Blue Raiders drop heartbreaker to Troy in OT

Rowe leads MT with 28 points and 14 rebounds

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- **Box Score (PDF)**

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee climbed back from a double-digit deficit in the second half, but fell to Troy, 74-70, in overtime at the Murphy Center Sunday afternoon.

The Blue Raiders (18-6, 13-2 Sun Belt) trailed by 12 at halftime of the annual Play 4Kay/ Power of Pink matchup. MT used an 8-2 run down the stretch to tie the game, but couldn't find the game-winning basket. In overtime, Troy (5-18, 2-12 SBC) outscored the Raiders 13-to-9 to snap MT's 12-game win streak.

All-America candidate Ebony Rowe recorded her 14th double-double of the season and her 46th of her career with 28 points and 14 rebounds. The Lexington, Ky., product was 10-of-19 from the field with two assists, a block and a steal.

Senior guard Kortni Jones posted 22 points, tallying 14 of those in the second half. Icelyn Elie added seven points, followed by six from Laken Leonard.

Middle Tennessee jumped out to an early three-point lead , but fell silent from the field and hit just one field goal in a span of six-plus minutes. Beyond the arc, MT went 0-for-13 to start the game before Jones hit a 3-pointer with 1:45 remaining in the first half. Troy made 47 percent (14-of-30) of their field goal attempts in the first half.

Trailing 47-34 at the 15:09 mark in the second half, Caroline Warden and Jones hit a pair of triples to spark a 14-2 run that pulled MT within one, 49-48. Leonard and Jones hit 3-pointers to end the run.

Troy jumped ahead by as many as six points, but the Blue Raiders were able to stick around, holding the Trojans scoreless for the final 2:40 and notching six unanswered, including a contested layup by Rowe with 49 seconds remaining to tie the game at 61.

The Trojans' Ashley Beverly-Kelley put Troy up four after sinking both free throws, but Rowe answered back with two points of her own to keep MT in the game. Troy's Britney McCloud, however, sunk a 3-pointer with 1:40 remaining to put the game out of reach.

After the game, the three pink jerseys belonging to the Blue Raider seniors were auctioned off. All proceeds were donated to breast cancer research.

Middle Tennessee travels to UALR on Saturday, Feb. 16 in a scheduled doubleheader that starts at 4:30 p.m.

NOTES

The 21.6 shooting percentage (8-of-37) in the first half was the lowest for MT this season ... Ebony Rowe reached her 46th career double-double with 28 points and 14 rebounds ... Middle Tennessee is now 28-4 when Rowe scores 20 or more points ... The Blue Raiders dropped their first ever game to Troy with MT holding a 16-1 edge in the series ... Two out of the last three games have went to overtime ... For the first time in the Rick Insell era, Middle Tennessee has two conference home games ... The Raiders are 67-3 inside the Murphy Center against SBC competition ... MT has played in four overtime games this season, which is the most in school history. The Raiders are 1-3 in OT games this season.

QUOTES

Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening Statement

Troy did a good job. They came in and did what they had to do. Their people played well together. (JoAnna) Harden just flat took it to us. They broke us down and made several key baskets when they had to. They got key rebounds. We had some people that didn't show up, and in this conference, there are just too many funny things that can happen. That just brought the pack back closer to us. They had only won one game in the conference and they come into Middle Tennessee and win. That's big for them.

On Troy's energy in the first half

I thought we played right into what they wanted to do. We were not executing. We were not going to the boards. We got open shots and were not knocking them down. We just thought we were going to win the game, and that's not the way it's played.

Junior forward Ebony Rowe

On Troy coming out with a lot of energy and confidence

I feel like every single person on their team came out with more energy than every single person on ours and it showed.

Senior guard Kortni Jones

On whether Sunday's loss is a learning experience for them as a team

I wouldn't say that. I will give credit where it is due. Troy has played a lot of teams close, not just us. They played FAU down to the wire, which we struggled with. I wouldn't say that it was anything like

that. They just came out more prepared and ready than we were.

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