

Balanced attack lifts MT past South Alabama

Rowe and Elie collect double-doubles

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

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Four Middle Tennessee players reached double figures on Wednesday evening to help the Blue Raiders snap a two-game losing streak and defeat South Alabama, 69-48, inside the Murphy Center.

The Blue Raiders (19-7, 14-3 Sun Belt) struggled to find momentum in the first half and held a 26-19 edge at the break. From there, the Raiders opened the second half on a five point run and won their 19th straight over South Alabama (14-12, 7-10 SBC).

MT holds a two game advantage in the Sun Belt East division with three games remaining.

All-America candidate Ebony Rowe had 18 points and 11 rebounds for her 47th career double-double and her 15th of the season. Senior Icelyn Elie reached the double-double mark for just the third time this season with 11 points and 11 rebounds.

For the 10th straight game, Kortni Jones reached double digits and finished the evening with 14 points. She also dished four four assists as she played in her 120th career game.

Off the bench, Shanice Cason played 32 minutes and tallied 10 points. Additionally, Janiece Johnson broke a career-best scoring performance, hitting all three shots from the field and both attempts from the charity stripe for eight points.

For the game, the Blue Raiders shot 45 percent (25-of-55), while holding South Alabama to 29 percent (17-of-59). MT controlled the rebound column 44-to-33 with 22 of those boards coming from Elie and Rowe.

Down by two inside the first media timeout, MT broke out on a 7-0 run that lasted over five minutes. The Lady Jags slowly crept back, bringing the score to 12-9 with six minutes remaining.

Johnson checked into the game with just over four minutes in the half and tied her career-high



shortly after, hitting two layups in less than a minute, and swatting a South Alabama shot attempt. MT used that momentum to build a 10-point lead with 13 seconds remaining, before the Lady Jaguars' Mansa El hit a three-pointer as time expired, cutting the score to 26-19 at half.

In the second half, Middle Tennessee jumped out to a 31-21 lead and held steady in that range, leading by as many as 13 during the first 10 minutes of the half. At the 11:03 mark, MT started a 9-0 run that lasted just under four minutes and included a quick burst of four points in just nine seconds.

The Blue Raiders will close out their home portion of the 2012-13 season this Saturday, Feb. 23 in the front-end of a doubleheader against ULM. Senior Day is scheduled for 3 p.m.

NOTES

Junior Ebony Rowe reached double figures for the 34th consecutive game ... She inked her 47th career double-double with 18 points and 11 rebounds ... Rowe now has 1,612 points in her career ... Kortni Jones moved to a tie for 8th all-time with 120 career games played ... Icelyn Elie earned her third double-double this season ... Janiece Johnson earned a career high with eight points ... Freshman Caroline Warden earned her first career start ... Fans and media are encourage to visit RaidersRowe.com for all the latest information on Ebony Rowe for All America.

QUOTES

Head Coach Rick Insell

On a slow start and getting it going in the 2nd half:

"You got two double-doubles between Ebony (Rowe) and Icelyn (Elie). I thought Janiece Johnson came in and gave us some big points. I thought that was a big shot Laken (Leonard) hit on the jump shot there. I thought Shanice Cason came to play tonight. We had some people that stepped up. Cason did a good job and I thought Kortni (Jones) did an adequate job. We just can't leave rebounding up to Ebony and Ice. That's what we were doing earlier in the year. We need more rebounds from that backside. I think our pressure up front bothered them to be honest with you.

Junior forward Ebony Rowe

On her struggles in the first half and her second half adjustments:

Coach was pretty upset at halftime. We weren't executing like we had been practicing. Me and Icelyn weren't finishing at the post like he wanted us to. We really did not come to play that first half we were just too lax. Kortni really got us going. She started attacking and got us points in the paint.

On the play of Janiece Johnson:

I'm ecstatic how she played today. She came ready and that is what we are missing. Especially as we get into tournament time, we want to go deep into the tournament and we need a big body like her to take on some of those 6'4" or 6'5" girls. I think she showed everyone tonight she can finish, she can defend and she can rebound. She adds another element to our game that we have never had before.

On grinding out games this year:

I feel like we always have a target on our back. I say that every game. Some teams will go down and not play well against other teams in the conference. I always say we get everyone's best game and we should. We were number one coming in and we are still number one in this conference. We have to know that there will be a target on our back and whether we grind it out or it is a blowout. A win is a win and we have to take it day by day.

Junior center Janiece Johnson

On giving the team a lift in the first half:

I have two good players in front of me and I am still learning. I still have some things that I have to do to get myself on the floor.

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