Blue Raiders take down FIU 3-0

Richardson hits .500 as MT sweeps season series with Panthers

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MIAMI - The Middle Tennessee volleyball team earned a key 3-0 (25-21, 25-20, 25-22) win over the FIU Panthers Sunday afternoon at U.S. Century Bank Arena.

The victory moved the Blue Raiders to 6-6 in the Sun Belt, two matches ahead of FIU for a Sun Belt Tournament berth. Both teams entered the weekend with identical 4-6 records. Chelsea Ross and Tyler Richardson each had eight kills to lead Middle Tennessee. Richardson hit .500 for the match with four blocks. Monet Marshall added six kills, five blocks, and four aces.

Middle Tennessee (9-20, 6-6 Sun Belt) jumped out to a quick 4-1 lead in the opening set on kills by Brandi Waller and Ross. The lead grew to five at 7-2 on a three-point run that included a Katie Bange kill and a block by Waller and Richardson. FIU (7-17, 4-8) battled back to within two at 10-8 on a Blue Raiders service error. After a Bange kill put Middle Tennessee ahead 11-8, Kimberly Smith and Brittany Spencer combined for a block to start a 4-0 Panthers run that put them in front 12-11.

The Blue Raiders came back with a 6-1 run as aces by Marshall and Halie Vannoy gave Middle Tennessee a 17-13 lead. FIU rallied to tie the set 19-19, going on a 6-2 run that included two blocks. Middle Tennessee broke the tie on a FIU error, then got back-to-back blocks by Ross and Marshall to take a 22-19 lead. The Panthers would only get as close as two points the rest of the way, as kills by Ross and Bange gave the Blue Raiders the first set 25-21.

Middle Tennessee got off to another fast start in the second set. The Blue Raiders won five of the first six points on aces by Marshall and Ross, as well as a block by Marshall and Waller. The lead grew to five for Middle Tennessee when Bange, Marshall, and Shelby Anderton combined for a block to make the score 10-5. FIU battled back to get within one at 10-9 on a block by Spencer and Marija Prsa. The two teams then traded points up to 13-12, when a Silvia Carli kill and a block by Carli and Lucia Castro put the Panthers in the lead 14-13. FIU grew its lead to three at 17-14 after a

Smith kill and Forde block. The Panthers led 19-17 when a Marshall kill started an 8-1 run for the Blue Raiders that led them to a 25-20 win in the second set. Richardson punctuated the run with a solo block on set point.

FIU won the the first four points of the third set, but Middle Tennessee battled back to tie the set 7-7 on a block by Richardson and Anderton. The Panthers broke the tie with four straight points as a Castro kill put FIU ahead 11-7. Middle Tennessee then got a Ross kill, which started a six-point run that put the Blue Raiders back in the lead 13-11. In a set of runs, FIU went on a three-point run to take a 14-13 lead. Middle Tennessee then took advantage of some Panthers errors to take a 17-15 lead. FIU responded with three straight points to go ahead 18-17. The two sides traded points up to 19-19 when two Prsa kills gave the Panthers a 21-19 lead. Just as in set two, the Blue Raiders rode a big run to victory. Middle Tennessee won six of the last nine points to win the set 25-22, with Ross putting down kills on each of the last three points.

The Blue Raiders return to action on Friday, Nov. 2 with a 7 p.m. match at South Alabama.

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