Second largest crowd in program history watches Raiders defeat Austin Peay

MT uses late first half run to down Lady Govs on Education Day

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - In front of the second largest crowd in program history, the Middle Tennessee women's basketball team defeated the Austin Peay Lady Govs 70-56 at Murphy Center on Tuesday.

A total of 10, 107 people saw the Blue Raiders down Austin Peay by 14 points at Murphy Center. The game marked Education Day sponsored by Aaron's and Academy Sports+Outdoors. MT Athletics and the Murfreesboro City Schools partnered together for the event that allowed the 12 schools to bring thousands of students to the game on Tuesday to cheer on the Blue Raiders. Over 7,500 Murfreesboro City Schools students were in attendance.

Kortni Jones led all scorers in the game with 17 points, making four three-pointers. Junior forward Ebony Rowe had her 36th career double-double with 14 points and a game-high 14 rebounds. Icelyn Elie also scored in double-figures with 10 points. Sophomore guard Shanice Cason filled out the box score with seven points, seven rebounds, and six assists.

Middle Tennessee (5-3) jumped out to a 7-3 lead early in the game, led by Rowe scoring the Blue Raiders' first five points. Austin Peay (2-6) closed the gap to two, 9-7, at the 14:09 mark of the opening half on baskets by Nicole Olszewski and Megan Bussabarger. The Blue Raiders got the lead back up to four on four straight points by Shanice Cason. The sophomore guard made a pair of free throws and a fast break layup to give Middle Tennessee a 13-9 lead with 12:50 to play in the half.

The Blue Raiders then went cold from the field, making one basket over the next 4:24. During that span, the Lady Govs went on an 8-2 run highlighted by an Olszewski triple to take a 19-15 lead with 8:44 remaining in the first. Austin Peay led by as much as five points before Janay Brinkley's second three of the game started a 12-1 run for Middle Tennessee, which also included two threes by Jones . A Cason jumper capped off the run, putting the Blue Raiders back in front 33-24 with 2:39 to play in the first half. The Blue Raiders held Austin Peay to one field goal for a stretch of 5:55 during their big

run to take the lead. Middle Tennessee led by as much as 12 points late in the half, taking a 40-30 lead at halftime.

The Blue Raiders found their three-point shooting stroke to start the second half. Middle Tennessee had four threes out of five made baskets to start the second half. Triples by Jones and Leonard highlighted a 10-1 Middle Tennessee run to open the half, putting the Blue Raiders ahead by 17. After back-to-back layups by the Lady Govs, Middle Tennessee pulled away with an 11-2 run over 7:29. The run started with a Rowe layup as Leonard added a three and two free throws to give the Blue Raiders a 61-39 lead with 9:04 remaining. Middle Tennessee took its largest lead of the game with 7:33 to go as a Rowe jumper put the Blue Raiders ahead by 24 points, 65-41, putting the game out of reach.

Middle Tennessee shot 38 percent from the field for the game as Austin Peay shot 39 percent from the floor. The Blue Raiders outrebounded the Lady Govs 48-to-37 and forced 28 Austin Peay turnovers while committing 26. Olszewski led the Lady Govs in scoring with 14 points. Bussabarger had 12 points and a team-high 10 rebounds.

The Blue Raiders are back in action at Murphy Center on Thursday, Dec. 6 with a 7 p.m. game against Xavier. On Thursday the athletic department will celebrate the 40th anniversary of Title IX.

QUOTES

Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening Statement

They came in and had good game plan. They put the ball in the hole and had some good shooters. I think they are going to do very well in the OVC. We also played Tennessee Tech, and I think they will both be in the four or five in their conference. Carrie Daniels is doing a good job with that team, they are going to get better. They've played a tough schedule with UAB, Vanderbilt and Louisville. They have played a tough schedule.

On the play of Janay Brinkely

She had a great game, scored eight points including two three-pointers. She is a very talented young lady. That is one of the things I have been trying to get her to do, step up and be more of a player and quit being so mechanical. She really gave us a lift when she came in She had a lot of deflections on the point of our press and not only that she came there late and created some steals. We needed that.

On the run late in the first half

We need to go on more of those runs. We haven't seen much of that lately and we need that. We've played a tough schedule and right now our kids are tired. We've got a big Xavier game on Thursday night and our kids have to come in tomorrow and get some things accomplished, but we can't come in and practice like we want to practice right now. And then we have to do the same thing on Friday and Saturday before we travel to Kentucky. We've got our schedule sort of bunched together right here and we are going to have to punch thru it.

On a strong start in the second half

We did that at South Dakota State, we had ten stops in a row, but we just couldn't convert them to points. The effort is there. I can't question our team's effort. We had 26 turnovers today, but the effort is there. They are diving for the ball, taking charges. We are just not getting some little things done that we need to work on.

Senior Guard Kortni Jones

On the crowd of 10,107

I have never heard that much noise in my life. Those kids were screaming so loud they actually had me more nervous than our regular crowd. It was good; I liked it.

On the play of Janay Brinkley

She gave us a really good lift. We have been putting a lot of emphasis on our guards knocking down shots, and she came in a hit two big 3-pointers for us. It made us feed off of her energy. When she comes in the game she has fresh legs, more than those of us already in the game. It gives us some excitement and we are excited for her as well. It gives confidence to her, which can only make our team better going into conference play.

Junior Forward Ebony Rowe

On the 11 a.m. tipoff

It felt a little weird. I felt like I should be going to class instead of playing a basketball game. It was good for us because later in the season we are going to have games like that and this will help us get mentally tough for those.

On the team's play inside the paint

It wasn't as good as I would have liked, and I don't think Ice (Icelyn Elie) was happy either. I credit Austin Peay. They knew that was our game plan going in and they started bringing in some players off the guards on the perimeter, just trying to double-team and slap at the ball, be real physical, and that took us out of our game plan a little bit. But that was good for us. We can only learn from that and get better.

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