Volleyball sweeps FIU 3-0

Blue Raiders move to 4-4 in Sun Belt after win over Panthers

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Led by 16 kills from Chelsea Ross and 13 kills from Katie Bange, the Middle Tennessee volleyball team swept the FIU Panthers 3-0 (25-16, 25-16, 25-20) Saturday night at Alumni Memorial Gym. The win moves the Blue Raiders to 4-4 in the Sun Belt Conference.

Ross hit .400 for the match and added eight digs. Bange had a match-high .500 hitting percentage, committing just two errors on 22 attacks. Brandi Waller also put down double-digit kills Saturday night, tallying 11. Tyler Richardson led all players with five blocks as Bri McCombs had 12 digs and three aces.

Middle Tennessee (7-17, 4-4) controlled the early portion of the first set, taking a 9-4 lead on a block by Richardson and Shelby Anderton. FIU (5-15, 2-6) closed to within four at 10-6 on a Kimberly Smith kill. The Blue Raiders then went on a 5-0 run, getting three kills from Ross to go up by nine 15-6. The Panthers responded with a 4-0 run to get back within five at 15-10. Middle Tennessee grew the lead to seven at 20-13 on a Richardson kill, with back-to-back Ross kills making the score 23-15. The Blue Raiders won the first set 25-16 on a McCombs service ace. Middle Tennessee hit .538 in the opening set and held FIU to a .129 mark.

The Blue Raiders kept up the momentum to start the second set, taking an 8-2 lead on two blocks as well as kills by Bange and Waller. FIU got to within four at 9-5 before Middle Tennessee went on a 4-0 run capped off by a Monet Marshall kill to make the score 13-5. FIU would only get as close as seven points the rest of the set. The Blue Raiders grew the lead to 10 at 21-11 on a Ross kill and an ace by Miri Shade. Middle Tennessee took the set 25-16 on a Bange kill, her eighth of the match. The Blue Raiders hit .400 in the second set, taking a 2-0 lead into the third set.

The third set started out as a back-and-forth affair. Middle Tennessee and FIU traded points early and often, playing to a 10-10 tie. The Blue Raiders broke the deadlock with a Bange kill and a block by Anderton and Richardson to take a 12-10 lead. FIU came back to tie the set 13-13 on a Renele Forde kill, then took a 14-13 lead on a Blue Raiders miscue. Middle Tennessee leveled the set at 14-14 on a Ross kill. That point started a four-point Blue Raiders spurt, putting Middle Tennessee in front 17-14. After a Marija Prsa kill got FIU within two 17-15, Rachel Shaughnessy put down a kill to

start another 4-0 Blue Raiders run that made the score 21-15. The Panthers got within four points at 23-19, but that would be as close as FIU would get. The Blue Raiders won the third set 25-20, concluding the sweep of the Panthers.

Middle Tennessee hit .379 for the match, 60 points better than its season-high set Friday night against Florida Atlantic. FIU managed just a .160 hitting percentage for the match. The Blue Raiders held a 39-31 advantage in digs and a 7-6 edge in blocks. Prsa led FIU with 16 kills and had three blocks.

The Blue Raiders step out of conference on Tuesday for a match at UAB. First serve is scheduled for 7 p.m.

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