

December 2, 2005

Blue Raiders Defeat South Dakota State 79-72

MT Media Relations

BROOKINGS, S.D. - Middle Tennessee women's basketball (4-2) earned its first road win of the season with a hard-fought 79-72 victory over South Dakota State (3-2) Friday in Frost Arena.

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"What a valiant effort by our team," said Head Coach Rick Insell. "This was a big win for Middle Tennessee and I don't think people will understand what we did here until later in the year."

The Blue Raiders staved off a Jackrabbit rally late in the second half by hitting free throws. Middle Tennessee was 11-of-13 from the line to close out the game and secure the win.

Middle Tennessee never trailed in the second half, but South Dakota State made a run at the Blue Raiders throughout the half. With 3:58 remaining the Jackrabbits pulled within one point, 64-63. The Blue Raiders pushed the lead back to two when **Tia Stovall** hit 1-of-2 free throws and then went back to the line when **Chrissy Givens** hit a pair of free throws to push the lead back to four. It was free throws that won the game for the Blue Raiders in the final minutes.

Middle Tennessee came in and did something only four other teams in five years had done in Frost Arena, win. In the last five years, including this season, South Dakota State is 55-5.

"South Dakota State is the toughest team we played since we faced Georgia," Insell said. "We just came after them in the second half and decided to attack the basket and were able to get to the free throw line."

The Blue Raiders struggled early offensively, in the first half, but was sparked by the strong play by Givens. With the game tied at 10, Givens pulled down a rebound that set up a lay-up by **Krystle Horton**. A steal by Horton and a bucket pushed the Middle Tennessee lead to four.

Middle Tennessee went on a 5-0 run and didn't allow a Jackrabbit point until Megan Vogel hit a pair of free throws to trim the lead to three. The Blue Raider lead ballooned to 13 thanks to tough defense. Middle Tennessee didn't allow a South Dakota State field goal for almost eight minutes however the Jackrabbits did hit a pair of free throws.

SDSU got its first bucket after that eight-minute span when Christina Gilbert hit a lay-up with 5:48 left in the first half. The Blue Raiders battled late in the second half with three players with two or more fouls. **Monique Martin** and **LaCondra Mason** each had three fouls and **Tia Stovall** had two. In the remaining five minute span, the Jackrabbits went on an 11-5 run to cut the Blue Raider lead from 11 to five, 34-29, to end the half. South Dakota State stayed in the game in the first half at the line, hitting 12-of-15 from the charity stripe.

Givens led the Blue Raiders with 27 points and Horton followed with a season-high 26. **Tia Stovall** added 12. The Blue Raiders had 13 steals in the game and shot 50 percent from the field.

Middle Tennessee returns to action on Sunday when the Blue Raiders travel to Fargo, North Dakota to take on North Dakota State. Tip-off is set for 2 p.m.

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