Jones and Elie play strong in Senior Day win over ULM

Raiders reach 20 wins for ninth straight season

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Kortni Jones scored 30 points in an outstanding Senior Day performance, while Icelyn Elie paced the Blue Raiders with a double-double in their final home game as Middle Tennessee defeated ULM, 74-53, Saturday afternoon.

The Blue Raiders (20-7, 15-3 SBC) have now won at least 20 games in nine straight seasons. ULM (7-20, 5-13) played a close first half with MT holding just a two-point edge at the break. The Raiders used nine triples in the second half to take a commanding lead and pick up their ninth straight win over the Warhawks.

Offensively, Middle Tennessee shot 42 percent (26-of-61), including a season-best 13 three-pointers. ULM was limited to 39 percent (22-of-57) from the field as Alexar Tugler was the only double-figure scorer with 17 points. MT won the rebound column, 40-37, while forcing 19 turnovers.

Jones' 30 points was two shy of her career best. She set a new personal record with eight triples, becoming the sixth player to reach that plateau. The senior guard handed out six assists, passing Patrice Holmes for second all-time with 458 career dishes. Jones also tallied double-figures for the 11th consecutive game.

Elie also had a strong senior day performance, boasting 15 boards and 11 boards for her second consecutive double-double. Elie was 6-of-11 from the field with two steals and an assist.

Freshman Caroline Warden notched a breakout performance, going 6-of-9 from the field with three makes behind the arc. The Gainesboro, Tenn., product tallied career-highs with 16 points, five rebounds and three assists.

MT was unable to pull away throughout the half, jumping out to a 9-2 lead, but allowing ULM to tie it up several times. With the score tied at 11 for nearly three minutes, Warden hit a 3-pointer to break the stalemate, and help with a spurt of points to put the score at 18-13.

A bizarre moment occurred with 5:11 remaining, when Jones attempted to intercept a ULM pass from Jasmine Shaw, tipping the ball off the backboard and through the hoop.

The Warhawks once again would fight back, as Jasmine Shaw hit a layup with 11 seconds remaining to cut the Raiders lead to 30-28 at the half.

Middle Tennessee didn't shoot a free throw in the first half, failing to reach the charity stripe in a half for the first time this season. Both squads shot 40 percent in the first half as Elie led MT with 10 points.

After halftime, ULM re-took a brief 35-34 lead, but the advantage was short lived, as Jones hit a three-pointer just 11 seconds later. From there, MT went on a 20-to-4 run over six minutes to clinch the program's ninth consecutive 20-win season.

After the game, the MT Athletic Department honored senior manager Whitney Gordon, Dymon Raynor, Elie and Jones for their significant contributions to the Blue Raider program during the past four seasons.

Middle Tennessee closes out its regular season with a pair of road matchups at Troy on Feb. 28 and WKU on March 2.

NOTES

Kortni Jones made her 121st appearances, which ranks eighth in school history ... Caroline Warden set a career-mark with 16 points and five rebounds ... Kortni Jones' 238 triples moved her to eighth on the all-time Sun Belt list ... Jones moved to second all-time with 458 career assists, passing Patrice Holmes ... Ebony Rowe's 34 game double-figure scoring streak was snapped on Saturday. It was only the fourth time in her career she did not reach double-figures.

QUOTES

Senior guard Kortni Jones

On whether she felt pressure on Senior Day to play well:

You always want to do well, especially that last game. It meant a lot to me and I know it meant a lot to my teammates for us to come out and have a good game. It was going south for me those first five minutes. A lot of my family came. I was spoken to at halftime and I came out mad and went on a rampage.

On if this was the best she's ever felt shooting:

I don't think I have ever shot that well. It felt really good. I hope I can do it again.

Freshman Guard Caroline Warden

On her scoring role:

My first shot I took I hit and then I took another one and I missed it. Then I got another chance to shoot and I passed it up. I was taken out but when I went back in I knew if I got another open look I had to take it and knock it down because nobody else was really hitting at the time.

On what it meant to send the seniors off well:

We all knew the game meant a lot to them and we as a team didn't want to let them down. They are our main players and they play a full game almost every game. We just took it upon ourselves to not let this game slip away from us and do the best we can for the seniors.

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