Raiders use dominance on boards to down UALR

Rowe and Jones notch career-best performances

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- **Box Score PDF**

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee used strong play on the boards and career-high performances by Ebony Rowe and Kortni Jones to knock off UALR, 65-56, on Wednesday evening at the Murphy Center.

The Raiders (12-5, 7-1 Sun Belt) held a three point lead at halftime and used a 21-7 run spanning six minutes to pick up their sixth consecutive victory. UALR (11-6, 4-5 SBC) was out-manned 47-to-27 on the boards. Both team shots 40 percent with MT knocking down 21 shots, while the Trojans had 22.

Rowe finished the game with career-highs in points (35) and tied her career-high of field goals made (13). She previously had a career performance of 32 last Saturday against ULM. The junior forward was 13-of-21 from the field, while grabbing a season-best 17 rebounds. 11 of those 17 boards came off the defensive glass.

Jones had a career-high eight rebounds, finishing the game with 10 points. Senior Icelyn Elie posted 14 points, grabbed five rebounds and blocked two shots in 34 minutes.

MT led early, jumping out to a four point lead after winning the tip-off. The lead stretched to eight in the first half by using a Jones free throw to go up 22-14 with 4:03 remaining. UALR, however, fought back to avoid a first half blowout, using a 10-5 run to close the half and pull within three, heading into the locker room with a 27-24 score.

Rowe put together an impressive first half, reaching her 43rd career double-double in just under 17 minutes, finishing the half with 14 points and 10 rebounds. She picked up where she left off in the second half, scoring eight points in the first five minutes and reaching the 20 point plateau. The Blue

Raiders are now 26-3 when Rowe reaches 20 points.

The back-and-forth play continued throughout the second half, with MT reaching a 35-29 lead at 15:48. UALR battled back to tie it at 35 and took a 37-35 lead from a jumper by Taylor Gault.

Rowe tied the game back up with free throws in the next possession, and Jones hit a three-pointer at 10:58 to put Middle Tennessee up 40-37. The Raiders pulled away for good after that, using two Rowe jump shots on consecutive possessions and a 21-7 run over the next six-plus minutes. During the run, Rowe had 12 points while Elie added five and Jones four.

Middle Tennessee returns to action at the Murphy Center this Saturday, Jan. 19 as they face Louisiana in a scheduled double-header beginning at 3 p.m.

NOTES

Ebony Rowe recorded her 43rd double-double with 35 points and 17 rebounds ... Middle Tennessee is 26-3 when Rowe scores 20 or more points ... Rowe has scored 20 or more points in six consecutive games ... For the third time in her career, Ebony Rowe tied a career-high with 13 made field goals ... Kortni Jones reached a career-high with eight rebounds ... Middle Tennessee improved to 17-6 overall against UALR and is 8-1 against the Trojans in Murfreesboro ... Middle Tennessee remains in a first place tie in the SBC East with Western Kentucky.

QUOTES

Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening Statement

It was a tough, hard-fought basketball game. We did the things tonight when we got behind that we should have been doing all night, push the ball a little bit, Ebony (Rowe) went to work, and we still have some things we need to work on in practice, and we'll keep on working on them until we get better at it.

On Ebony Rowe's career performance

Kortni (Jones) got six assists and most of those were going to Ebony. Ebony was 9-of-12 at the line and that was one of the things we have worked on, getting her to the line. That is one of the things we have worked on since she got here and that is working on her free throws. Now that is one of the things she is doing, but 13-of-21 from the field is a pretty good night, too.

On tonight's win

It wasn't so much a statement win as it was a conference win. We'll see them again this year. They'll take back home what they learned tonight and work on that and we'll work on what we learned tonight.

Senior Guard Kortni Jones

On having a career night in rebounds

Shooting has always been the emphasis on the two guard ever since I've been here. I saw that I wasn't going to get any shots off of their defense, so I focused on rebounding because their guards crash. Assists is something that I have always done, since I came in as a point guard. I love to make assists, especially when you have someone like Ebony Rowe. When you get her the ball, nine times out of ten, she is going to score. I try to incorporate other parts of my game when I'm not getting open looks.

Junior Forward Ebony Rowe

On scoring a career-high 35 points

You don't have a night like I had without a lot of help from your teammates. It is all completely assists. People read the stat line and see 35 points, but they don't see my teammates out there giving me great passes, especially Kortni (Jones), Icelyn (Elie) and Shanice (Cason). They know exactly what move I am going to make, where I am going to go.

On winning six games in a row

That was definitely a wake-up call. I guess this sounds kind of arrogant, but I think we thought that this year we were going to come in and take the conference over. We went undefeated last year in the regular season, and it was a wake-up call. These conference teams are really good, everyone has gotten better, and I think we are in the mentality right now that we don't want to lose, and we are not going to lose.

UALR Head Coach Joe Foley

Comments on tonight's game

I thought it was a great game. I thought both teams played hard and both teams did good things. There was a little bit more experience at the end. The last eight minutes they used their experience on us a little bit, but it was a good game.

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