Volleyball defeats South Alabama 3-1

Blue Raiders hit .331 for third straight win

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MOBILE, Ala. - The Middle Tennessee volleyball team won its third consecutive match Friday night, defeating the South Alabama Jaguars 3-1 (29-27, 25-21, 16-25, 25-18) at Jaguar Gy m. Freshman Chelsea Ross led the Blue Raiders with 17 kills, adding nine digs and a career-high five assists.

Katie Bange added 14 kills, hitting .346 for the match. Brandi Waller had 13 kills and a pair of blocks. Tyler Richardson hit .500 with nine kills and a match-high five blocks. Shelby Anderton had 50 assists with Bri McCombs leading Middle Tennessee with 14 digs.

South Alabama (13-14, 6-6) won four of the first five points of the match, getting kills from Torlandria Jones and Melissa Waelter as well as an ace from Emily Hundt. Middle Tennessee (10-20, 7-6) battled back to get within one at 5-4 on kills by Ross and Bange. The Blue Raiders trailed 6-5 when a Lindsay Schwartz kill sparked a 6-1 Jaguars run that gave South Alabama a 12-6 lead. Middle Tennessee rallied back with a 7-2 run, capped off by a Marshall kill, to get within one at 14-13. The Jaguars led 17-14 when a Waller kill started a 5-1 Blue Raiders run that gave Middle Tennessee its first lead of the set, 20-19.

The two sides then traded points up to 21-21, when a McCombs ace and Ross kill put Middle Tennessee two points from the set at 23-21. South Alabama took the next three points to earn a set point at 24-23. Ross fought off the set point with a kill. The Blue Raiders had their first set point at 26-25, but an error tied the set at 26-26. Bange put down a kill to give Middle Tennessee a 27-26 lead, but Schwartz answered to even the set at 27-27. Richardson then put the set away for the Blue Raiders, giving Middle Tennessee at 29-27 win in the first set. The Blue Raiders hit .459 in the opening frame with only two hitting errors.

The Blue Raiders started off the second set by taking a 5-3 lead, winning four straight points on two South Alabama errors, a Bange kill, and a block by Waller and Marshall. The Jaguars tied the set 6-6 on an Olivia Mohler kill. Middle Tennessee broke the tie with a 5-1 run as a block by Richardson and Ross put the Blue Raiders ahead 11-7. South Alabama closed to within one at 17-16, but a Waller kill started a three-point run that gave Middle Tennessee a 20-16 lead. The Jaguars only got as

close as two points the rest of the way. Bange put down consecutive kills to give the Blue Raiders a 2-0 lead in the match, winning the second set 25-21. Middle Tennessee hit .464 in the second set, holding South Alabama to .300.

Middle Tennessee and South Alabama traded points early and often in the third set, playing to a 9-9 tie. The Jaguars took an 11-9 lead on a Jones kill, but the Blue Raiders leveled the set at 11-11 on consecutive Ross kills. With the set tied 13-13, South Alabama got a kill from Savannah Stewart that started a 6-0 Jaguars run. Two straight South Alabama blocks punctuated the run, putting the Jaguars in the lead 19-13. The Jaguars hit .360 in the third, holding the Blue Raiders to a .033 mark as South Alabama won the third set 25-16.

The Jaguars jumped out to a 7-5 lead in the fourth set, getting kills from Waelter, Stewart, and Olivia Mohler. After the Blue Raiders got to within one at 7-6, a Waelter kill started a 6-1 South Alabama run that put the Jaguars ahead 13-7. Middle Tennessee rallied back with a 7-1 run highlighted by two Ross kills and a block by Marshall and Bange to tie the set 14-14. After South Alabama took a 15-14 lead, Bange and Waller combined for three kills to put the Blue Raiders back in the lead 17-15. The Jaguars came back to even the set at 17-17. Middle Tennessee broke the tie with a Waller kill, that started an 8-1 run to end the match. Anderton and Richardson combined to block a Stewart attempt on match point to give Middle Tennessee a 25-18 win in the fourth set and a 3-1 win in the match.

The Blue Raiders hit .331 for the match as the Jaguars hit .303. Middle Tennessee outblocked South Alabama 9-6, but the Jaguars held a 46-44 edge in digs. Waelter led South Alabama with 17 kills as Jones hit .565 with 15 kills. Libero Jenna Hassell led all players with 15 digs.

Middle Tennessee is back in action Saturday night with a 7 p.m. match at Troy.

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