Winning streak reaches eight as MT completes Florida sweep

Blue Raiders remain lone unbeaten in Sun Belt play

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BOCA RATON, Fla. – Middle Tennessee women's basketball extended its winning streak to eight games by knocking off Florida Atlantic, 55-37, Saturday afternoon to complete a south Florida sweep and remain the lone unbeaten in Sun Belt action. The Blue Raiders were led by 14 points apiece from Ebony Rowe and Kortni Jones. Jones hit three 3-pointers among her team-high scoring honors, while Rowe knocked down 6-of-8 field goals. Icelyn Elie added a dozen to give Middle Tennessee a trio in double-figure scoring. The Owls were paced by April Goins' 10 points, the only Florida Atlantic (8-8, 3-2 SBC) player to reach double figures. DaLita Scott grabbed a game-best seven rebounds, as FAU won the battle on the glass, 31-to-24. The Blue Raiders jumped out to an early 2-0 lead on a Rowe layup but five-straight points from the Owls gave them a 5-2 edge. Laken Leonard then drained a 3-pointer at 16:24 to knot the score once again. Rowe would hit a jumper before FAU again hit five-straight points, capped by a 3-pointer from Latavia Dempsey at the 12:30 mark. A 6-2 Middle Tennessee run during the next five minutes put the Blue Raiders back on top. Leonard started the surge with a drive through the lane to just beat the shot clock before Rowe added an old-fashioned three-point play with 8:40 left. The two teams traded baskets during the next three minutes but a 3-pointer from Jones at 4:29 and a Rowe drive along the baseline to the other side of the hoop put Middle Tennessee (14-5, 6-0 SBC) ahead, 22-18, with exactly three

minutes remaining in the period. Following a Teri Stamps jumper, cutting the margin in half, the Blue Raiders scored the final two buckets of the stanza. KeKe Stewart converted a 17-footer from the top of the key before Shanice Cason was on the receiving end of a steal, racing to the her basket uncontested for a layup with seven seconds to play and sending MT into the intermission ahead, 26-20. A Jones triple opened the second half, as Middle Tennessee utilized a 10-2 run to start the session. Six of the first 10 points came via Stewart, including a turnaround jumper at the 16:10 mark to help the Blue Raiders build a 14-point cushion, 36-22, in the first five minutes. By the 10:42 mark, Florida Atlantic had dropped the deficit to 10 on a pair of occasions, the last on a Goins jumper to make it 42-32. Elie then started to heat up, scoring six straight and eight of MT's next 11 to push the Blue Raider advantage to 53-36 with 3:56 left. Neither team mounted much offensively down the stretch. Jones drove to the basket for a layup at the 2:46 mark and Takia Brooks gave the Owls a free throw 23 seconds later, but neither team tallied any more points in the final two minutes. Middle Tennessee will return to action when it welcomes Arkansas State to the historic Murphy Center for a 7 p.m. Wednesday tip. 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.

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