tennessee comeback bids by connecting on the freebies. Middle Tennessee forced 25 Chattanooga turnovers; however, the Blue Raiders were guilty of 18, and they shot just 34 percent from the field. "I thought our girls pressured pretty good but Chattanooga did a good job handling our pressure," Insell said. "I was proud of forcing the 25 turnovers but we didn't do a good job of converting those into points, while Chattanooga was able to do that successfully." Chattanooga scored 29 of its 76 points off Middle Tennessee turnovers. Blue Raiders Monique Martin and Johnna Abney started in their debuts, while newcomer LaCondra Mason came off the bench in her Middle Tennessee debut. The trio combined for 20 points and eight rebounds. Despite its lack of depth, Middle Tennessee's bench outscored Chattanooga's 12-5. Middle Tennessee will play its home opener against Houston Tuesday at 7 p.m.

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