

# Blue Raiders survive overtime scare at Troy to start New Year

## MT outscores Trojans, 14-8, in extra period

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**TROY, Ala.** – Middle

Tennessee was challenged for 45 minutes but timely buckets in overtime lifted the Blue Raiders to a 72-66 victory at Troy Thursday night in Sun Belt women's basketball action. MT outscored the Trojans 14-8 during the extra five minutes to pull out the win in the first game of the 2012 calendar year. Kortni Jones and Ebony Rowe paced the offensive attack with 24 and 22 points, respectively. Jones hit five 3-pointers, including two to open overtime. Icelyn Elie fell just short of a double-double with nine points and a team-high nine rebounds. Troy was led by 19 points from DeAngela Sword and 14 from Tenia Manuel, including all eight of her team's points in overtime before fouling out. Jones quickly gave MT a six-point cushion in the extra frame, connecting on a pair of triples within the first 1:05 before Manuel answered with a trey of her own at the 3:28



mark. Manuel then knocked down 5-of-6 free throws, pushing the Trojans ahead, 66-64, with 1:56 to play. A Rowe free throw preceded a Jones layup as the Blue Raiders regained the lead, 67-66, and never looked back. Shanice Cason added a pair of charity tosses before Jones added another. With the five-point advantage in the waning seconds, Rowe stole the ball at midcourt and raced to the other end to decide the final margin. Middle Tennessee (11-5, 3-0 SBC) turned up the heat to start the second frame, scoring on a Rowe layup just six seconds into the half. The reigning Sun Belt Player of the Week continued to be the focal point of the offense, tallying 13 of the initial 19 points,

including an in-bounds play at 17:18 to give the Blue Raiders the lead, 30-29, their first since Elie's game-opening bucket for a 2-0 advantage. A Jones triple ignited a 5-0 run, as MT built a 36-31 advantage. However, Troy battled back with an 8-0 surge of its own, capped by a Jasmine Pitts 3-pointer at the 9:50 mark, to claim a 39-36 lead. The Trojans could not pull ahead by more than four during the next four minutes, as the two teams were tied at 47-47 as the six-minute mark was passed. Following a Jones miss from long range, Lauren March came flying into the lane to grab the offensive rebound. While in the air collecting the loose ball, she fired a shot towards the hoop and converted the attempt to give her team a 49-47 edge. The lead was short lived with Dominique Ross countering on the other end to knot the score at 49-49. Neither team was able to increase its lead by more than one for the next three minutes until an Elie steal led to a Jones layup at 2:01 for a 57-54 score. Jumpers by Sophia Kleeman and Sword gave Troy a 58-57 advantage but Cason hit 1-of-2 free throws with 10 seconds left in regulation to force overtime. Middle Tennessee grabbed the offensive rebound off the second shot, but a pair of chances in the final seconds rimmed out. The Blue Raiders scored the game's first bucket before suffering a four-minute drought as the Trojans netted six unanswered points to claim a 6-2 lead. Janay Brinkley snapped Middle Tennessee's lull with a 3-pointer at 15:08, and following a Cason free throw and Elie layup, the Blue Raiders clawed within two, 10-8. However, Ross hit a 10-footer and Pitts tossed up a wild layup to push the Trojan edge back to a half dozen before Laken Leonard buried a corner trey. Following an old-fashioned three-point play by Ross, KeKe Stewart hit a turnaround jumper to keep it a four-point difference, 17-13, as neither team would score again for over three minutes. Four-straight Jones points trimmed the deficit to two, 19-17, but Sword connected on a pair of free throws to extend the Troy (1-13, 0-3 SBC) advantage back to four, 21-17, with under four minutes to play in the period. Sword continued to score for the Trojans, tallying of her team's final six points, and Ebony Rowe finally got on the board for MT at 3:12, as the Blue Raiders entered the intermission down eight, 27-19. Middle Tennessee will return to action when it plays host to Louisiana at 3 p.m. inside the historic Murphy Center. Dick Palmer and Duane Hickey will call all the action on the Blue Raider Network of WMOT (89.5 FM) and WGNS (1450 AM, 100.5 FM, 101.9 FM). In addition, 2012 Sun Belt Conference Tournament booklets are now on sale at the Middle Tennessee athletic ticket office. Cost per booklet is \$83 and includes a ticket to all eight sessions of the Sun Belt Championships, March 3-6, in Hot Springs, Ark. Fans can purchase booklets by calling 1-888-YES-MTSU or visiting [goblueraiders.com](http://goblueraiders.com).

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