Volleyball fights off Harvard in five sets

Blue Raiders hit .529 in fifth set for win

August 31, 2012 · @MTAthletics

BLACKSBURG, Va. - The Middle Tennessee volleyball team jumped out to a two-set lead on Harvard Friday afternoon at the Hokie Invitational hosted by Virginia Tech, but ended up having to win in five sets 3-2 (26-24, 25-20, 20-25, 20-25, 15-8) over the Crimson.

Chelsea Ross led all players with 19 kills and added 11 digs for a double-double. Brandi Waller added 11 kills. Bri McCombs had a season-high 24 digs for the Blue Raiders.

Harvard (0-1) took control early in the first set, taking a 7-3 lead. Middle Tennessee (2-3) fought back to tie the set at 10-10 and 12-12 on a Shelby Anderton service ace. The two teams traded points until 19-19 when kills by Ross and Miri Shade put the Blue Raiders ahead 21-19. The Crimson tied the 21-21 on a Caroline Walters kill and a solo block by Teresa Skelly. With the set tied 23-23, Skelly put down a kill to give Harvard set point 24-23. The Blue Raiders tied the set 24-24 on a Waller kill. The senior then put down kills on the next two points to give Middle Tennessee the set 26-24.

The Blue Raiders took an early 6-4 lead in the second set on a block by Waller and Tyler Richardson. Harvard closed to within one at 9-8, but a Crimson error and a Ross solo block sparked a 5-1 Middle Tennessee run to put the Blue Raiders up 14-9. The lead grew to six at 16-10 on a Waller kill and to seven at 22-15 after back-to-back kills by Ross and Katie Bange. Harvard only got as close as four points the rest of the set. Middle Tennessee won the set 25-20 on Waller's seventh kill of the match, putting the Blue Raiders up two sets to none. The Blue Raiders hit .435 in the second set with six blocks.

Harvard jumped out to a 4-1 lead in the third set, but Middle Tennessee came back to tie the set 6-6 on kills by Shade and Rachel Shaughnessy as well as a block by Shade and Richardson. The Crimson then went on a 5-0 run capped off by a block by Skelly and Caroline Holte to go ahead 11-6. The Blue Raiders closed to within three, 12-9, on a Richardson kill but Harvard won 10 of the 15 points to go up 22-14. Middle Tennessee got within three at 22-19, combining a Waller kill and Shade service ace with three Harvard errors. The Crimson, however, took the set 25-20 on kills by Walters and Taylor Docter.

Still ahead 2-1, Middle Tennessee got out to a quick 4-1 lead in the fourth set. The lead grew to six at 11-5 on back-to-back kills by Bange and Ross. Harvard came back with seven of the next eight points to tie the set 12-12. With the set tied 17-17, Jennifer Shults put down a kill to give Harvard the lead 18-17. Skelly and Shults then blocked a Waller attack to make the score 19-17. Bange got the Blue Raiders within one with a kill at 19-18 but that would be as close as Middle Tennessee would get the rest of the set. Harvard evened the match 2-2 with a 25-20 win in the fourth set, holding the Blue Raiders to a .000 hitting percentage in the set.

The two teams traded points to start the fifth and final set, playing to a 4-4 tie. Middle Tennessee took advantage of a pair of Crimson errors to go ahead 6-4. Leading 7-6, the Blue Raiders got three straight kills from Waller, Ross, and Monet Marshall to go up 10-6. Harvard cut the lead to 10-7 on a Docter kill, but Middle Tennessee got kills from Ross and Bange during a 4-0 run to have set point at 14-7. The Blue Raiders took the set 15-8 on a Ross kill, and the match 3-2.

Middle Tennessee hit .224 for the match while Harvard hit .225. The Blue Raiders had a 57-51 advantage in digs and a 12-11 edge in blocks. Richardson led all players with a career-high seven blocks while Waller was in on five.

Middle Tennessee is back in action with two more matches in the Hokie Invitational Saturday. The Blue Raiders will first take on Towson at 9:30 a.m. before taking on the host Virginia Tech at 6 p.m.

Printed on December 10, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/62340