

Givens Smashes Sun Belt Scoring Record in Blue Raider Win

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

After waiting two days to play, the Middle Tennessee women's basketball team finally made its debut in the Sun Belt Tournament, and what an appearance.

The No. 2 seeded Blue Raiders (18-10), who had played so many close games this season, left little room for doubt in their 84-58 victory over No. 3 seed from the West Louisiana-Lafayette (18-10) Saturday in the Murphy Center. Middle Tennessee built leads of 12-0 and 15-2, hitting seven of its first nine shots from the field to start the game, and never trailed.

Sun Belt Player of the Year Chrissy Givens paced the Blue Raiders, as any league MVP should do, by smashing the Sun Belt Tournament record for most points in a single game. Givens, a junior guard from Monroe, La., had a career-high 36 points against the Ragin' Cajuns and put her name in the Sun Belt record books. She also tied the Sun Belt record for most field goals with 14. Her 36 points were six shy of tying the Middle Tennessee record for most points in a game.



Middle Tennessee forced 25 Louisiana-Lafayette turnovers and scored 23 points off Ragin' Cajun miscues. The Blue Raiders also held ULL to just one three-pointer in 12 attempts.

After key starters Krystle Horton and Johnna Abney found themselves in foul trouble early, Head Coach Rick Insell had to look to his bench for production. He got it in sophomores Lakira Boyd and Latoya Barclay. The duo combined for 15 points and nine rebounds in 23 and 16, minutes respectively.

The win for the Blue Raiders snaps a two-game losing streak and pushes their home winning streak to 19 against Sun Belt conference opponents. Junior forward Horton added 15 points for the Blue Raiders and also had seven rebounds and Middle Tennessee's lone block.

The Blue Raiders advance to the Sun Belt semifinals and will play the winner of the North Texas and Arkansas State game at 11 a.m. on Monday. The game will be televised on ESPN plus.

NOTES:

Chrissy Givens, the Sun Belt Player of the Year, set a tournament record for points with 36, and tied the record for most FG's with 14 ... MT now has a record of 9-3 when hosting conference basketball tournaments ... MT built leads of 12-0 and 15-2, hitting seven of their first nine shots from the field, and never trailed in the game ... Chrissy Givens had career best totals of 36 points and 14 field goals Givens has now scored 20 or more points in 13 consecutive home games ... Givens has scored at least 20 points 18 times this year and 30 or more seven times ... Latoya Barclay's two successful free throws in the second half kept her perfect from the line in 17 attempts this season ... MT is now 10-0 all-time vs. ULL ... Rick Insell became the seventh coach at MT to win his first conference tournament game. Overall, the record is 7-1 ... The win snapped a two-game losing streak for MT, their longest such streak of the year.

QUOTES:

Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening Statement: "I'm glad the first game is over with. I'm glad we are the winners. Our kids played hard, and they did what they had to do. Kelley [Hall] has a good team. Jones is a great player. Blanche is a great player. I thought our personnel did a real good job of matching up with them."

"Our quick start excited the coaching staff. After our last two starts, it felt good to be back home and see the ball go in. The difference is probably the two days they had off. They had fresher legs than they have had the last two games. They were more mentally alert. We have played a tough schedule and have been on the road a lot. We were just mentally fatigued as well as physically fatigued."

"We have played all 10 of them all year in crucial situations. It didn't bother us a bit to put Lakira Boyd in there. She has started several times. Barclay has probably earned more starts than Johnna [Abney], but she doesn't want to start. She wants to come off the bench. She feels more comfortable coming off the bench. We feel confident with her coming off the bench also. We are going to use all of our ladies. We have 10 in uniform, and they will all see action in the tournament. You will see all of them make crucial plays. I am really proud of them for what they have done up to this point."

"Chrissy Givens is a winner. When the lead was cut to four points, who hit the three? It was her. You don't coach that. You are born with it. Thank goodness Stephany Smith did a good job recruiting Chrissy Givens to Middle Tennessee."

Guard Chrissy Givens

"I have to give credit to my teammates and the coaching staff for the offensive scheme that we run. A couple of times my teammates are looking for me. If you have selfish people, then it wouldn't work. My teammates are just so unselfish. It is great to play with people like that. I have to do my part by knocking down shots because they are looking for me."



"We have harped all year on our press. Today, we just got after it. Everybody was hustling and diving after balls. We even missed some assignments. Defense wasn't great today. We still have some improvements to do."

Forward Krystle Horton

"We played great offensively and defensively. We just stayed in the game and kept our heads in it. We didn't get down. We came back in the second half and played our hearts out."

"Our goal is to have a lot of pressure on the defensive end. When you do your job on the defensive end, it leads to offense. When we come out and have a great defensive game, we know we are going to do well on the offensive end."

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