Volleyball knocks off No. 24 Long Beach State, 3-2

Blue Raiders notch first victory over a ranked opponent since 2007

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DENVER - Holding an impressive 2-0 lead, the Middle Tennessee volleyball team weathered a strong comeback from 24th-ranked Long Beach State, winning 3-2 (25-23, 25-9, 20-25, 20-25, 17-15). The match marked Middle Tennessee's sixth consecutive victory, and first over a ranked opponent since defeating ninth-ranked Hawaii in the 2007 NCAA Tournament Second Round. "I thought we could have won the match earlier, but I'm happy to take a five-game win over a top 25 team," said head coach Matt Peck. "I think this is a benchmark of our team. We had some big performances today. I thought Angela Peyton did an outstanding job for most of the match, Lindsay Cheatham came up huge for us, and Morgan Peterson came off the bench cold and scored a few big points. It was a great match for us, and we have another tough one coming up tonight." Four Blue Raiders combined to post 10 more kills led by Ashley Adams' 16. Lindsay Cheatham was second on the team with 13 at an outstanding .524 clip. Izabela Kozon and Stacy Oladinni tallied 12 and 11 kills, respectively. Angela Peyton put together an impressive day at setter, recording a career-high 47 assists. Defensively, Brynne Henderson had the match-high in digs with 14. Both Cheatham and Oladinni accounted for six block assists, and Peyton had five. Middle Tennessee came from behind

to win the opening stanza 25-23. Faced with an early 1-6 deficit, the Blue Raiders would pull within one point six times before finally tying at 17-17. Long Beach State would never regain the lead in the set, but tied the affair at 23-23. An Oladinni kill gave MT the lead, and a block from Peyton and Cheatham slammed the door on the set. Middle Tennessee ran away with the second set, 25-9. After the Blue Raiders took an early lead, the 49ers pulled within two at 6-4. However, with Kendall Howard serving, MT ran off the next eight points to take a commanding 14-4 lead. Moments later, Oladinni would help push the lead further with a six point run to go up 22-7, eventually winning with a Cheatham kill to take a 2-0 match lead. Long Beach would pull the match closer with an impressive 25-20 third set win. The 49ers would never trail in the frame to cut the lead to 2-1. LBSU evened the match at 2-2 with a 20-25 fourth set victory. The Blue Raiders went on an early run, stretching the lead to 17-12 and forcing a 49er time out. However, Long Beach would respond by notching nine of the next 10 points to take a 21-18 lead. MT cut the lead to one at 20-21, but the 49ers scored on the next four serves to force a fifth and final set. Middle Tennessee took the fifth set in electrifying fashion, 17-15. LBSU stretched an early lead to 9-6, but the Blue Raiders scored the next five points to take an 11-9 lead, stretching it to 13-10 on a Peterson kill to force a Long Beach timeout. The 49ers responded with a three consecutive points to pull even, but could never take the lead, forcing three MT match points before a Cheatham kill and LBSU attack error sealed the deal. The Blue Raiders will now take on defending Colonial Athletic champion VCU at 6 p.m. in Denver.

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