

# Lanning joins 1,000-point club in tight win

## MT remains unbeaten in SBC action at 7-0

January 23, 2011 · Athletic Communications

### MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Senior Anne Marie Lanning became the 25th member of Middle Tennessee's 1,000-point club, finishing with 18, as the Blue Raiders held on for a 71-68 victory Sunday afternoon over visiting Denver inside the Murphy Center. The win for Middle Tennessee, its 12th consecutive in the series, was shown regionally on Comcast/Charter Sports Southeast (CSS) as the Sun Belt Network game of the week.

Lanning hit an off-balance 3-pointer with 5:35 to play in the opening 20 minutes to take her spot among the elite Blue Raiders in the program's history. Her attempt came from the left wing as the shot clock was set to expire.

She added three more triples to give her four on the day, matching the Pioneer team total and raising her career mark to 215. She added five assists and three steals in playing all 40 minutes.

Freshman Ebony Rowe also had an explosive day for Middle Tennessee (16-4, 7-0 Sun Belt), recording her 10th career double-double with team-leading 24 points and 17 rebounds, including 10 on the offensive glass. Among the 10 double-doubles, four have now come in league action.

Sophomore Icelyn Elie provided the Blue Raiders with a trio of double-figure scorers, contributing 16 points.



Katelyn Murdoch set the tone for Denver (12-8, 4-3 Sun Belt) with 25 points, missing just two shots on an 11-of-13 performance. Brianna Culberson registered a double-double of her own with 17 points and 13 rebounds, while also joining the 1,000-point club.

Britteni Rice posted 12 points, as the Pioneers matched MT with three players in double figures, and Emiko Smith handed out one-half of the squad's 18 assists.

The game opened with neither team able to pull away and five ties within the first five minutes, as Elie tallied three-straight buckets to force an 11-11 deadlock at 15:17. Rowe then went to work on the low block, posting eight of Middle Tennessee's next 11 points, widening the margin to eight, 22-14, over the course of the next five minutes.

Three trips to the foul line where it hit all six attempts enabled Denver to tie the score once again, 26-26, with 6:05 left in the period. Lanning responded with her 1,000-point shot before she added a free throw to make it a four-point, 30-26, difference at 4:23.

The Pioneers countered with an 8-1 spurt, claiming a 34-31 edge with 1:36 remaining, but the stanza's seventh tie came following a Lanning trey with only 44 seconds to play before she fed the ball to redshirt freshman Lauren March for a baseline jumper, giving MT a 38-36 lead at the intermission.

The two teams traded baskets in the early going of the second period and the ninth, and final, tie was at 40-40 when Rowe tipped-in her own miss with 17:31 to go. Elie regained control and notched the next seven points, started by an old-fashioned three-point play, to push the Blue Raider edge to 47-40 at the 15:48 mark.

Denver pulled within five a couple times during the next two-and-a-half minutes, the last on a Murdoch layup at 13:27, but sophomore Kortni Jones drained a 3-pointer on the next Blue Raider possession to ignite a 13-4 run. Lanning and Jones each added another trey to close the streak and give Middle Tennessee a 62-48 lead with 8:40 remaining.

Again, the Pioneers did not quit, and eight of the next 10 points fell through the visitors' hoop, capped by a Sarah Feeney steal and layup at 5:51, to trim the deficit back to single digits, 67-59. Freshman Jordyn Luffman answered with a 3-pointer at the other end, but Denver kept pushing and Murdoch tallied seven of its next 10 points to slice the gap to two, 68-66, with just 40 seconds left.

The two teams traded trips to the foul line down the stretch, and after Tina Stewart missed a chance to put the Blue Raiders ahead by two possessions, the Pioneers had one last look. Elie, however, stepped in front of Culberson's in-bounds pass at mid-court to seal the win.

Middle Tennessee will return to action at 6 p.m. Central Wednesday when it travels to Boca Raton, Fla., to face Florida Atlantic in the second meeting between the two programs this season.

Before the Blue Raiders hit the road for south Florida, Dick Palmer and head coach Rick Insell will be live at Coach's Grill in Murfreesboro from 6-7 p.m. Monday for the fourth installment of Rick Insell Live!

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

They have a very, very good basketball team. They are experienced, and they remind me a lot of our team last year in the fact that they handle the ball so well, they know what they want to do, and they are able to execute. They are very heady, they are a very good basketball team.

Murdoch only missed two shots, and one of them was one of those last shots. Culberson is as good as anybody, and their point guard (Smith) did a good job of delivering the basketball.

*On 18-4 run that featured Icelyn Elie and Ebony Rowe*

We were a little hesitant with Ice because she had three fouls, and as smart and experienced as Denver was, they might take a charge. But she cut the lane a time or two, got some put-backs, made some great shots. When Icelyn Elie steps up and takes it to the next level, it is going to make us a better basketball team. Ebony is tough inside, and Ice can slash and finish like she did today, that makes us a pretty good team inside.

