Century mark reached in dominating win Wednesday night

Freshman Leonard sends Blue Raiders into triple digits

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee women's basketball team reached the 100-point mark for the first time this season in a 103-52 rout of visiting Troy Wednesday night inside the Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn. The Blue Raiders, who led the nation with seven 100-plus outings a year ago, nearly doubled the Trojans' output as five players reached double digits.

Leading the charge offensively was freshman Jordyn Luffman, who netted a career-high 19 points, including topping her previous best of 15 by scoring five consecutive points just before the midway mark of the opening period. She drained her third 3-pointer at 10:28 and then stole the ensuing Troy (4-15, 1-5 Sun Belt) in-bounds pass and hit a 10-footer in the lane to set her career high at the 10:14 mark, providing a 35-12 MT cushion. The steal was one of her game-high tying four, also setting a career best.

Sophomore Icelyn Elie was next with 18 points on 9-of-12 field goals, keying an overall 39-of-74 (52.7 percent) effort from the floor for the Blue Raiders, including a 20-of-35 (57.1 percent) performance in the final 20 minutes.

Joining the pair in double figures were sophomore Kortni Jones (14 points), senior Anne Marie

Lanning (12) and freshman Ebony Rowe (11). Jones knocked down four of the squad's 11 triples and handed out a team-high six assists, while equaling Luffman's four steals.

Lanning closed within eight of the 1,000-point plateau, sliding into 26th place in school history with 992 career points. She surpassed Cortney Neely (1996-99) and trails only Kelly Chastain (1998-2001) in her pursuit of becoming the 25th player in school history to reach the milestone.

Redshirt freshman Lauren March also had her most productive effort in a Middle Tennessee (15-4, 6-0 Sun Belt) uniform, setting career bests with nine points and eight rebounds in 17 minutes off the bench.

True freshman Laken Leonard, part of a trio of substitutions with five minutes remaining as the Blue Raiders emptied their bench, poured in a career-high eight points, including a 3-pointer to lift Middle Tennessee into triple digits and a 3-of-3 effort at the foul line in her first collegiate trips to the charity stripe.

Tenia Manuel paced the Trojans with 17 points and six rebounds, all on the defensive glass, as the Blue Raiders held Troy to just three offensive caroms. The three offensive boards came in the second half.

Jamesha Blake added 10 points for the Trojans, who shot a staggering 11-of-18 (61.1 percent) in the first half but could not overcome 32 turnovers, while forcing just 10 by Middle Tennessee.

Troy grabbed an early 8-7 lead two-and-a-half minutes into the contest following a Donette McNair layup, but she then committed her second foul on the next Blue Raider possession and was forced to sit the remainder of the stanza.

With McNair on the bench, Middle Tennessee took control and KeKe Stewart's two free throws following the infraction began a 12-0 spurt during the next two minutes, featuring back-to-back treys by Luffman and Jones and a put-back on her own miss by Luffman to give the Blue Raiders a 19-8 edge at 15:03 and force a Trojan timeout.

Luffman continued to find the back of the net early, registering one-half of MT's next 16 points, including the five straight, to widen the margin to 23, 35-12. Manuel and Ieva Nagy then scored to bring Troy within 19, 35-16, but a 9-2 Blue Raider streak, again started by a pair of points from Stewart, pushed the deficit to 26, 44-18, with 4:18 left in the half.

The Trojans sliced the lead to 22 on a pair of occasions down the final stretch but Jones swiped a DeAngela Sword pass and launched a 3-pointer just before the buzzer, banking in the long-range attempt, and sending Middle Tennessee into the intermission ahead, 49-24.

The Blue Raiders quickly built a 33-point advantage in the second half, beginning the session with an 8-2 run during the first three minutes. Lanning converted a pair of free throws just over a minute later, extending the difference to 35, but Manuel pulled it back to 33 on a jumper at 13:33 for a 65-32 lead.

