Raiders drop tough road contest at SDSU

Shooting lull too much to overcome for MT

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BROOKINGS, S.D. - Strong defensive play from South Dakota State hampered Middle Tennessee as the Blue Raiders dropped a 63-56 contest to the Jackrabbits on Saturday at Frost Arena.

MT opened early with an 8-2 lead, but SDSU used a 14-0 run and held on to that lead for the majority of the game. The Blue Raiders (4-3) tied the contest at 34-34 with 14:36 left in the second half. However, the Jacks (4-4) used another run of 12-4 to take a 46-38 lead. Lauren March's triple at 1:43 cut the Jacks' lead to four, but SDSU followed with a five point swing in the span of 20 seconds to extend the lead to nine.

The Blue Raiders were outrebounded 48-to-31. SDSU outscored Middle Tennessee 34-16 in the paint. Offensively, MT shot 29 percent (13-of-63) and was 27 percent (6-of-22) beyond the arch. The Raiders forced 23 turnovers and converted those to 16 points.

Junior Ebony Rowe notched a game-best 23 points and grabbed seven boards in the loss. She had three steals and shot 50 percent from the field in 39 minutes. The Lexington, Ky., native's three offensive rebounds allowed her to become MT's all-time recorder holder with 369 offensive boards in her career. Rowe passed former Blue Raider Krystle Horton's mark of 369.

Icelyn Elie reached double-digits with 13 points and five boards, while Kortni Jones had 13 points, four assists and three steals.

Early on it looked as though the Blue Raiders had momentum with an 8-2 lead. From there, it evaporated as South Dakota State belted off a 14-2 run. SDSU used its strength off the boards, grabbing 26 compared to MT's 13 in the opening half. The Jacks scored 16 points inside, holding the Raiders to four in the paint.

The Blue Raiders cut the lead to 26-24 when Janay Brinkley picked up 3-pointer. From there, SDSU

hit two consecutive treys and took a 32-26 lead into the locker room.

MT made just 8-of-29 from the field for 28 percent as Ebony Rowe led all scorers with 11 points. For the Jackrabbits shot 44 percent (12-of-27) as Megan Waytashek and Gabrielle Boever had eight points each.

To start the second half, the Blue Raiders tied the game at 34-34 thanks to a basket and free throws from Rowe. However, from there SDSU went on a 12-4 lead to retake command.

MT used a pair of free throws from Elie and a March triple to cut the game within four with 1:43 left. From there, SDSU used a three pointer from Eide and a steal and score from Gabrielle Boever to take control of the game.

After closing out a five game road trip, the Blue Raiders return home to host Austin Peay for Education Day sponsored by Aaron's and Academy Sports and Outdoors on Tuesday, Dec. 4. The tipoff is scheduled for 11 a.m. as 7,000 students from Murfreesboro City Schools will partake in the event. In order to accommodate the large amount of students, season ticket holder seating will be moved to the first 10 rows of reserved seating in sections D,E,F,N,O and P. Those sections will be roped off and monitored by security personnel. All other sections are general admission for MCS students.

NOTES

Janay Brinkley earned her third career start and her first since earning the nod at ETSU last season ... Ebony Rowe is now the school's all-time offensive rebound leader with her three offensive boards today ... MT now trails in the series to SDSU, 3-4 ... The Blue Raiders shot their lowest from the field for the first time since shooting 28.4 against Vanderbilt in the NCAA Tournament last year.

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