Blue Raiders knock off Missouri in home opener

Adams posts a career-high 25 kills in 3-1 victory

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - After a not-so-memorable opening day last Saturday, the Blue Raiders responded emphatically in the home opener against Missouri on Thursday evening, knocking off the Tigers 3-1 (25-13, 28-30, 25-17, 25-15) at Alumni Memorial Gym. Missouri entered the match with a perfect 4-0 record and were coming off an NCAA Regional semifinal appearance in 2010. The Tigers were also just outside of the AVCA Top 25 Coaches Poll this week, picking up 33 points to sit in 29th among all vote-getters. "It feels great to get a win over a Sweet 16 team from last year," head coach Matt Peck said. "They're a great team, but we just played outstanding. The difference between our team tonight and our team last weekend is night and day. Ashley was obviously big for us today, but it was just a complete team win. Everyone played well." Ashley Adams, the reigning Sun Belt Player of the Week, kept recent success going with an astounding 25 kills, averaging 6.25 per set. The junior was remarkably efficient on the attack, hitting at a .526 rate. "I didn't expect to get the ball that much, so getting that many kills was unexpected," Adams said. "I just wanted our whole team to play well and hopefully get a win. Winning this first home game is huge for us, especially after not playing well last weekend. We have to look at this as the beginning of our season." Maria Szivos was second on the team with 13 kills and surpassed the 1,000 kill mark for her career in the fourth set. The Jaszbereny, Hungary, native finished hitting .400 for the match, and tacked on a pair of service aces. For the match Middle Tennessee posted 71 kills to Missouri's 44 and out-hit the Tigers .432 to .187. Angela Peyton directed the offense with a match-high 41 assists to go along with 11 digs to register her first double-double of the season. Brynne Henderson also reached double figures in digs, posting a match-high 17. At the net, the Blue Raiders also showed improvement, out-blocking the Tigers 11.5 to 7.0, led by seven blocks from Oyinlola

Oladinni. Adams, Szivos and Angela Peyton each chipped in three. "We didn't block as well as we should have last week," Adams said. "We really focused a lot on blocking in practice this week. Our blocking tonight was a complete 180 from last weekend, and it really helped us win." Perhaps looking to erase last week's memories early, the Blue Raiders ran away to a 25-13 victory in the opening stanza. After some back and forth play early, consecutive kills from Lindsay Cheatham, Szivos and Adams gave the Blue and White a 9-3 edge, and they'd never look back. Adams and Cheatham posted seven and four kills, respectively in the frame, and Middle Tennessee had only two attack errors, out-hitting Mizzou .619 to .174. The Tigers clawed back into it in the second set, taking advantage of an early 5-0 lead and holding on through 11 ties to win the second set 30-28. The Blue Raiders were able to fend off five set points late, but back-to-back kills from Emily Wilson and Lisa Henning sent the match into the break even at 1-1. Szivos and Adams grabbed the advantage back for Middle Tennessee in the third frame as the duo posted 12 of MT's 17 kills to lead the Blue Raiders to a 25-17 victory. After some even play early, the Blue and White, who hit a scorching .520 in the frame, utilized a six-point run to grab a 15-10 lead and wouldn't be challenged down the stretch. Adams continued her tour de force, posting the final two kills of the set to propel MT to a 2-1 advantage. Brandi Waller stepped up in the fourth and final frame with seven kills to lead the Blue Raiders to a 25-15 victory. Early on, it looked like MT would win in a runaway as Waller put an exclamation point on an early run with back-to-back kills to give Middle Tennessee an 8-2 lead. However, the Tigers were able to fight back within two at 11-9 and 12-10, but that was as close as they would get. Spurred on by two kills and a block from Adams, the Blue Raiders grabbed a 17-11 lead, ultimately ending the match with a Waller kill. Middle Tennessee will look to build on Thursday evening's successes as they will play host to ETSU on Friday during the seventh annual Blue Raider Bash. The meeting will mark the first between the two schools since the 1997 season. First serve is slated for 7:30 p.m.

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