

# Middle Tennessee dominates in exhibition opener

## Blue Raiders place six players in double figures

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### **MURFREESBORO, Tenn. –**

Middle Tennessee started with a 21-2 run over the first seven minutes and never looked back in claiming a 124-55 victory over Alabama-Huntsville Tuesday night in women's basketball exhibition action to begin the 2011-12 campaign.

Junior Kortni Jones led all players with 28 points, hitting 10-of-20 field goals and all six of her free throws. Classmate and Preseason All-Sun Belt Second Team honoree Icelyn Elie added 25 points on 12-of-17 field goals, as the pair nearly combined to outscore the entire UAH roster.

Six MT starters reached double figures overall, including freshman Shanice Cason with 17 in her first collegiate action.

Co-Sun Belt Player of the Year Ebony Rowe registered a double-double of 14 points and a game-best 14 rebounds. The Blue Raiders forced 35 turnovers and shot 56.8 percent from the floor, hitting 25-of-44 in each half for 50-of-88 for the game.

Middle Tennessee also swiped 22 steals, including six by Jones.

Natalie Kelley was the lone Lady Charger to net double-figure points with 12, half of which came on free throws. Over one-half of Alabama-Huntsville's points for the game (29-of-55) were scored at the charity stripe. Bailee Robinson and Kelley hauled in a team-high five caroms.



The Blue Raiders raced out to a 6-0 lead before Chelsi Bryant scored for the Lady Chargers at 16:41, closing UAH within four, the closest it would get the remainder of the game. Middle Tennessee then tallied the next 15 points, which included a put-back from Elie and a 3-pointer from Cason, her first collegiate points, at 14:04.

Bryant snapped the run with a triple of her own at 12:52 and the margin stayed around 16 at 23-7 before a 12-2 MT burst, capped by four-straight Elie points, pushed the advantage to 26, 35-9, with 10:15 to play in the first half. A pair of free throws apiece from Kelley and Jordan Smith helped the Lady Chargers trim the margin to 20, 37-17, over the next two-and-a-half minutes, but Elie drained a 3-pointer to start a 16-2 streak during the next four minutes, pushing the lead to 34, 53-19, at 3:27.

Alabama-Huntsville brought the lead down to 31, 53-22, on its next possession via an old-fashioned three-point play from Alysse Bishop, but it would get no closer the remainder of the contest. A KeKe Stewart jumper with 58 seconds left enabled the Blue Raiders to grow their halftime cushion to 38, 60-22.

Robinson poured in another old-fashioned three-point play to start the second half for the Lady Chargers but just three-and-a-half minutes in, at 16:30, a Lauren March jumper made it a 43-point lead, 70-27. The edge swelled to 50, 83-33, on a pair of Cason charity tosses with 13:57 left and continued to widen, reaching 61 on back-to-back Elie layups, the second coming off a Janay Brinkley steal.

After March made it a 65-point advantage by putting Middle Tennessee in triple digits, 101-36, at the 8:48 mark, Alabama-Huntsville used a Robinson layup and set of free throws, followed by another pair at the line from Kelley, to cut it down to 59, 101-42, coming out of the under-eight media timeout.

Elie hit a jumper with 4:40 left to give MT a 69-point cushion, 113-44, its largest of the game, only to be matched by a Cason steal and pass ahead to March in the last seconds to decide the final score.

The Blue Raiders will return to action when they close the exhibition season with a 5:30 p.m. Monday tip against Martin Methodist.

### **Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes**

#### **HEAD COACH RICK INSELL:**

We've got a lot of things to work on. We knew that we were better than Alabama-Huntsville, and we also knew that they were going to gravitate to the ball. We didn't do a real good job. They gave us some things that we needed to work on.

#### **KORTNI JONES:**

*On Shanice Cason*

Shanice is going to give us some depth at the point and that is going to free me up as a scorer when I move to the 2-guard. She came in here hard-nosed and tough and she can shoot the ball. I like that because I've wanted to see what I could do as a scorer. I think she is going to help us.