Four Raiders reach double figures in win over FAU

Middle Tennessee moves into three-way tie in SBC East

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- **Box Score (PDF)**

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Using an impressive 15-0 run in the second half, Middle Tennessee jumped into a three-way tie for first place in the Sun Belt East with a 73-59 win over Florida Atlantic on Wednesday evening.

Florida Atlantic (8-6, 5-1 Sun Belt) kept it close for good portion of the game, including taking a four point lead early in the first half. MT bounced back with a 15 point run that lasted four minutes to distance themselves from the Owls and collect their season-best fourth straight win. With the victory, MT joins Florida Atlantic and Western Kentucky atop the East division in the Sun Belt.

MT (10-1, 5-1 SBC) shot 44 percent (24-of-55) from the field, while collecting 14 steals and 13 assists. FAU was edged by MT in the rebound column, 42-39, as the Owls shot 35 percent (25-of-71).

Four Blue Raiders tallied double-digits as junior Ebony Rowe led all scorers with 22 points and added 15 rebounds. The Lexington native ratcheted her 42nd double-double and reached double-figures for the 76th time out of 79 career games.

Lebanon's Icelyn Elie tied her career high for steals with five and added 18 points of her own. Sophomore guard Shanice Cason connected for 14, nearing her season-high of 15 and Kortni Jones, who hit the only Blue Raider three-pointer of the night, had 11.

After notching the first two points of the game, MT fell behind 6-2 but answered back with an 8-0 run that lasted five minutes. MT took a 15-12 lead into the eight-minute media timeout, but FAU tied the game almost immediately on a jumper by Shanequa Schrouder. From there, the Blue Raiders went

on a 5-0 run before ending the half up four, 27-23.

At the break, MT's Shanice Cason, Elie and KeKe Stewart each had six points while Rowe had five points and five rebounds. The Blue Raiders attempted a season low three three-point field goals in the first half, a miss by Jones as time expired.

The Owls started hot in the second half, notching a quick layup within the first minute, and slowly pulling closer, eventually tying the game at 33 at 16:15. After a 37-37 tie, Rowe took control of MT's offense, scoring 10 points in a span of 7:51 as the Blue Raiders pulled away for good. FAU was held scoreless for 5:12 during MT's 15-0 run, and was outscored 31-7 over an 8:55 span.

The Blue Raiders return to action Saturday in a 2 p.m. tip-off at Louisiana-Monroe.

NOTES

Ebony Rowe moved to 14th all-time with 1,380 points in her career, passing Heather Prater's total of 1,360 ... Rowe reached her 42nd double-double with 20 points and 15 rebounds. Rowe ranks fifth nationally with 10 double-doubles ... Kortni Jones has 404 assists in her career, reaching fifth place all-time at MT ... The 27 point total in the first half was the third lowest of the season for Middle Tennessee ... Kortni Jones tied Kristi Brown for fifth all-time with 206 career triples ... MT has now hit a three-pointer in 96 consecutive games ... Middle Tennessee is 24-3 when Ebony Rowe scores 20-plus points in a game ... Rowe moved into a tie for ninth all-time with Stephanie Capley after notching her 65th career block ... Middle Tennessee is 6-1 this year when scoring 70 or more points and 137-9 overall since Coach Rick Insell arrived in 2005-06.

QUOTES

Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening Statement:

They've got a good basketball team. They keep throwing players at us in waves and they play aggressive. If you don't get to the line and knock down your free throws, you are going to be in a bind. We missed some opportunities to go in at halftime by more than ten, but I am proud of our girls. They did a good job. They played more people than us, but we just gutted it up and got the job done.

On 15-0 run early in second half:

We haven't had many of those 15-0 runs this year. I was glad to see it. Ebony Rowe just went to work. She got some offside rebounds and another double-double. A lot of people would like to have a young lady like her.

On FAU strong rebounding in the first half:

They weren't undefeated in the conference for no reason. They've got a very good basketball team. They have a lot of energy and enthusiasm. Coach Kellie Lewis-Jay has brought in a couple of junior college players and they already had a bunch of good ones there. We knew coming in that they were going to go to the boards, and pressure our guards. We did exactly what we felt like we had to do, which was attack the basket on every possession.

On three-way tie for SBC lead:

We have played six games and have 14 more in the conference. There are about eight teams in this conference that there isn't a lot of separation and we are one of them. There are a lot of good teams in this conference. We just finished winning two last-shot games and this team (FAU) was undefeated until tonight. Every win that you get, you better cherish.

About changing one phase of his team's offense:

There is one thing that I am not satisfied with. We have been battling everybody up to this point with two posts, Icelyn (Elie) and Ebony (Rowe). Our emphasis right now is to get Keke (Stewart), Janiece Johnson, Lauren March and Dymon Raynor in the game, and move Ice on the perimeter, and get some help on the boards. Icelyn just can't carry the load down there when they have three or four people in there.

Junior Forward Ebony Rowe

On the team being 24-3 when she scores 20 points:

I credit my teammates for that because when we run our sets, they give me perfect passes and open looks. I missed a lot of chip shots in the beginning. They were looking for me and I wasn't finishing for them. Coach (Insell) definitely pointed that out at halftime. Kortni (Jones) made some amazing passes. Icelyn (Elie) hit me with a couple of passes and Shanice (Cason) as well. Once they started getting me the ball, it made it pretty easy for me after that.

On rebounding in second half:

Coach (Insell) pointed that out at halftime. We have three posts players in our starting line-up, all over six-foot. We should be getting every rebound, so Coach was very disappointed in us. We went out in the second half with a chip on our shoulders, trying to prove we could get those rebounds, and we did.

Sophomore Guard Shanice Cason

On how good it felt to break the game open in the second half:

It felt good, but we know that we have to keep playing hard. We can't let our guard down. We have to keep going, but it does feel good to finally have a big win. We won at South Alabama last week by a big margin and we are just getting better every day.

Senior Forward Icelyn Elie

On protecting home court:

Coach (Insell) puts a lot of emphasis on defending our home court. We are known for having long winning streaks on this floor and we took pride in that tonight.