*On close finish*

That is the second Sunday in a row that we have had a tight game, but we had Anne Marie Lanning on the floor conducting things, and that makes you feel a lot better. When we had a two or three point lead, she went to the line and hit both free throws.

Ebony is just amazing. You look at her, and you wonder how does she get all of that done, but she gets on the boards. Some of those first half put-backs, she just went and got. They were not hers, she just went and got them. You have to be born with that, you do not coach that. She is a competitor, she gets great positioning, and she has got great leap. She is a winner. If we had not had her, we might had been in a bind. They are a very good basketball team.

*Does your team expect to win these games?*

Our practices are pretty intense, sometimes playing the games is a lot easier than going to practice. I am a stickler for doing it right every time. We do expect to win every time we walk out on the floor. These players I have got this year are just about all freshmen and sophomores, and I think a lot of people around the conference, and around the country, kinda looked over them. They thought they are going to need a year or two of seasoning, they are going to be pretty good. Well, they decided in July that they did not want to hear any more of that. We never mentioned it in the conditioning room, or the training room, or in practice. What they wanted to do was show the bunch that left, while they had all the respect in the world for them, that they had a pretty good bunch behind them last year. I was criticized last year for not playing some of those kids, but we were in so many tight games, and I had so much trust in that bunch of seniors, that I just did not go to them.

Anne Marie Lanning is a special player. She has been a winner all her life. Everybody has kind of overlooked her. She is slow, she has got no lateral quickness, she just wins. She willed her high school team to a state championship, she has been a three-year starter for us. This year, she has been running around with all of those infants on the floor and directing them where they need to go, and she is doing more coaching on the floor than I am doing off the floor. I am really going to miss her when she goes. I enjoy watching her play. What about that last 3-point shot that she made at the half? Not many people could have even got that off, and it did not even hit the rim.

When I recruited her, I knew she was going to be a 1,000-point scorer. One reason is Amber Holt was sitting on the block and three people had to guard her, and then Alysha Clark was on the block and three people had to guard her, so somebody was going to come off, probably Anne Marie, and

she got a lot of points because she played with Jackie (Pickel), Chelsia (Lymon), AC and Brandi (Brown).

Anne Marie is our MVP. She does everything for us. She initiates our offense for us, we trust her with the basketball. If you watch, every possession goes thru Anne Marie Lanning. She dictates basically what we want. She may not be the best player on our team, but in her teammates' eyes, and in the eyes of the coaches, she is our MVP. And she might end up being the MVP of this conference before it is all said and done.

### **Senior Anne Marie Lanning**

*On hitting the 1,000-point shot of her career*

First of all, I did not even think about the shot being my 1,000th point. All I could think about was that I got lucky on that one because I heard the clock running down and I just threw it up there. It is significant because it means a lot. I did not get emotional, but I just know that it means a lot to me, and I am glad that I could get it with the teammates that I have.

*On Insell saying she was MVP of the conference*

That was really special because he has told me that before and talked to me about it. To me, I would rather be the MVP and not score so many points. That means a lot because Ebony scores most of our points, and I am the only senior playing. Everybody sets goals and stuff, but I did not really think about it. I have thought about all of the other girls that have scored 1,000 points here. I just knew who they were.

*Did you think MT ever had a good-size lead against Denver?*

I thought there at the end, when we were clicking on all cylinders, when we were already up 11, we got some breakaways in transition. We made a few risky passes and turnovers that should not have been. We should not have gotten in that position.

*On Ebony Rowe*

There are similarities between Ebony and Alysha and Amber. Our offense is the same, and the special play that we run, she is the primary. That is who we get the ball to first. Today, they were doubling down on her, and she did a good job of getting the ball out to the high post. That is something that she has been working on in practice, and I think she did a great job.

### **Freshman Ebony Rowe**

A game like this is a confidence booster, and it is fun playing out there with my teammates.

### **Denver Postgame Quotes**

#### **Head Coach Erik Johnson**

This is one of those hard ones as a coach. We have come a long way. We came here last year at this time and got drilled. Middle Tennessee beat us in every facet of the game. This year, we knew we were light years ahead of where we were last year. We knew this team was beatable, and I am very, very proud of our effort.

We came out and handled the pressure. We were able to hold down their 3-point shooters for large stretches of the game. The difference is that they had huge offensive rebounds, and we could not keep Ebony Rowe off the glass. We gave them those second chance points. In a three point game,

you think about getting just one more box out or having one more ball bounce our way.

It is hard. We do not want to say it is a moral victory or we have come so far because we can beat this team. Our team knows it is not about coming close, and our team is disappointed that we did not come out with this win. We know that if we face those guys again in Hot Springs, we are going to be prepared.

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*Printed on July 31, 2014*

*Original URL: <http://www.gblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/50712>*