Blue Raiders Defeat Denver in Front of Record-Breaking Crowd

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - A record-breaking crowd, for a single game, of 4,011 fans were in attendance to watch Middle Tennessee women's basketball (15-8, 8-2 SBC) defeat Denver (11-12, 5-7 SBC) 77-56 Saturday in the Murphy Center.

- **Photos:** MT vs. Denver Gallery

  The Blue Raiders shot a season-high 57.4 percent from the field for the game, and shot a scorching 72 percent from the field in the first half alone. Middle Tennessee pounded the boards against Denver, collecting 36 caroms to the Pioneers 19.

  In the first half, Middle Tennessee was 18-of-25 from the field and in a span of three minutes hit seven consecutive baskets to balloon its lead to 44-20 with 5:29 left. In that span, junior guard Chrissy Givens hit three of the buckets including back-to-back three-pointers.

  The second half was a balance of success and

struggle for Middle Tennessee. After continuing its stifling defense and building a 31-point lead with 8:06 remaining in the game, the Blue Raiders gave Denver some open looks on the perimeter.

In the final eight minutes, Denver connected on four three-pointers with three of the four by the Pioneers' Brooke Meyer. Also in that time frame, Middle Tennessee went on a six-minute stretch in which the Blue Raiders didn't score a basket. Givens finally broke Middle Tennessee's scoring drought when she hit one of two free throws with 2:59 left in the game.

Although Middle Tennessee forced 24 Denver turnovers and scored 32 points off Pioneer miscues, the Blue Raiders had turnover problems themselves. Middle Tennessee turned the ball over 25 times in the game, affording Denver 24 points.

Givens' 30 points is the third straight game the Monroe, Louisiana native has scored 30 or more points and the fifth time this season. She also recorded her fifth double-double of her career with 11 rebounds against Denver.

Senior Tia Stovall scored in double figures, with 12, for the first time in four games and also had six rebounds. Sophomore Lakira Boyd, who picked up her eighth start of the season, ended the night with 10 points.

Middle Tennessee remains tied for first place in the Sun Belt East with rival Western Kentucky. The Blue Raiders continue their three-game home-stand on Thursday when the club will face Arkansas State at 7 p.m. in the Murphy Center.

NOTES:

STREAK MOVES TO 16: With the win over Denver on Saturday afternoon, Middle Tennessee ran its streak to 16 consecutive victories over conference opponents at home. The last time the Blue Raiders dropped a home game to an SBC member was on Feb. 5, 2004 in double overtime against Western Kentucky.

10 IN A ROW FOR GIVENS: Junior Chrissy Givens, who tallied 30 points in the win over Denver Saturday, has now scored 20 or more points at home in 10 straight games. The only home game Givens has been held under 20 points was the home opener against Houston, when she registered just eight points.

BOYD BREAKS OUT: Sophomore Lakira Boyd scored in double figures for just the second time in her career when she tallied a season-high 10 points in the win over Denver. Boyd's career-high is 11 points set against Xavier on Jan. 6, 2005. The Memphis native entered play today having scored just 18 points in her previous six games combined.

GIVENS ON FIRE: Chrissy Givens, who entered the year with a career-high point total of 18, is on a tear her junior season. Givens has scored 30 or more points five times and tallied 20 or more on 15 times. The Monroe, La., native has registered 30 or more points in three straight

games after recording the second double-double of the season with 30 points and 11 boards in the win over Denver. Over her past three games, Givens is averaging 31.0 points, 7.7 rebounds, 5.0 steals, and is shooting 50.7 percent (34-67) from the field and 47.8 percent (11-23) from behind the arc.

PLAYER OF THE GAME: Lakira Boyd was voted the Alexander Automotive Family Player of the Game against Denver by members of the working media.

TIDBITS: With seven steals tonight, Chrissy Givens ran her total to 81 on the season to rank sixth on the single-season list ... Tia Stovall scored in double figures for the first time in four games when she tallied 12 points against Denver ... Givens is now just 26 points shy of joining the 1,000-point club at Middle Tennessee ... The announced attendance of 4,011 is the largest of the season.

QUOTES:

HEAD COACH RICK INSELL:

On shooting 57 percent for the night against Denver: "We came out and put the ball in the net early. We got to go out and put the ball in the hole. We are going to make mistakes if we are going to make plays. We got to work through them and keep trying."

On the effort by Denver: "Denver never backed off a lick. They kept shooting and putting the ball back in the hole."

About Denver making some crucial three's in the second half: "We may have stayed in the zone too long. They gave it to Jena Cole's hands and they put themselves back in the game."

About tonight's win helping the team down the stretch: "We felt like we needed to take care of Middle Tennessee. We know what everybody's got. We got to take care of the Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders. We are hard to beat at home and that's what we did tonight, win."

Thoughts on Chrissy Givens' performance: She's going to get her points and she's going to get her steals. A lot of good things are happening to Chrissy. It's good because she has put a lot of effort from high school to college. She's a team player and she's reaping what she has sowed. I promise you the last thing on her mind is scoring. She scores because that's what she has to do for her basketball team.

FORWARD LAKIRA BOYD:

On helping contribute to a 77-56 win over Denver: "I knew I had to go out there and play hard to help our team get a win, especially coming off the loss at North Texas."

On gaining momentum early in Saturday's contest: "When we gain our momentum, nothing can stop us from winning a game. We got fired up from Chrissy [Givens] and [Tia Stovall] and we went on from there."

GUARD CHRISSY GIVENS

About the defensive pressure applied against Denver: "Almost every night our defense gives us momentum. We apply so much pressure which helps to create turnovers. When we get one steal, we are going to steal a few more times because we are so pumped up."

About winning after a tough loss at North Texas: "North Texas was a game that challenged us to refocus. We thought we were becoming a good team but North Texas showed us that we needed to refocus. That loss helped us look inside and we have a lot more improvement to do. The North Texas game pretty much gave us a gut check."

About out rebounding Denver 36 to 19: "We talked about effort for the past two days. Going to the boards is all about effort. We were all going after the boards tonight. Tonight everybody gave a maximum effort."

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