Volleyball falls in five sets at Austin Peay

Ross tallies season-high 29 kills

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CLARKSVILLE, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee volleyball team could not hold off a hard-charging Austin Peay squad Wednesday night, falling 3-2 (25-16, 25-23, 23-25, 24-26, 12-15) at the Dunn Center.

Freshman outside hitter Chelsea Ross led the Blue Raiders with 29 kills, a season-high. She hit .280 for the match on 82 attacks with 10 digs. Senior Brandi Waller set a new career-high with 20 kills, hitting .295. Setter Shelby Anderton had 56 assists as libero Bri McCombs had a season-high 28 digs. Miri Shade also had a season-high in digs with 16.

Middle Tennessee (5-17) trailed early in the first set 5-3, but a Rachel Shaughnessy kill started a six-point run that put the Blue Raiders ahead 9-5. Shaughnessy also had three consecutive aces during the scoring spurt. Austin Peay (10-12) came back to get within two at 12-10 on a Jada Stotts service ace. The Blue Raiders got the lead back up to six, 18-12, on two Ross kills as well as a Ross ace. Middle Tennessee then used kills by Waller and Katie Bange to take a 21-13 lead. The Blue Raiders hit .429 in the set and won it 25-16 on a Ross kill.

The second set started out much like the first. Middle Tennessee took an early 9-6 lead on two Waller kills and a solo block. The advantage grew to four at 13-9 on a block by Ross and Tyler Richardson. Austin Peay then went on a six-point run to take the lead 15-13. Nikki Doyle had five kills for the Lady Govs during the run. Austin Peay led 19-16 when three straight Middle Tennessee kills tied the set 19-19. The two sides then traded points up to 23-23, when an Austin Peay error and a Ross kill gave the Blue Raiders the second set 25-23 and a 2-0 lead in the match.

Austin Peay took control of the third set, right from the start, taking a 5-1 lead on four Doyle kills. The Blue Raiders fought back and got within two at 8-6 on a block by Bange and Tyler Richardson. Waller then got Middle Tennessee even with the Lady Govs at 10-10 with a kill. After Austin Peay went ahead 11-10, the Blue Raiders went a three-point run to take a 13-10 lead. The Lady Govs came back and tied the set 13-13 on a Hillary Plybon solo block, and the two teams traded points up to 17-17. Stotts broke the deadlock with a kill, starting a 4-1 run that put Austin Peay up 21-18. The Lady Govs had a set point at 24-21, but kills by Ross and Waller made the score 24-23. Austin Peay,

however, took the set 25-23.

Middle Tennessee broke open the fourth set with a 5-1 run as a Waller kill made the score 8-4. The Lady Govs came back with a 10-3 run to take a 14-11 lead. A Ross kill then sparked a four-point Blue Raiders run that put them ahead 15-14. Middle Tennessee hung on to that lead, increasing it to three at 22-19 on a Ross kill. Austin Peay then won the next four points as a block by Lauren Henderson and Aubrey Marsellis put the Lady Govs in the lead 23-22. Doyle gave Austin Peay set point at 24-23 but a Bange kill leveled the set 24-24. Doyle once again gave the Lady Govs a set point and Austin Peay cashed in. A Henderson solo block gave the Lady Govs the set 26-24 and tied the match at two sets all.

The Blue Raiders took an early 3-1 lead in the fifth set, getting two kills from Ross. Middle Tennessee kept a two-point lead up to 8-6 when an error and a Doyle kill tied the set at 8-8. With the set tied 9-9, Henderson put down a kill to give the Lady Govs a 10-9 lead. Plybon then served an ace to make the score 11-9. Henderson put Austin Peay up by three, 13-10, with a solo block. The Blue Raiders got within two with a Bange kill, but kills by Doyle and Stotts were enough for Austin Peay to win the set 15-12 and the match 3-2.

Middle Tennessee outhit Austin Peay .267-.262 for the match. The Lady Govs had a 15-11 advantage in blocks and an 80-75 edge in digs. Doyle led all players with 34 kills, hitting .409 for the match. Stotts added 11 kills and 23 digs.

The Blue Raiders open a weekend homestand on Friday night with a 7 p.m. match against Florida Atlantic at Alumni Memorial Gym. Middle Tennessee will play four of its next five matches at home.

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