Rowe scores 28 to lead MT in loss to No. 7 Kentucky

Raiders cut lead to six with two-plus minutes remaining

November 24, 2013 · @MTAthletics

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee's second half rally fell short Sunday afternoon falling, 84-72, to No. 7/7 Kentucky in front of 4,822 strong at the Murphy Center.

Kentucky (6-0) opened up to a 12 point lead before taking a 41-34 advantage at the break. Middle Tennessee (1-3) used a 9-0 run to cut the deficit to



six with 2:34 remaining in the game. UK then managed 10 points down the stretch to remain unbeaten.

Yet again Wade Watch List candidate Ebony Rowe had a stellar game, notching a season-best 28 points after shooting 12-of-21 from the field. Rowe matched a game-high eight rebounds en route to her 97th double-figure scoring game.

Offensively, the Blue Raiders shot a season-best 46 percent (24-of-52) from the field, while UK lit up the basket for 50 percent (33-of-66). MT kept rebounds in check with the Wildcats holding a 35-34 edge. Laken Leonard added nine points going a perfect 3-for-3 from the field. Guards Shanice Cason and Olivia Jones each added eight points, while China Dow posted seven points. Jones finished second on the team with six rebounds.

Kentucky opened the second half holding the 41-34 advantage. Three baskets by Rowe combined with a layup from Jones cut UK's lead down to five. The Wildcats went on an 11-0 spurt during a two minute stretch, extending the lead to 16 points with 14:05 remaining.

With 4:03 remaining, UK's Samarie Walker scored on a putback, giving the Wildcat's the 13 point lead. Leonard made her first shot attempt of the game only 18 seconds later, trimming down the 'Cats lead. After another Leonard 3-point bucket and a Cason jumper the lead was down to six with 2:34 remaining. Kentucky went on a 10-4 run to close out the game behind eight free throws.

UK had four girls in double-digits, led by Bria Goss' 16 points on 6-of-8 shooting. Kastine Evans added 15, Jennifer O'Neill added 14 and Walker finished with 12 points.

Middle Tennessee returns to action next weekend at the Gulf Coast Showcase. The Blue Raiders

open the three-day tournament on Friday, Nov. 29 against Southeastern Louisiana. Tip-off is set for 11 a.m. CT.

NOTES: For the first time this season, two freshmen (Dow and Jones) were in the starting lineups for the Raiders ... Ebony Rowe moved into sole possession of seventh place with 90th career block ... KeKe Stewart matched a career-long with four starts ... Middle Tennessee's shooting percentage of 46.2 was the highest of the season for the Raiders ... MT is averaging 8,024 in their first two games.

Middle Tennessee Head Coach Rick Insell

Opening Statement:

One of the things I said when I was going to come here was that I was going to grow the game. I was going to give everything I had to play the best teams in the country and bring them to Middle Tennessee State University to play our basketball program. The Kentucky's, the Tennessee's; go on the road and play the Miami's. I could have set the schedule where we could be 4-0 right now and playing at Kentucky, but I chose not to. I chose to challenge my basketball team.

On the team's effort:

I'm very proud of our basketball program, I'm very proud of our basketball team, I'm very proud of the effort that my young ladies put out tonight. We didn't quit. We've come through a stretch now that was very tough, but we knew that going in and we knew that from the summer. I'm very proud of our basketball team and the effort that they gave us and I'm very proud of our fan base.

On coming back in the second half:

We don't quit. I don't care who we're playing. We don't quit. We don't look at the scoreboard. We play the game. It didn't even phase us. We knew we were down. We knew we wanted to cut it below ten before the eight minute mark and we did that. We got the lead down to six.

Senior Forward Ebony Rowe

On the loss:

I felt like we just kept fight and we just couldn't seem to put all of the pieces together. They made some big time baskets in that second half. Their big time players stepped up and made big plays. The proudest moment for me is the fact that my team did not give up. A lot of teams could have been down fifteen points and just thrown in the towel, but we fought down to those last twenty-five seconds.

Senior Forward Lauren March

On stepping up against Kentucky:

Really my role as a fifth year senior is to go out there and lead so that's what I try to do. I try to help my teammates and get them in the right places. Whenever I do come in the game, I know my role is to help rebound and then shoot when I'm open and find open players so that's why I tried to do tonight.

Kentucky Head Coach Matthew Mitchell

Opening Statement:

We're really happy to win this game today. Middle Tennessee is a really tough team with a great crowd. So I'm really proud of Kentucky and how we played today to overcome every bit of adversity that came our way and we're really going to enjoy this win. This will be a very valuable win for our team going forward and hopefully will help us get to where we want to be at the end of the year.

On coming out today strong after a big win over Lipscomb:

We had a big win on Thursday and what you don't want to do is become complacent and think you've arrived. We had some good practices the end of this week and really tried to get mentally prepared for this game but we also wanted to make sure we had our legs under us because we knew it'd be a tough game today. Middle Tennessee is a really tough team and they're going to have a great season. And I think it was important for us to establish some early momentum and let them know we were ready to play today.

On not letting Middle Tennessee get a big run:

The difference between this game and last the two is we got off to such a better start. Therefore we weren't digging ourselves out of a big hole the whole game and half to fight back. I told my team that this would not be a 40-point blowout, this was going to be a tough game and to come in here and beat them by 12 on their home court makes me really happy about this one.

On Ebony Rowe:

She works for 40 minutes and it's a difficult matchup for our scheme. We're spread out a lot because we don't double-team a lot and Middle Tennessee usually has so many good three-pointer shooters, that it's difficult task for us. We don't pack it in and stand in the lane, or double-team post players much so we just have to play Kentucky basketball. Today we tried to have her stop catching the ball and that was really hard to do. But we were able to make enough plays to get the job done.

Senior Guard Kastine Evans

On playing in front of a tough Murphy Center crowd:

I think it's how well-coached they are. They battle all the time. I was here two years ago when we lost and you could just see the atmosphere here and they really take pride in winning here. They're like us, they take a lot of pride in playing at home and that's what makes it so tough.

Senior Forward Samarie Walker

On the timeout after Middle Tennessee's big second half run:

Coach told us to not worry about what they're doing and worry about what we were doing, to keep playing our game. We had to fight through it and win the next four minutes.

On playing against Ebony Rowe:

It's a lot of fun playing against her. It's always a challenge, she's a great player, and I like playing against players like that.

Printed on July 28, 2014

Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/71939