

Elie powers Middle Tennessee to comeback win over James Madison

Blue Raiders place four players in double figures

December 12, 2010 · Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. –

Sophomore Icelyn Elie registered her first career double-double to lead four Middle Tennessee players in double-figure scoring, as the Blue Raiders rallied for an 81-75 home victory over James Madison inside the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn., Sunday afternoon.

Elie had her best performance in a Middle Tennessee (7-3) uniform, pouring in a career-best 25 points, including the first two 3-pointers of her career, while leading all players with a career-high 16 rebounds, a dozen on the defensive glass, to become just the third active Blue Raider with a double-double. She joins senior Emily Queen and freshman Ebony Rowe in the elite group.

Rowe was second on the team with 21 points and seven rebounds, while senior Anne Marie Lanning finished with 17 points and junior Tina Stewart added 10. Lanning, who garnered the start at point guard, handed out a game-best six assists and moved into 34th on the school's all-time scoring list with 872 points.

Freshman Jordyn Luffman earned her first career start after netting a career-high 10 points against No. 4/5 Xavier Thursday and was one of three rookies among the starting five, joining Rowe and KeKe Stewart.



James Madison senior Dawn Evans, who entered the game listed sixth in the latest NCAA statistics for scoring, concluded the day with a game-high 27 points on 10-of-30 field goals, including 5-of-17 from behind the 3-point arc. Teammate Courtney Hamner joined her in double figures with 15, while Lauren Jimenez added 10 points and 10 rebounds for the Dukes.

Evans knocked down the game's first points, a 3-pointer, but the Blue Raiders answered with an 11-4 run, including triples from Tina Stewart and Luffman and an old-fashioned three-point play courtesy of Lanning to take an 11-7 edge at the 17:04 mark.

James Madison (5-4) then countered by scoring the next 16 points over a five-minute span, using seven points from Hamner and an Evans trey to open a 23-11 cushion with 12:05 remaining before Elie halted the surge a half-minute later on another old-fashioned three-point play.

Her three-point effort was the beginning of an 8-0 MT streak, capped by a Lanning triple at 10:34, cutting the margin to four, 23-19. Elie's first collegiate 3-pointer came at 9:36 and kept the Blue Raiders within five before Lanning knocked down a jumper at 7:49 to slice the margin to two, 29-27.

The Dukes used a pair of triples to widen the margin back to a half dozen, 35-29, but Middle Tennessee roared back with five straight to trim it down to one, 35-34, with 4:20 to go in the period. A pair of Nikki Newman free throws pushed the nip-and-tuck affair back to a three-point difference at 3:31 before Rowe took control.

Rowe scored the final three Blue Raider buckets of the half, including a jumper at 2:31 to give Middle Tennessee a brief, 38-37 edge, before Evans countered by tallying the last seven James Madison points to send the visitors into the intermission ahead, 44-40.

The second half opened with a Tina Stewart triple and kept the Blue Raiders from allowing the Dukes to open more than five-point lead in the first four minutes. A pair of Tarik Hislop charity tosses at 15:51 gave James Madison its largest advantage of the stanza at 54-49.

Elie and Rowe knocked down a pair of layups over the course of the next minute before Hislop hit another set of free throws at 14:38 for a three-point lead, 56-53. Sophomore Kortni Jones buried a 3-pointer on the next Middle Tennessee possession to knot the score for the first time since 7-7. Lanning then put the Blue Raiders ahead, 59-56, with a triple of her own less than 30 seconds later and forcing a James Madison timeout.

The Dukes, however, did not let Middle Tennessee run away with the lead and Evans converted a pair of free throws and Hamner drained a 3-pointer at 11:58 to put James Madison back on top, 61-59. The two teams traded baskets over the next six minutes, resulting in four more ties, before Jimenez gave the Dukes a 69-67 edge at 4:39 with a pair of free throws.

Finding themselves down two, the Blue Raiders turned to Tina Stewart for a 3-pointer at 4:20 for a one-point edge. Jimenez grabbed her own missed shot and put in the rebound to put the advantage back in James Madison's control before Elie notched her second 3-pointer at 2:25 to give Middle Tennessee a 73-71 lead, one it would not surrender the remainder of the contest.

Rowe pushed the advantage to four with a layup at 1:16 before the Dukes were forced to foul down the stretch, helping decide the final margin despite an Evans triple with 11 seconds to play.

The Blue Raiders will take a week off for final exams before returning to action next Monday and

Tuesday, Dec. 20-21, at the UTSA Holiday Classic in San Antonio, Texas. Middle Tennessee will begin the two-day event versus St. Bonaventure before battling Big 12 opponent Kansas State to conclude its action in the Lone Star State.

