

Middle Tennessee tips-off season with win over UNCW

Blue Raiders win fourth-straight season opener

November 11, 2011 · Athletic Communications

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. –

Middle Tennessee jumped out to an early lead and never looked back in claiming a 79-60 women's basketball victory over UNC Wilmington in the season opener Friday night in the Lady Lion Classic in University Park, Pa. The Blue Raiders win is their fourth straight in a season opener, dating back to the 2008 campaign. Junior Kortni Jones paced Middle Tennessee (1-0) with a game-high 25 points on 7-of-13 from the floor, including five 3-pointers and 6-of-6 at the foul line.

Sophomore Ebony Rowe, the Sun Belt co-Preseason Player of the Year, added a double-double of 22 points and 13 rebounds. It marks the 29th consecutive game in which she has reached double-figure scoring. Preseason All-Sun Belt Second Team honoree, junior Icelyn Elie, added 13 points to give the Blue Raiders a trio in double digits. MT started the contest by making



all nine of its free throws in the first half but converted only 2-of-9 from the stripe after the break. UNC Wilmington was paced by 12 points from Ayoola Weaver. Abria Trice and Jessica Freeman each contributed 11 points with Karneshia Garrett hauling in a Seahawk-high nine boards. The Blue Raiders raced out to a 13-0 start entering the first media timeout at 15:58. Jones knocked down the initial basket of the season, a 3-pointer from the left corner, and Rowe netted six points during the stretch. After Trice put the Seahawks on the board for the first time with a triple of her own at 14:17, she added a second bucket 30 seconds later as UNCW clawed within eight. However, Rowe pushed

the lead back to double digits and by the 9:21 mark back-to-back layups by Elie increased the margin to 14, 24-10. Cason drained her second shot of the period from just inside the 3-point arc at 8:01 and then five-consecutive points from Jones made it a 19-point advantage, 33-14, with 5:35 to play. UNC Wilmington (0-1) trimmed the deficit to 15 over the next three minutes, capped by an Weaver layup. She added another layup, followed by back-to-back close-range conversions from Alisha Andrews, pulling UNCW within 11, 39-28, as a minute remained in the stanza. With the clock winding down, the Seahawks held the ball, but Elie intercepted a mid-court pass and raced to the other end. Rowe cleaned up a missed layup by adding one of her own to send the Blue Raiders into the intermission ahead by 13, 41-28. As the second half started, Middle Tennessee turned its offensive attention to Rowe for four of its first five field goals before a Jones 3-pointer at 15:56 extended the cushion to 22, 54-32, on a 13-4 spurt. Weaver helped bring the Seahawks back within 18, 58-40, over the next four minutes, but sophomore Janay Brinkley put a halt to the attempted comeback with a trey at 11:33. UNCW would then outscore the Blue Raiders 10-2 over the next three minutes, cutting the deficit to 13, 63-50, at the 8:49 mark before Brinkley answered with her second 3-pointer in as many tries on the next MT possession. Her triple started a 6-0 run, but the Seahawks countered with six-straight points of their own to keep the difference at a baker's dozen, 69-56, with 4:24 remaining. The lead would extend back out to 18 on the strength of a Rowe jumper and Jones 3-pointer before the under-four minute timeout and then increase to 21 as junior Jamila Ajanaku connected on an old-fashioned three-point play with 2:37 left. Reigning Colonial Athletic Association Rookie of the Year Alisha Andrews and Trice each added buckets for UNC Wilmington down the stretch but their efforts could not get UNCW closer than 19. Shanice Cason became fifth Blue Raider freshman under Insell to start season opener and second in as many years (Rowe). Middle Tennessee will face a stiff test Sunday in its final game of the tournament. The Blue Raiders will tip-off against No. 12/14 and host Penn State at 11 a.m. Central. The contest can be heard on WMOT (89.5 FM) and WGNS (1450 AM, 100.5 FM, 101.9 FM) with Dick Palmer on the call.

Printed on August 1, 2014

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/56501>