Volleyball falls to Louisville in NCAA opener

Blue Raiders end season with 29-6 record

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WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - The Middle Tennessee volleyball team dropped their first match since Oct. 15, losing to Louisville 3-0 (22-25, 21-25, 17-25) on Friday evening at Holloway Gymnasium on the campus of Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind.

"I think we had a good game plan, but we just couldn't execute it today," head coach Matt Peck said. "Stacy had an outstanding match. We needed to make more plays tonight, and we couldn't."

Middle Tennessee, who secured their fifth consecutive trip to the NCAA Tournament via winning the Sun Belt Tournament, concluded their season with a 29-6 mark for the year, having won 26 of their final 28 matches to close out the year.

Stacy Oladinni led the Blue Raiders with a season-high 13 kills on the night and hit at a .478 clip. Maria Szivos was second with seven kills and Izabela Kozon tallied six.

Morgan Peterson and Angela Peyton split time at setter, recording 18 and 13 assists respectively.

Kozon anchored the defense with 10 digs and Szivos was second with eight. Brynne Henderson was third with seven.

As a team, MT was outhit by the Cardinals .293 to .158 and out-blocked 11.0 to 3.0.

Middle Tennessee dropped the first set in 22-25 fashion, marking the first time that the Blue Raiders

have lost an opening set since a trip to North Texas on Oct. 29.

Louisville raced out to an early 6-1 advantage, forcing a timeout, and Middle Tennessee would respond with seven of the next eight points, culminating with a Kozon ace to grab a slim 8-7 edge.

The lead would hold temporarily, and the Cardinals ultimately took back the lead at 14-13. Louisville weathered a strong comeback effort and would never trail down the stretch.

The Cardinals won the second set 25-21 to hand Middle Tennessee just their second 0-2 deficit of the season.

Once again, the Cardinals grabbed an early edge, going up 3-9 out of the gate. However, the Blue Raiders slowly inched back, and then utilized a four-point run to go up 15-13.

However, the lead wouldn't last, and Louisville ran off 10 of the next 12 points to grab an insurmountable 23-17 advantage.

The third set would play out in similar fashion as the first two, and Louisville secured the first sweep of Middle Tennessee this season with a 25-17 victory.

Middle Tennessee and Louisville swapped leads for much of the early part of the set, as neither team could really create much distance.

After an Oladinni kill evened up the set at 15, Louisville hit another run, scoring on five of the next six serves to grab a 20-16 advantage and wouldn't look back.

The Blue Raiders end their season as winners of both the Sun Belt regular season and tournament titles, only the second Middle Tennessee team in history to accomplish the feat. The record of 29-6 is the third best in school history.

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