Blue Raiders sweep past FIU for ninth straight win

Adams and Szivos combine for 25 kills in victory

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee volleyball team notched their ninth consecutive victory on Sunday with a 3-0 (25-23, 25-21, 25-16) sweep of FIU at Alumni Memorial Gym. "FIU played us much better than they did two weeks ago down there, but we responded when we needed to," head coach Matt Peck said. "I don't think it was one of our better matches, but we did what we had to do, and Maria was just outstanding for us. The win improves the Blue Raiders to 11-9 overall including 8-1 in conference play, putting them in first place in the Sun Belt's East Division. The duo of Ashley Adams and Maria Szivos led the team in kills on the day, with Adams posting 13 and Szivos hitting at a blistering .522 rate for 12. Alyssa Wistrick tallied eight, and as a team, the Blue Raiders out-hit the Panthers .303 to .209 and recorded 46 kills to FIU's 40. After putting up a career-high three service aces on Friday, Oyinlola Oladinni kept it rolling with four more on Sunday, including three in a row at one point. "Oyinlola has worked very hard on her serving over the past couple of years, and now when she goes back there, I'm expecting her to score some points," Peck said. "She's really improved at it this season, and it's been huge for us." Morgan Peterson added four kills to go along with a match-high 38 assists. The sophomore also filled up the stat sheet defensively, posting 10 digs and four blocks. "I think Morgan is really starting to put it all together," Peck said. "Her defense has picked up quite a bit, and now we're starting to use her as an attacker as well, and it's paying off." Oladinni also put up four blocks as the Blue and

White out-blocked FIU 9.5 to 4.0. Lindsay Cheatham picked up three, and both Wistrick and Adams added two. Lindsey Purvis notched a career-high 10 digs. Szivos and Henderson chipped in nine and eight, respectively. Szivos led the way with four kills and Adams added three more as Middle Tennessee held on for a 25-23 opening set victory. MT led off with four consecutive points, but the Panthers began to inch back into it, grabbing their only lead of the frame at 9-7 on a Jovana Bjelica kill and service ace. It would stay even for a bit, but pair of Wistrick kills over the course of a 7-2 spurt pushed the Blue and White ahead at 17-12. FIU surged right back to tie it on multiple occasions, including at 23-23, but back-to-back kills from Peterson and Adams slammed the door to hand MT the 1-0 lead. Adams and Wistrick led the way in the second set, combining for 11 kills as the Blue Raiders out-hit the Panthers .316 to .256 en route to a 25-21 win. Middle Tennessee scored the opening four points of the frame once again, with Oladinni following up an Adams kill with three consecutive aces. The advantage would hold steady for much of the early goings, but Jessica Egan helped engineer a run to pull FIU within one at 13-12, and the Blue Raiders couldn't shake the Panthers down the stretch. FIU grabbed their first lead of the set at 17-16, but MT rallied for three straight scores only for a kill and service ace to tie it back up at 19-19. The trio of Adams, Cheatham and Peterson proved huge though as they combined for three kills and a three blocks to send the Blue Raiders into the break up 2-0 for the fifth consecutive match. Szivos came alive in the third and final set, picking up seven kills on eight attempts and three digs as Middle Tennessee grabbed a 25-16 victory. After playing even early, Middle Tennessee took an insurmountable lead with a 7-2 run to grab the 19-14 advantage. Adams recorded the final three points for MT with a trio of kills to secure the Blue Raiders' eighth sweep in the past nine matches. After starting the season 2-5 at home, Middle Tennessee has now won six consecutive, sweeping each match in 3-0 fashion. The Blue and White will hope to transfer the good fortune to the road as the team will now prepare for a trip to Louisiana later this week for a pair of matches, taking on ULM on Thursday and Louisiana on Saturday.

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