

Jones makes history as Blue Raiders remain perfect in SBC

MT improves to 58-1 under Insell in home conference games

January 25, 2012 · Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. –

Junior Kortni Jones passed her way into Middle Tennessee and Sun Belt history Wednesday night, leading the Blue Raiders to an 82-52 home victory, their 11th straight, over Troy inside the historic Murphy Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Jones handed out a school record and Sun Belt Conference games only mark of 16 assists, as part of 25 total by Middle Tennessee on 33 field goals. The 16 helpers surpass the previous program standard of 14 set twice, the last time by Chelsia Lymon at South Alabama February 21, 2010. In league contests, she bettered the mark of 15 established by UAB's Bev Williams against Charlotte Jan. 13, 1990, while falling one short of the overall conference record of 17 by UAB's Kitty Price in 1986.



Along with her 16 assists, she tied a career best with six 3-pointers on her way to sharing game-high scoring honors with 24 points, one shy of her career high set in the season opener versus UNC Wilmington Nov. 11 at the Lady Lion Classic in University Park, Pa. It marks her third career double-double of points and assists, and second in the last three games.

Also with a double-double Wednesday night was classmate Icelyn Elie, her second straight, seventh of the season and 10th of her career. Elie finished with a game-high tying 24 points to go along with

her game-best 10 rebounds, as the Blue Raiders won the battle on the glass, 36-to-26.

Reigning Sun Belt Player of the Week Ebony Rowe gave Middle Tennessee (17-5, 9-0 SBC) a trio in double-figure scoring with 12 points, eight in the second half, plus nine rebounds and a game-high five steals.

The Trojans were led by DeAngela Sword's 10 points. She finished a rebound shy of Tenia Manuel's team-best six caroms.

The Blue Raiders blew the gates open from the start, racing out to a 10-2 lead in just over two minutes and expanding the advantage to 20-4 following back-to-back 3-pointers from sophomores Laken Leonard and Janay Brinkley, and a Rowe layup at 13:19.

A pair of Jones triples helped the lead swell to 19 two times during the next four minutes before jumpers from Manuel and Jamesha Blake helped Troy (1-18, 0-8 SBC) trim the deficit to 15, 28-13, with 8:59 remaining.

Jones and Sarah McAppion traded two free throws apiece in the next minute to precede treys by Leonard and Jones, providing Middle Tennessee with a 21-point, 36-15, edge as the clock approached the final five minutes of the period. Ieva Nagy hit a pair of 3-pointers for the Trojans to cut the margin to 15 before consecutive in-the-paint buckets from Elie and Rowe made it a 19-point difference with 1:01 left. Blake and Jasmine Pitts scored before the half to send Troy into the locker rooms down 15, 42-27.

Sword began the second half with a jumper, cutting the score to a 13-point MT edge, 42-29 and it would remain no less than 13 through the opening two-and-a-half minutes as Kourtney Coleman hit a jumper to make it 44-31 with 17:29 to play.

Rowe then went to work inside, making a pair of baskets, both on Jones assists, to ignite a 13-0 spurt covering nearly four minutes as Middle Tennessee saw its lead swell to 57-31 with 13:47 left. Just over a minute later after a 30-second Blue Raider timeout, Jones stole the Trojan in-bounds pass and fed Rowe for a layup and a 28-point lead, 61-33.

Troy then mounted a 7-2 run in the next three minutes, including four points from Pitts, to pull within 23, 63-40. But, over the course of the ensuing three minutes, Middle Tennessee responded with a 7-1 run of its own to push the lead to 29, 70-41, on a KeKe Stewart jumper at the 6:29 mark.

The Blue Raiders would hold the Trojans to all free throws with the lone exception of a Sword jumper at 1:46 the remainder of the game. Middle Tennessee would build a game-best 39-point cushion, 82-43, on an Elie layup at 3:55 before Troy netted the final nine points.

