Blue Raiders Take Over Sun Belt East With Win Over UNO

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NEW ORLEANS, La. - Middle Tennessee women's basketball claimed sole possession of first place in the Sun Belt East with a 90-41 victory over the University of New Orleans (2-18, 0-8) Saturday night in the Human Performance Center.

The Blue Raiders improve to 13-7 overall but more importantly improve to 6-1 in the Sun Belt East. Middle Tennessee took a half game lead over Florida International who is 5-1 in the Sun Belt East after playing out of conference on Saturday night.

Middle Tennessee had a mission on Saturday night. The Blue Raiders came out with dominance on both sides of the ball to take an early lead on the Privateers and never looked back. The Blue Raiders shot the ball well from downtown in the first half, draining a season-high 12 three-pointers including five from freshman point guard Johnna Abney. Middle Tennessee didn't connect on a three-pointer in the second half, but found the bucket inside the paint just as friendly.

All ten Blue Raider players saw action in the game, including freshman forward Brittany Pittman who played a career-high 20 minutes and swatted a career-high five blocks. Monique Martin also made the most of her minutes as the sophomore guard led all scorers with a career-high 18 points and six steals in just 14 minutes.

"I was really proud of Monique's performance tonight," said Head Coach Rick Insell. "She is so strong and athletic and we are going to need Monique to play this hard down the stretch. She has had limited playing time because of her defense but she really tried hard at playing defense and I am really excited to see it coming together for her."

Middle Tennessee was just as tenacious on defense. The Blue Raiders forced New Orleans to commit 32 miscues and scored 39 points off Privateer turnovers. Middle Tennessee also scored 37 points from its bench.

"We took the game away from them early," Insell said. "We have been working on becoming a better transition team and we really focused on our ball pressure tonight."

The Blue Raiders shot 49.3 percent from the field and 50 percent from the three-point line. The squad also collected a season-high 22 steals.

Chrissy Givens also ended the game with double figure scoring as she added 15 points in the game. Sophomore forward Lakira Boyd pulled down a career-high 10 rebound, and also had four steals.

Middle Tennessee will try and defend its first place spot in the Sun Belt East when the Blue Raiders host Florida International on Thursday. Tip-off is set for 7 p.m.

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