The tournament will be the first in-season event for the Blue Raiders, not counting the 2008 Preseason WNIT, since traveling to Minneapolis for the Subway Classic in November 2006 where they defeated Maine and Minnesota.

Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes

Head Coach Rick Insell:

I thought it was a great women's basketball games, two good teams that have a chance to be real good by the end of the year. He (JMU Coach Kenny Brooks) does it right. He does just what we do and that is to schedule games against teams that are as good or better than you are, and play in hostile gyms. This makes you better prepared to go deeper into the NCAA Tournament. You have to tip your hat to them and that is exactly what we are trying to do here at Middle Tennessee.

Most of the time, we had three freshmen on the floor, and I think at the end we had two freshmen and two sophomores. We played hard and they did too. It was just a great game.

Icelyn Elie had the best game of her career (25 pts., 16 rebs., two steals) and we needed it and I hope she will build on that. If she can, it is not going to do anything but help us.

On JMU scoring pretty easily early in the game

The bottom line is that Dawn Evans is probably the best player that has been in this gym since Alysha Clark. She was runner-up to Alysha two years in a row in scoring. I am telling you, Dawn Evans is an opposing coach's nightmare. You cannot stop her. She is phenomenal. She is not big as a minute, but you are not going to stop her. People go to see one of the best players in the game here today in Dawn Evans. I do not know how many points she ended up with (27), probably all she wanted. What a great player.

Later on, when she gave the ball up, Tina Stewart, with her quickness, was able to deny her the ball, and that gave them some problems because they had people handling the ball that were not used to it. If anything, that was the big difference.

We got a couple of big rebounds late, one on a missed free throw on a play that Coach (Lynn) Burkey put in. That is his 40 years of experience that he brings to the table. And Icelyn was feeling comfortable on the three, and that is what we have been needing.

This was just as big a game as the Xavier game the other night. I am not sure they do not have just as good a team as Xavier.

On JMU run

We did not look at the clock, we just kept playing, which is what we teach them. Then they missed a shot or two, and we hit a couple, and we are back in the game. That is big for those young players to be able to do that. Most of the time we had mostly freshmen and sophomores on the floor, without any experience before this year. Maybe I should have played them more last year.

Sophomore Icelyn Elie:

Yes, you could say I was feeling it today.

On missing a free throw then coming back and hitting a three

I think it was just a focus thing. You just have to have a good mindset and be prepared for whatever.

It was pretty tough inside. We have some big girls, too, and they can go up against that size, and I thought we did real well with the post.

Senior Anne Marie Lanning:

On cutting 12-point JMU lead to only four at the half

We have done a nice job of fighting and not giving up. We know that you cannot score 10 points on one shot, so we had to keep chipping away, and we had to pick up our D. We know the things that we needed to do, and at halftime, we talked about all the things we did wrong in the first half, and we did not want to keep doing them wrong. I thought we did a good job of that too.

Dawn Evans is a great player. I played against her in high school and with her in AAU, so I knew what I was getting into. She is a great player. She is going to take her team far this year.

They were making one move and putting a shot up, and we had to run our offense, which is what we do. If there is a quick hit, Coach really likes for us to run our offense because we have so many options.

This win was huge for our young team. Coach knows he has to be patient with us and he is. In the past, our teams have had multiple seniors and this year we have 11 freshmen and sophomores. I love this team. Our chemistry is getting better every game. We do not give up, we keep battling all the way to the end. This is the second game that we have had to battle to the end, the UCF game was the first.

James Madison Postgame Quotes

Head Coach Kenny Brooks:

On Icelyn Elie and MT's post play

You have to say we were surprised. Anytime you see a kid who averages seven points a game, you do not think in your wildest dreams that they would get 25 and 16 rebounds. We knew that Ebony Rowe was capable of doing that, and we knew KeKe Stewart had the ability to score 20. We knew that they were very talented and they have the type of post players that give us trouble, kids who can move and step out on the perimeter. They exploited that well. I think our defense could do better, especially on the inside. We were going for steals, had bad positioning, and we did not have patience. We have got to get better if we are going to be a good basketball team.

On this season

I think we have upped the ante with our schedule. We knew it was going to be a very tough and very challenging schedule, and any time that you are going to take on a schedule like that, you need some luck. You need to be healthy too, and we have not been healthy all year. We have had to do a little bit of patchwork. You know, kids are out and you have to try and put new people in. We are trying, but we have had to be perimeter-oriented one minute and then inside-oriented the next. We just have not found that stride we want to hit.

On Dawn Evans

She has really had to carry the team with kids being out. Her percentages are down because she is really forced to take some crazy shots sometimes for us. She has done great, especially considering her health, and not being able to get the practice time that she normally has gotten over the past few years.

Printed on July 26, 2014

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/49958>