MT rolls past Arkansas State for 12th consecutive win

Jones has career night with 32 points

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- **Box Score (PDF)**

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee used double figure nights from Icelyn Elie, Kortni Jones and Ebony Rowe to pick up a 93-49 victory over Arkansas State Wednesday evening inside the Murphy Center.

The trio combined for 72 of MT's 93 points as the Blue Raiders (18-5, 13-1 Sun Belt) reeled off their 12th consecutive victory. MT opened up a 12-4 run early in the game and never looked back. The Red Wolves (12-11, 9-5 SBC) struggled to find any offensive firepower, giving up 31 points off 24 turnovers. Wednesday's victory kept MT ahead two games in the Sun Belt East division.

Jones established a new career-high 32 points, besting her previous of 28 set against WKU on Jan. 27. Her achievement was the third 30-plus performance by an Middle Tennessee player this season. She made 11-of-17 from the field, while collecting a season-best six steals.

Rowe chipped in with 19 points and four rebounds, reaching her 31st consecutive game in double figures. Elie added 21 points and eight rebounds. The Lebanon native set a career-high with seven steals.

MT shot shot 59.4 percent in the first half for the fourth straight game, and finished the contest with a 55.4 shooting percentage (36-of-64). Meanwhile, the Blue Raider defense held ASU to under 39 percent (19-of-49). Opponents have been held to 40 percent or less in six of the last seven games.

A team often powered by the long-range shot, the Blue Raiders outscored their opponent 42-to-24 in the paint tonight. Second chance points were also aplenty as MT managed 27 compared to six for ASU. The rebound column also tilted in Middle Tennessee's favor, 37-27.

On the defensive side of the ball, Middle Tennessee was able to snag 20 steals, their highest total since the Nov. 9 game against Kennesaw State. Additionally, MT limited their mistakes, turning the ball over a season-low nine times.

In the first half, the Blue Raiders shut down ASU's offensive attack at the 9:58 mark. With the score at 24-15, Jones hit a jumper that sparked a run of 15 unanswered points lasting over five minutes. During the run, Caroline Warden hit a wide-open step back jumper that forced an ASU timeout. MT went into the break up 46-21, matching their season-high for first half points.

The scoreboard continued to light up for Middle Tennessee in the second half with their largest run of the final 20 minutes lasting just under three minutes. MT used several other spurts to remain ahead and pick up their largest margin of victory this season.

On Sunday, Middle Tennessee welcomes Troy for the annual Play 4 Kay game. Tipoff is set for 2 p.m. at the Murphy Center. The Raiders will wear pink uniforms and Middle Tennessee Medical Center will take donations for breast cancer awareness during the game.

NOTES

KeKe Stewart made her first start since earning the nod at Arkansas State on Jan. 2 ... Ebony Rowe reached her 31st consecutive game in double figures, which ranks sixth nationally ... Rowe also has tallied double-digits in 84 of 87 games ... Middle Tennessee has shot over 50 percent in the first half in four consecutive games ... Kortni Jones set a new career-high with 11 made field goals and 32 points, breaking a previous of nine makes and 28 points ... Three different Raiders have reached 30-plus points in a game this season (Jones, Elie and Rowe) ... MT improves to 11-0 all-time against Arkansas State in the Murphy Center ... Middle Tennessee's 12 consecutive wins is tied for the fourth longest active streak in the NCAA.

QUOTES

Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening Statement

That is not indicative of how good Arkansas State is. They are better than that. We shot the ball extremely well tonight. We had our lowest turnovers of the year. Kortni (Jones) had 32 points, she was four of five from the field, had six assists, six steals and six rebounds. It was an all-around game for her. There is not a whole lot of negative at all. We played a lot of people in crucial situations. When anybody came in, they did some things positive that we needed them to do. I am very proud of our basketball team.

On why the offense was so effective

We are attacking the basket with our perimeter people and everybody in general. We are breaking people down and we are making some smart decisions. We have to continue to do that because when we play these teams with bigger people, they have to come out on the floor and guard us. I was pleased with the way we came out in the second half, when Ebony (Rowe) threw a pass to Ice, and she made a great catch and finished the play with a basket. When you have a first half like we had, you don't want to come out sloppy the second half and we didn't.

On the play of Kortni Jones

This was absolutely Kortni's best game. Right now, she is playing with a lot of passion, she is very coachable, she's a leader, she's knocking down shots, she is doing the things that we need for a senior and a leader to do.

Senior Guard Kortni Jones

On scoring a career-high 32 points

Coach (Insell) has been putting a lot of emphasis on attacking the basket. We are still shooting the ball outside, but the more you attack the basket, the more the 3-point shots are open.

On the difference in playing Arkansas State a second time

We were struggling when we played them the first time. We were lucky to get out of there with a win. We are a much better team now, and I think we felt that we had to make a statement tonight.

Senior Forward Icelyn Elie

On the win over ASU

In the past few weeks, we haven't really been taking it to our scouts as we should, and tonight we really focused on that. We knew exactly what they were going to do from the start, and it gave us the momentum from the beginning.

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