Jones’ record-breaking night propels Blue Raiders to road victory

Junior has reached century mark for 3-pointers this season

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MONROE, La. – Middle Tennessee junior Kortni Jones smashed two single-season Sun Belt records on her way to tying her career-high point total, in lifting the Blue Raiders to a 67-53 road victory at ULM Thursday evening inside the Fant-Ewing Coliseum in Monroe, La. Jones dropped in her first five 3-pointers before halftime, reaching the century mark for the season, and setting conference standards for makes and attempts from behind the arc. She tied the previous records with a triple at 12:59 and then the marks became hers with her second long-range attempt with 9:57 remaining. She finished with a career-best tying 25 points, equaling the total she put together in the season opener Nov. 11 versus UNC Wilmington in the Lady Lion Classic. Jones becomes the first player in school and conference history to reach the triple-digit plateau in 3-pointers, finishing the game with a career-high tying six to boast her season mark to 101. She currently ranks second nationally in the category. Sophomore Ebony Rowe added her 12th double-double of the season and 28th of her career with 12 points and a season-best 17 rebounds, including 10 on the offensive glass. It is the second time this year Rowe has had 10 offensive caroms, matching the effort at Xavier Dec. 9. Junior Icelyn Elie finished just shy of her third-straight double-double, tallying 18 points and grabbing nine rebounds to round out the Middle Tennessee (23-5, 15-0 SBC) trio in double figures. The victory is the Blue Raiders’ 17th in a row, the third longest streak in school history. The only other

players to score for MT were starting guards, freshman Shanice Cason and sophomore Laken Leonard, with six points apiece. Elizabeth Torres paced the Warhawks with 13 points, including two of the team's 3-pointers. Marion Zollicoffer, who added 11 points, joined her in double-figures. Four ULM (9-19, 7-8 SBC) players hauled in a team-high four rebounds each, as Middle Tennessee dominated the glass, 45-26. The two teams battled back and forth through the opening six-and-a-half minutes, with a Larrie Williams jumper keeping the Warhawks within three, 11-8. However, the next eight points and 16 of the ensuing 20 would fall through the Blue Raiders' hoop. Jones drained three triples during the stretch and Rowe contributed five points, as Middle Tennessee extended its lead to 15, 27-12, by the 7:46 mark. ULM slowly chipped away at the deficit, trimming it to 12 twice in the next five minutes, the last on a Jasmine Shaw jumper at 3:01 to make it 32-20 in MT's favor. Consecutive 3-pointers from Leonard and Jones pushed it back to 18, 38-20, in the next minute before Torres answered with one of her own with 1:21 left. She would add a free throw but Jones hit one more trey before the half, with 13 seconds remaining, to send the Blue Raiders into the intermission ahead 17, 41-24. Back-to-back 3-pointers from Leonard and Cason helped Middle Tennessee watch its advantage swell to 21, 49-28, within the first four minutes of the second period. Cason scored six of the team's eight points over a seven-minute stretch, as the edge remained 18, 50-32, following an Ashleigh Simmons layup at the 13:15 mark. A pair of Elie free throws made it a 20-point difference again at 12:48, but a 16-8 Warhawk spurt covering a six-minute span cut the margin to a dozen, 60-48, with 6:48 left. Jones knocked down three-straight charity tosses and Rowe added a layup in the next two minutes, extending the advantage to 17, 65-48, as the five-minute mark was passed. The teams traded baskets in the waning minutes with another Torres triple deciding the final outcome, as she scored the final points with 25 seconds to play. The Blue Raiders return to the court when they close regular-season action at 1 p.m. Sunday by traveling to Bowling Green, Ky., to face Western Kentucky. The contest will be televised regionally by the Sun Belt Network and shown locally on Comcast/Charter Sports Southeast (CSS) with Lyn Rollins and Debbie Leonard on the call. It will be Middle Tennessee's third broadcast this season on the league's package. Dick Palmer and Duane Hickey 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 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 4-6, in Hot Springs, Ark. Fans can purchase booklets by calling 1-888-YES-MTSU or visiting goblueraiders.com.

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