Women's Basketball rolls to 73-38 win over Lincoln Memorial

Blue Raiders cruise in final tuneup before season opener on Friday

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee women's basketball team scored 33 points in the first 10 minutes of its exhibition game Tuesday night against Lincoln Memorial, cruising to a 73-38 win over the Railsplitters at the Murphy Center. Laken Leonard and Janiece Johnson each had a team-high 12 points in the win.

Leonard made a game-high four 3-pointers in the game, adding four rebounds. Johnson tied Lauren March with a game-high seven rebounds. Icelyn Elie had 10 points in just 10 minutes, making a pair of threes.

Middle Tennessee got off to an incredible start, scoring the game's first 16 points in 3:27. Elie scored 10 of those points on two 3-pointers and four free throws. Lincoln Memorial started the game 1-for-10 from the field with 10 turnovers, making its first basket at the 15:47 mark of the half as Kalasia Green converted a three-point play for the Railsplitters. After that three-point play, Rowe made back-to-back baskets to start a 20-0 Blue Raiders run over the next 6:02. Leonard and Janay Brinkley each made consecutive threes during the run, with Brinkley's triples putting the Blue Raiders ahead 36-3 with 9:16 remaining in the first half.

Lincoln Memorial made a bit of a run late in the half. The Railsplitters used a Mariah Richardson bucket to start an 8-3 run that made the score 39-11 at the 4:33 mark, the closest Lincoln Memorial got to the Blue Raiders for the remainder of the half. Middle Tennessee got baskets from Leonard, Cason and Stephanie Myers to end the half, with the Blue Raiders taking a 48-14 lead into the locker room. Middle Tennessee shot 50 percent from the field in the first half, including 9-of-17 from beyond the arc and out hustled Lincoln Memorial on the boards, 20-6. The Blue Raiders also forced 12

Railsplitters turnovers, scoring 28 points off those turnovers.

Middle Tennessee's bench saw considerable action in the second half. Johnson scored the Blue Raiders' first eight points of the half, as her third basket of the half gave MT a 56-24 lead with 11:16 to play. The Blue Raiders found some offense late in the game as March scored nine of MT's 16 points in the last 6:09. Freshman guard Caroline Warden capped off the game with a 3-pointer in the last seven seconds.

The Blue Raiders shot 36 percent from the field for the game, holding Lincoln Memorial to 33 percent from the floor. MT forced 29 Railsplitters turnovers while committing just 12. The Blue Raiders also held a 45-34 advantage on the glass.

Middle Tennessee opens the 2012-13 season on Friday night at 5:30 against Kennesaw State at the Murphy Center. The game is the Blue Raiders' opening game in the Preseason WNIT. Tickets are available online at GoBlueRaiders.com and by calling the MTSU Ticket Office at 1-888-YES-MTSU.

QUOTES

Junior Guard Laken Leonard

I think we came out strong and had a really good start. It's always good to have these games, to get everybody in the game and get experience for all your players. And to see where we stand individually and as a team. This definitely gives us ideas of what we should be working on before we get to bigger games. I think our defense definitely needs to improve and I think we're still getting used to each other and what we're each good at.

On the upcoming WNIT...

Coach Insell has been talking about it since day one. It's a great opportunity for us to show everybody what we can do and get a good start to the season. We're going to have to get up for it though, because there are a lot of good teams in it.

On what to take from the two exhibition games...

We learned our strengths and weaknesses, the things we're good at and what we need to keep improving. It's a good warmup for the freshmen to get to know the coaches and what they're going to expect from them. It's good for us to know how to communicate with each other on the floor. It's one thing in practice when you get to stop and work on something. In the game, you have to react when something goes wrong. These exhibition games are important to get that stuff worked on.

Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening Statement...

One of the things that we talk about in practice is not wasting a possession. I thought the second half we wasted a lot of possessions for some of our young ladies to get better. I coached more in the second half than I did in the last 10 ball games, but I have two or three of those young ladies that have got to get better. Tonight was a great time for me to help those people. I thought Janice Johnson did a good job. She got a little better tonight than she was in the first game. She's not going to be able to play seven minutes straight, but she can give us two or three tough minutes, and give

Ice and Ebony some time.

On the play of junior Lauren March...

There were flashes out there when Lauren March did a pretty good job, but I wanted her to be more consistent. She is the type of young lady that can go out there and get 25 points in ten minutes, but I am the one that has got to convince her to do it. She won't do it. She wants to pass the ball off.

On the play of freshman Caroline Warden...

I thought Caroline (Warden) did good, and she's probably the one that knew less about what went on than anybody that played. We probably got more out of her, as far as what she knows about our system than the other kids.

On prepping for the WNIT...

We have to go back in tomorrow, work hard and get ready to play tough against Kennesaw State. We get too caught up in just catching and throwing it up there instead of running our offense and taking what they give you. We have too many people on the floor that can shoot the ball, too many. Recognize the game! If there are three people guarding Janice Johnson, then there has to be two people open somewhere, and we have to recognize that.

On playing most of the bench in the second half...

I was really hoping that we'd have two or three kids that could step on that court in the second half and the likes of Courtney, Icelyn, Ebony and Keke (Stewart) could look out there and develop a lot of confidence in what they saw. I don't think we got that. And I don't know if we'll ever get another opportunity to do that this year. When we get those opportunities, we can't waste them.

On the play of the starters...

Our starters put the game out of reach early because they will execute. I felt like the bunch I stuck in there the second half should have done the same thing. We had two plays in the second half where we executed our offense to a "T", and we scored on both of them. The rest of the time, we free-lanced. That's not us. That's not Lady Raider basketball.

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