

Elie sinks triple in final seconds to lift Raiders over NT

Jones becomes 27th member of 1,000-point club

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- [Box Score \(PDF\)](#)

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Icelyn Elie's three-pointer with 14 seconds left was the difference Thursday night, as Middle Tennessee secured a 66-64 win over North Texas at the Murphy Center.

Elie finished the game with 15 points and six rebounds. Kortni Jones and Ebony Rowe each led all scorers on the night with 21 points. Jones eclipsed 1,000 career points in the first half and scored over 20 for the first time since registering 24 at Tennessee Tech. Rowe added 11



rebounds for her 40th double-double of her career. The Blue Raiders (7-5, 2-1 Sun Belt) won despite shooting just 39.4 percent (26-of-66) from the field. Middle Tennessee made up for an off-night shooting by forcing 25 North Texas (2-9, 1-1 Sun Belt) turnovers, turning those into 23 points.

North Texas jumped out to the largest lead of the game within the first three minutes of the second half. A Hyder triple and a BreAnna Dawkins basket gave the Mean Green a 40-35 lead with 17:04 to play. NT led 42-38 before Jones went on a 7-2 run by herself to give the Blue Raiders a 45-44 lead with 14:53 remaining in the contest. The two sides traded one-point leads until a Laken Leonard triple and an Elie fastbreak layup put Middle Tennessee in front 52-48. NT came back with a Goodwin three and a Dawkins layup to take a 55-54 lead with 8:38 remaining.

North Texas battled back and tied the game 61-61 on a Sara Stanley layup. Rowe broke the tie with 3:40 to play on a jumper in the lane, making the score 63-61. Stanley split a pair of free throws at the 1:56 mark to get the Mean Green within one, 63-62. With 41 seconds left, Dawkins drove to the basket and scored to give North Texas a one-point lead, 64-63. On Middle Tennessee's last possession, Rowe found Elie for the eventual game-winning three that made the score 66-64. North Texas had two chances to either tie the game or win it, but both shots fell short.

The two teams traded baskets to open the game, as a Rowe three-point play with 14:54 remaining in the first half gave Middle Tennessee an 11-9 lead. North Texas took back the lead with a 6-0 run, highlighted by a Loryn Goodwin three-pointer, to take a 15-11 advantage at the 13:01 mark. The Blue Raiders responded with a 6-2 run capped off by a Keke Stewart layup to tie the game 17-17.

Jones scored six straight points to give Middle Tennessee a 25-21 lead with 6:56 to play in the half. Her third basket of the run was a jumper from the elbow, putting her over 1,000 points for her career. North Texas would not go away, however. A Laura McCoy layup sparked an 11-3 Mean Green run over the next 4:58, as a Braylah Blakely jumper gave North Texas a 32-28 lead with 1:58 to go in the half. Middle Tennessee responded with a Jones three-pointer and a pair of Shanice Cason foul shots to take a 33-32 lead in the final minute. The Mean Green then got a three-point play from Hyder to end the half, giving North Texas a 35-33 lead at halftime.

Middle Tennessee returns to action with a pair of road conference games. MT plays at Arkansas State on Jan. 2 before visiting South Alabama on Jan. 5.

NOTES:

Kortni Jones became the 27th member of the 1,000 point club with 11 points in the first half ... Jones scored 21 points, her highest total since tallying 24 at Tennessee Tech ... Jones tied a career-high with nine made field goals ... Ebony Rowe reached double figures for the 73rd time out of 76 career games ... Shanice Cason set a season-high with seven assists ... Ebony Rowe earned her 40th double-double, she set the school record against FIU ... Rowe current leads all underclassmen with 40 double-doubles in the NCAA ... Coach Insell's teams are now 38-17 after a loss and are 62-2 against SBC competition at the Murphy Center ... Rick Insell now stands one win shy (181) of tying the all-time wins leader Lewis Bivens (182).

QUOTES

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening Statement:

They've got a good basketball team. I think they are as good as anybody on their side of the bracket, including UALR. (Mike Peterson) does a good job, they played hard.

On his team's bench play:

Icelyn (Elie) has been shooting the ball well, and the more we use Keke (Stewart) in there, the better we are going to be. Also Dymon and J. J. played well. J. J. had a wide-open one-footer, and why she went up and under, I don't know

On winning a game close to the wire:

We needed to win one of these games, we've lost two or three of them, and we needed to win one. I'm proud of our players. We didn't play one of our better games, but we willed ourselves into a victory. They outshot us and out-rebounded us, but we did some things that we had to do. Ebony had another double-double, 21 points and 11 rebounds.

On the back-and-forth play of the game:

We killed ourselves with turnovers. When we'd make a big play, they'd come running back down the floor, and get a chip shot and get the momentum back.

Senior forward Icelyn Elie

On the win:

We haven't been shooting very well the last few games, but we worked on our shooting in practice. I think we had a lot more confidence in our shots tonight. They are a good team. I remember playing them last year, and they had a real good post player, but they had an even better one tonight (Alexis Hyder). They are tough to guard.

Senior Guard Kortni Jones

On her offensive performance:

I've had coaches tell me that I am not just a shooter, and that sometimes, to get yourself going, you have to attack the basket and get a few shots under your belt. I was trying to focus more on the pull-up jumper and getting to the basket and get in the flow and get going. I can honestly say that it felt good to be back. I had been missing three's like no other, but my teammates kept telling me to keep shooting. They helped me tonight, and helped me get that confidence back.

On the defensive pressure from North Texas:

We don't get pressed like that very often, and it took us a little while to get going. We had not practiced our offense against the press in a long time, but we practiced it a lot and it helped us see what was open and what to look for. It really helped us because they pressed us the whole game, and it kept us from getting as many turnovers as we could have.

North Texas Head Coach Mike Peterson

Statement about the game:

We've played 11 times and had this type of game 10 times against the hardest schedule anyone in this conference has played. That's why we're 2-9. We played that game against Oklahoma, in three overtimes against Alabama, against St. Bonaventure in two overtimes and we had a lead against Arizona. That's the game we play. When we get over the hump and make one more shot, get one more rebound, make one less defensive error, then we'll be okay. We were not as tough as Middle Tennessee was. I thought they were very tough. They dug out rebounds and loose balls, and they disrupted us offensively. When we held on to the ball and were able to execute, we got great shots and knocked them down. I thought we were good in transition and our defense was extremely disruptive. They did not like the combination of zones and traps. It bothered them.

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