Justice Posts Double-Double in MT Win

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's Jennifer Justice posted her first career double-double and Jamie Thomatis added 21 points, as the Lady Raiders posted a 73-55 victory over UT Martin Wednesday night at the Murphy Center. Justice had 13 points and 11 rebounds off the bench, including nine rebounds in the second half, as the Lady Raiders (4-2) outscored the visiting Skyhawks (1-6), 46-31, in the second half to take the victory. Middle Tennessee committed 14 turnovers and shot just 39 percent from the field in the first half, taking just a 27-24 advantage into halftime. The Lady Raiders scored eight of the first 10 points to open the second half, but the Skyhawks would not go away. MT built the lead to as many as 12 points five minutes into the second half, but UT Martin continued to fight and cut the lead to three at 44-41 when Jody Miller nailed a three-pointer at the 11:46 mark. But the Lady Raiders answered with a 13-2 run over the next six minutes to push the lead to 14. Thomatis scored seven of her 21 points during the run, helping Middle Tennessee put the game away and secure their fourth victory of the season. Thomatis and Justice each had a team-high four assists for the Lady Raiders. Freshman Jessica Schlueter scored nine points in her first career start, as senior Joanne Aluka sat out the contest with a leg injury. Amy Watson led the Skyhawks with 15 points, but just two in the second half. T.J. Barker added eight points and Kelly Pendleton had seven for UT Martin. The Lady Raiders finish their current three-game homestand with a 2 p.m. contest against Tennessee Tech on Sunday at the Murphy Center. **GAME QUOTES**

MT Head Coach Stephany Smith

"I was disappointed in our first half of play. I told the kids after the game that I believed I had more confidence in them then they have in themselves. I wouldn't have thrown our team to the wolves by starting three freshman if I didn't have confidence in them."

"At the half I called out our point guards and told them they need to take responsibility for the sloppy play, and they responded well in the second half. I was really pleased with Jennifer Justice's performance and the way she played tonight because it has been really frustrating for her."

"I expect Joanne Aluka to play on Sunday against Tennessee Tech. Tennessee Tech is a big game for our basketball team because there is so much history and animosity between the two teams. I

hope our veterans can stress the importance of this game to our younger players."

MT Forward Jennifer Justice

"I tried to pick up the slack with Joanne (Aluka) out of the line-up. Sometimes it's hard to come in and play behind someone that good. I think we did a good job of boxing out tonight. To start the game I think we took UT Martin for granted, and we had to come out in the second half and play our type of ball."

MT Forward Jamie Thomatis

"We wanted to have a good game against UT Martin and have momentum going into Tennessee Tech, unfortunately we didn't do that tonight. UT Martin came out confident in the first half and was really aggressive on the ball and in the lanes, and that kind of set us back. We knew in the second half we were going to have to match that aggressive play and we did."

UT-Martin Head Coach Gary Van Atta

"Our game plan tonight was to play solid defense and take care of the ball. Looking at the turnover stats tells me we didn't do that. We tried to control the tempo of the game and played man-to-man and get into the passing lanes and that worked in the first half. However, in the second half Middle Tennessee started to take advantage of that by making back door cuts and it was all over from there."

GAME NOTES

CAREER FIRSTS: Lady Raiders Jessica Schlueter and Tiffany Fisher made their first collegiate starts against UT Martin tonight. Schlueter tallied a career-high nine points in the contest, while Fisher was held scoreless. **ALUKA OUT:** Senior Joanne Aluka missed only her third start in the last 62 Lady Raider games tonight. Aluka was held out of action due to a mild stress fracture in her right shin. However, Aluka was honored in a pregame ceremony for becoming the 15th player in Lady Raider history to score 1,000 points in her career. Aluka achieved the mark against Ole Miss last Saturday. **JUSTICE IS SERVED:** Sophomore Jennifer Justice netted a career-high 13 points against UT Martin while logging a career-high 24 minutes. For good measure, Justice tallied a double-double on the night by snaring a career-high 11 rebounds. She also added four assists and two steals to her ledger in the game. **GETTING TO THE LINE:** The Blue Raiders took advantage of the Skyhawks proclivity to foul in the game by connecting on 26-of-30 free throw attempts. The Lady Raiders held UT Martin to only 14 trips to the charity stripe in the game. The free throw attempts are the second most for the team this season. The Lady Raiders shot 33 free throws against Austin Peay earlier this year. **THIS AND THAT:** Jamie Thomatis made her 44th consecutive start tonight - Thomatis also netted double figures in scoring for the 19th straight time - The Lady Raiders are now 53-9 when holding the opposition to less than 70 points under Stephany Smith - Smith coached Lady Raider squads are now 31-15 when scoring between 70 and 79 points - Smith is now 42-11 in the Murphy Center.

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