Lanning then ignited a series of three consecutive 3-pointers, draining the first two before Jones added one, to force another Troy timeout after MT claimed a 42-point, 74-32, edge with 12:25 left. The surge continued as Elie added a pair of jumpers and Stewart contributed another jumper to cap

a 15-0 streak, pushing the margin to 48, 80-32, with 10:57 remaining.

Brooke Bowie posted four-straight Trojan points to cut the lead to 43, 83-40, but a 10-3 Middle Tennessee answer set the difference at 50, 93-43, at the 5:51 mark. Blake tallied another jumper for Troy before the Blue Raider bench was cleared. Joining Leonard on the floor over the final minutes were sophomore Jamila Ajanaku and freshman Janay Brinkley.

Middle Tennessee will return to action at Noon Sunday when it plays host to Denver in another Sun Belt Network game of the Week. Richard Cross will handle the play-by-play, while Debbie Leonard will serve as the color analyst.

Dick Palmer and Duane Hickey 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
I was proud of everybody tonight in the roles they played, in the second half in particular. We tried to do a better job on the boards and we did, and we tried to do a better job in our defensive movements, and we did. I am not concerned about the score as much as I am the little things, closing out on the baseline, closing out on the shooters, things like that. Also pushing the basketball and filling the lanes, and we were able to do some of that. I am really happy with our girls.

On Troy's three offensive rebounds
We out rebounded them 38-24, and we have been out rebounding everybody this year except Sunday, and we got out rebounded at Arkansas State.

Mike (Murphy) does a good job. They are a little bit down right now, but he will have them ready when we go back down there next month.

On Jordyn Luffman
She is a player, she is just got to step out of her shell. She has been a role player all of her life, and we are wanting her to be a primary player. We want her to step up and take some shots, and make something happen, and she did that in the first half. I think when she hit the first couple of shots, that gave her some confidence, and that should help her the rest of the year.

Ebony (Rowe) and Anne Marie (Lanning) have been carrying us the first half of the year, and we want some of those other girls to step up. They are very talented, and we know they are talented, and the only thing holding them back is themselves.

I thought Dymon Raynor did well tonight, and so did Lauren March, and Icelyn Elie came out of her shell a little bit tonight, and that is what we want. I thought when that last group went in, they played pretty good defense. Laken (Leonard) and Janay (Brinkley) and Jamila (Ajanaku) got up in the lanes a little better than the other group. Of course they were a little fresher. I told them if they started playing the scoreboard instead of running our offense, they were coming out. I did not care about scoring a 100 points, I just wanted them to run our offense.

On defensive pressure
That is something we have been working on the last two or three days, and it showed up tonight. I hope we can carry that over the next game because Denver is a very good basketball team.

Freshman Jordyn Luffman

On scoring 17 points in the first 10 minutes

I just got going. It was like the ball just kept falling to me. I do not really know how to describe it.

Senior Anne Marie Lanning

On the team defense

I would grade out team's defense tonight as a B in the first half, and an A in the second half. We picked it up, and that was our main emphasis at halftime. Coach Insell wanted us to work on our 'D'. He was not mad at us, he just wanted to work on it and see what we could do. I think we did a great job.

On Jordyn Luffman's performance

I think she can be awesome, if she actually knew the potential that she has, and I say that every day to Kim Clark, our guard coach. Jordyn could do whatever she wants. She is a rebounder, she has got the body, she is a shooter, she has got it all. Tonight, she had a breakout, so she proved to herself and everyone else what she can do. Now she just has to believe in herself.

On being close to scoring 1,000 points in her career

It is nothing that I have thought a whole lot about as being a goal, but I have worked hard, so hopefully I worked hard to achieve something. Last year, Coach would always talk about our four 1,000 point scorers, and he would always say we are going to have a fifth one, so he has planted that seed for me to have a goal to reach. And, now I am almost there.

Troy Postgame Quotes

Head Coach Michael Murphy

Obviously, we did not play a very good basketball game. All the credit goes to Middle Tennessee. They are very well coached, play extremely well, play as a group, have a lot of depth and can score from both inside and outside. We obviously have a lot of work to do, but I want to congratulate Middle Tennessee on playing a great game.

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