

# Fast start flies Blue Raiders past Owls

## MT ahead by 37 at half, 49-12

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### MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee scored the first 10 points en route to a dominating Sun Belt women's basketball 83-52 victory Wednesday night over visiting Florida Atlantic inside the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The Blue Raiders jumped out in front early before the Owls netted their first points at 15:48 and Middle Tennessee (13-4, 4-0 Sun Belt) owned a 27-5 advantage halfway through the opening period. The points kept pouring in, as Florida Atlantic did not reach double digits until it cut the lead to 38-10 with 4:25 left in the half. The Blue Raiders secured a 49-12 halftime edge, as the 37-point margin was the largest lead by MT at any point this season.

Four Blue Raider starters

reached double figures, led by 19 from senior Anne Marie Lanning. She nailed 5-of-6 from behind the 3-point arc, all in the inaugural 20 minutes, to move into fourth place on the school's all-time list with 208. She also moved within 30 points of the 1,000-point plateau, where she will become the 25th member of the elite club in program history.

Sophomore Kortni Jones tallied the first double-double of her career with 11 points and a career-high tying 10 assists, equaling the handouts she had Nov. 28 against South Dakota State. Jones becomes just the fourth current Middle Tennessee player with a double-double, joining Ebony Rowe, Icelyn Elie and Emily Queen. Her 10 assists were part of the Blue Raiders' 25 on 34 field goals.

Elie was next behind Lanning in the scoring column with 14 points, while registering all three of Middle Tennessee's blocked shots to set a career best.



Rounding out the double-figure scorers was Rowe with 13. She also hauled in a team-high tying seven rebounds, matching Tina Stewart's career high, as the Blue Raiders won the battle on the glass, 40-to-23.

Middle Tennessee shot a season-best 57.6 percent from the floor after blistering the nets at a 63.3 percent rate during the first half.

Despite the sizeable halftime advantage, the Owls rallied to top MT in scoring during the second half, 40-34. Three Florida Atlantic (4-12, 1-4 Sun Belt) players reached double figures, including a team-best 15 from Lyrell Barfield. She converted three of the team's five 3-pointers and was joined in double digits by Takia Brooks and Breana Turner with 11 and 10 points, respectively.

Turner and Chaquera Kent each grabbed an Owl-high five boards with Kent accounting for three of the squad's eight defensive caroms.

FAU struggled from the floor in the opening period, connecting on just 4-of-24 (16.7 percent) before warming up in the second half to make 16-of-30 (53.3 percent).

The early 10-point cushion swelled to a dozen before Teri Stamps made the back-end of a two-shot free throw set for Florida Atlantic's third point with 13:22 remaining. The Blue Raiders then scored the next 12 points, all on triples, to push the edge to 26-3 with 10:42 to play in the stanza.

Following a Barfield layup to trim the lead to 20, 27-7, at the 9:32 mark, Middle Tennessee embarked on an 11-0 spurt, widening the gap to 31, 38-7, with 4:25 to go. Again, Barfield halted the surge, this time hitting a 3-pointer, before the Blue Raiders outscored the Owls 11-5 down the stretch.

Florida Atlantic began the second half by netting 10 of the first 14 points, cutting the lead back to 31, 53-22, with five minutes elapsed. Consecutive triples, one each by Barfield and Brooks, trimmed the margin to 29, 59-30, just three minutes later and then within five minutes, it was cut to 25, 73-48, following an old-fashioned three-point play by Stamps at 4:35.

Middle Tennessee used three-straight jumpers in the lane by sophomore Dymon Raynor to extend the edge back to 30, 80-50, with 2:10 remaining before Luffman sealed the contest with a 3-pointer on a Raynor assist with 58 seconds showing on the clock.

The Blue Raiders will return to action at Noon Sunday when they travel to Jonesboro, Ark., to face Arkansas State in the Sun Belt Game of the Week. The contest will be shown live on Comcast/Charter Sports Southeast (CSS) with Lyn Rollins on play-by-play and Debbie Leonard as the color analyst.

Dick Palmer will also have all the action on the Blue Raider Network, including WGNS (100.5 FM, 101.9 FM, 1450 AM), WMOT (89.5 FM) and WBRY (96.7 FM, 1540 AM).

### **Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes** **Head Coach Rick Insell**

*On FAU comeback in the second half to make it a closer game*

It is tough to try to tell a young team not to play the scoreboard. FAU did a good job, they kept battling, knocked down some threes and got it back respectable. Give them credit for that. We got to

play a lot of people tonight. I thought Dymon (Raynor) did well, and Lauren March did well. Those are two kids that I thought at the start of the season would have to play tough for us, so if we can get them playing a little tougher here at the end of the year, it gives us another player or two we can put in there.

*On ball movement in the first half*

We are getting better. We did move the ball well, we had good vision, we had people running lanes. I think one of our weaknesses is offensive transition because we are not running the right lanes. In the first half, we got in some lanes, made some skip passes, Anne Marie made some threes, and that was big for us. We have got to get better at that, if we can. It is going to make us a little better ball team.

*On team focus*

We were good in the first half. The second half we got out there and got giggly. That is what happens with a young team. Sometimes we get a little caught up with ourselves, and that is when the coaching staff has to bring them back down to earth. We did have a good first half, and I was proud of that. They do not play games in one half. There are two halves, and you have got to come out with that same focus in that second half. But again, give Florida Atlantic credit, they did a good job.

*On Anne Marie not scoring as much in second half*

Anne Marie was knocking down some passes inside in the second half to Ebony (Rowe). We were trying to work on some of our offenses. There was a shot or two she should have taken, but she is the most unselfish player that I have ever coached. She does not care who gets the points, who gets the credit, as long as we get the win she is as happy as a lark. Every game I watch her play, I am just impressed with her that much more.

**Senior Anne Marie Lanning**

*On fast start*

I thought we executed really well in the first half. In the second half, I think we came out laxed, and let them attack us more. I see that they had 12 points in the first half and 40 in the second. We lacked on boxing them out tonight, too. Although we could out-jump them tonight, we are not going to be able to do that on some other teams, and that will be something that we work on in practice.

*On second half*

It is difficult to maintain that level, but I think the great teams do not let that happen, and as we play more games, and start maturing more, I think we will be able to keep going and not lay down.

*On playing a lot of players*

I think that was great. That is what we have been striving for in practice. Everybody works so hard in practice. And tonight he gave some of them an opportunity to play more and the ones that went out there did well with the opportunity they were given. I hope we can continue to do that and not drop off when they come in, and continue to be able to sub like that.

*On Arkansas State*

We will start working on them in practice tomorrow, and it is always a tough battle when we go up there. We are going to have to come out and execute a little better, block out a little better and defend a little better.

## **Sophomore Kortni Jones**

*On 25 team assists*

Coach harps a lot on us making good decisions. In practice, sometimes he will stop and run us if we are making multiple bad decisions. Everybody focuses a lot on making a good pass, and not only a good pass, but the extra pass, because sometimes the first pass is not always the best shot. There is usually someone open that may have a better shot.

## **Florida Atlantic Postgame Quotes**

### **Head Coach Chancellor Dugan**

I do not think we played as well as I thought we could in the first half. I thought we made some adjustments at halftime, and I think we played a lot better. We have to do a better job on the boards and a better job overall on defense. I was pleased to see that we had a lot of fight in us in that second half. We made some halftime adjustments and they listened to what we told them. I was pleased with that.

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