

Blue Raiders grind out tough road win against Knights

MT wins twice on three-game road trip

December 7, 2010 · Athletic Communications

ORLANDO – Middle

Tennessee took control in the second half and pulled out a 77-73 road victory at UCF Tuesday afternoon in the closest game of the season-to-date inside the UCF Arena in Orlando.

The Blue Raiders were led by freshman Ebony Rowe, who posted 20 points on 9-of-12 field goals and nine rebounds to go along with three assists and two steals in 33 minutes. All nine of her caroms came on the defensive glass.

Fellow rookie KeKe Stewart poured in a game-high 21 points on 8-of-14 field goals and 5-of-6 free throws and grabbed seven rebounds, while sophomore Icelyn Elie gave Middle Tennessee a trio in double-figure scoring with 11 points. Senior Anne Marie Lanning also registered seven boards.

Chelsie Wiley topped the Knights with 17 points, two more than Aisha Patrick. Angelica Mealing and D'Nay Daniels contributed 11 and 10 points, respectively. Daniels and Patrick hauled in an UCF-best seven rebounds.

The Blue Raider post players were the difference early, as 17 of the first 19 MT points were accumulated by Elie, Stewart and Rowe. Elie netted the game's first two buckets, giving Middle Tennessee (6-2) a 4-0 lead on a pair of layups, but the Knights answered with a run to knot the



scoring at 8-8 with 16:04 remaining following a layup by Patrick.

A pair of Kortni Jones free throws preceded a Rowe layup to help the Blue Raiders expand the margin back to four, 12-8, but again UCF (4-4) trimmed into the deficit on a Mealing old-fashioned three-point play at 14:13. Stewart then tallied the next six Middle Tennessee points, the first half coming on a three-point play of her own on the next possession, as the Blue Raiders increased their advantage to a first-half high six, 19-13, with 12:35 to play.

The lead remained five, 23-18, on a Rowe layup with 9:54 to go before Gevenia Carter and Patrick pulled the Knights within one, 23-22, a minute-and-a-half later. Jelisa Caldwell gave UCF its first advantage, 24-23, but it was quickly erased following a 3-pointer from Lanning at 7:54. The score would be tied two more times; however, Patrick's old-fashioned three-point play at 4:18 gave the Knights a three-point cushion and the first half lead it would not relinquish the remainder of the period, despite Jones hitting another set of charity tosses at 1:52 to cut the gap to one, 35-34. Jones then had a couple turnovers in the final 30 seconds, resulting in UCF fast break layups, allowing the hosts to open a five-point, 39-34, halftime edge.

The second half opened with Middle Tennessee scoring the first points on a trey from freshman Jordyn Luffman and Stewart powering in a short jumper to knot the scoring at 39-39. The Knights would post the next three points behind a Patrick free throw and Erika Jones layup before Elie countered with a pair of layups of her own to give MT a 43-42 edge.

Daniels gave UCF a brief 44-43 lead and the teams traded who was on top until Elie gave the Blue Raiders a 47-46 advantage with 13:40 left. Middle Tennessee turned to Rowe for its next three points, opening a four-point, 50-46, lead before Sarah Green halted the surge with a free throw at 11:51. Wiley converted another three-point play just over a minute later, cutting the margin back to two, 52-50.

The contest would become tied for the sixth time as Mealing intercepted a Jones pass and raced to the other end for a layup at 8:28 to make it 54-54. After the teams traded points for the game's seventh tie, 56-56, Stewart answered with the go-ahead bucket and the Blue Raiders never looked back. The field goal opened a 7-0 MT run during the next three minutes before Erika Jones stopped the drought with a pair of free throws at 3:35 to pull the Knights within five, 63-58.

Five straight Middle Tennessee points expanded the lead back to a game-high 10, 68-58, with just 2:12 remaining. UCF, however, did not quit and five quick points cut the Blue Raider advantage in half, 68-63, with 1:18 to go. Kortni Jones sank a pair of free throws, but Ashia Kelly drained a 3-pointer with 1:07 on the clock to make it a four-point difference, 70-66.

The margin continued to dwindle and the Knights cut it to two, 75-73, on a Wiley 3-pointer with 12 seconds left. Lanning iced the victory with a pair of charity tosses with nine seconds left and UCF was unable to get a shot off in the final seconds.

Middle Tennessee will return to action against No. 4/5 Xavier inside the Murphy Center at 7 p.m. Thursday in the first of only two December home games. The Musketeers will come to Murfreesboro as the second-highest ranked team in the Rick Insell era after being a possession away from reaching the Final Four a year ago.

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/49876>