Without a game this weekend, the Blue Raiders will return to action in over a week. Middle Tennessee travels to Denton, Texas, to face North Texas at 5 p.m. Thursday, February 2. It begins a two-game road swing, which also includes a 5:30 p.m. (Central) Saturday, February 4 tip in Denver against the Denver Pioneers.

Dick Palmer will have all the action live on the Blue Raider Network on 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.

Middle Tennessee Postgame Quotes:

HEAD COACH RICK INSELL:

When Kortni Jones comes to play, we are a pretty good basketball team. For the last two or three games, she has tried her best to get on track for what I want done. She's delivering the basketball, she's making great decisions, and had only one turnover in each half. And she played 36 minutes. I am real pleased. Not only that she had a double-double, but that she handled the basketball, she knocked down shots and had only two turnovers.

We've got some very talented young ladies that haven't broken out of their shells yet. Lauren March is one, Janay Brinkley is another one, and you see they got considerable playing time tonight. We've got to bring them around. We've got to have them down the stretch. They are very good players, but we just haven't been able to get them out of their shell, get 'em to step across the line. In another night or two, we are going to have to start using them even more. They knew what they were doing tonight. There was only a couple of times when they got lost and we can live with that. And they were really getting up pressure as far as our press was concerned.

Scoring-wise, we've been able to score pretty much all year. We are averaging over 70 points a game in the conference, and we are happy with that.

On defense setting the tone tonight

We've got seven days before we play North Texas and all we are going to work on is defense. We'll take tomorrow (Thursday) off, practice on Friday and Saturday, take Sunday off, and then work to have them ready to play North Texas on Thursday.

On defending Troy's Australian players

Those two kids from Australia have a great basketball IQ, they know how to play the game, they know where they want the ball, they know where they want to get the ball to their teammates. I thought (Assistant Coach) Alex Fuller did a good job of having a scout on them. We didn't allow them to get to their spots, we were able to switch, we were able to trap, and you noticed that we had several jump balls tonight. And it was because of the scout that Alex worked up on them, her and Coach Burkey and Coach Kim.

I was pleased with the scout, but I was even more pleased that our players took the scout from the practice floor to the playing floor.

On complacency

They are not going to get complacent. You'd be surprised that not once has the 11-game winning streak been mentioned by any one of them, not in practice, not in the dressing room. They are afraid to. They may have mentioned it back in their dorm rooms, but they aren't going to mention it around me.

KORTNI JONES (who had 24 points and a school record 16 assists)

It was a pretty special night tonight, especially since I had 16 assists. Coach told me at halftime that I had 10 and that he wanted more from me also. I put a focus on continuing to make passes to my

teammates. I feel they have a lot of trust in me and I have a lot of trust in them that they will catch and score. Sometimes I think I surprise them when I throw it, but they know that I'm not throwing it just to be doing it. I'm hoping that they will see the basket is close. It was really special tonight, not only scoring a lot of points, but to let everyone know that I am capable of being a passer also.

On working with Icelyn Elie and Ebony Rowe

Icelyn and Ebony are both extremely athletic and fast. If I see them out of the corner of my eye, and I'm a little ahead of them, and I know they are running full speed, nine times out of 10 I'm going to throw it. I try to put a little air under it, and I know that eventually, they will get to it and score.

On preparing for a Troy team that took MT into overtime three weeks ago in Troy The main focus was us coming in and playing like we knew how to play, how we are capable of playing. When we went down there, we had no focus at all, we just didn't play together, but when they came up here, we played with a different mindset tonight.

On balanced scoring on the team

I think we are all capable of scoring double figure points. If somebody has a breakout night, it is going to be a good game. If two people have a breakout night, then that takes the pressure off of Ebony. I feel like she has a lot of pressure on her back, coming off of being a Freshman All-American, and everybody looks at her to have a double-double every night. I think it's good that me and Icelyn can pick up the slack when she's not on her best game.

ICELYN ELIE:

On Kortni's passes

You always have to be ready because you never know when Kortni is going to throw it. She threw a lot of good passes. I just had to be ready for them and make something out of it.

Printed on July 23, 2014

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/58009>