

# Blue Raiders In SBC Tourney Final

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**FIRST TIME SINCE '91:** The Blue Raiders are in the finals of a conference tournament for the first time since 1991. The drought of 11 years, though, is not the longest dry spell the team is hoping to break. The Blue Raiders are shooting for their first trip to the NCAA Tournament since 1989. That trip to the Big Dance saw the Blue Raiders knock off Florida State in Nashville before falling to Virginia in the second round.



## **FOUR IN A ROW AT**

**DIDDLE:** The Blue Raiders are sporting a winning streak of sorts at Diddle Arena. The Blue Raiders have won four straight games in conference tournament play at WKU's arena dating back to 1982. In that tournament, the Blue Raiders won two games, including an NCAA-clinching win over the Hilltoppers. MT advanced to the NCAA Regional in Nashville and went on to score the biggest win in school history with a 50-44 victory over Kentucky.

**DAVIS 2-0 IN TOURNEY FINALS:** Middle Tennessee head coach Kermit Davis is a perfect 2-0 in conference tournament finals as a Division I head coach. Davis guided two Idaho squads to Big West Tourney finals in 1989 and 1990, leading the Vandals to the NCAA Tournament on both occasions. Tuesday's SBC final will mark the third title game in Davis' five years as a bench boss.

**GUNN BACK IN FORM:** After failing to score 10 points in the Blue Raiders' win over South Alabama on Sunday, Tommy Gunn showed the SBC Tournament crowd why he was a first team all-league selection. Gunn scored 19 points on 8-of-10 shooting in the contest in only 28 minutes of play. Gunn also dished out four assists, blocked a shot, and grabbed two steals. Gunn came into the game averaging about 17 points in games following a contest in which he was held below 10 points and continued that trend.

**RUNNING GOOD OFFENSE:** Middle Tennessee picked a good night to set a new season high in field goal percentage. The Blue Raiders posted a 60.7 percent mark from the floor against the Pioneers, besting their previous season high of 59.5 set at Florida International. MT connected on

37-of-61 attempts in the game.

**TWO FOR TUESDAY:** Middle Tennessee's men's and women's hoops squads are in the same conference tournament final for the first time since 1989. If things hold true to form, Tuesday could be a special day in MT basketball lore. Both the Lady Raiders and Blue Raiders took home the tournament crown that year and went on to the NCAA Tournament.

**NEXT UP:** The Blue Raiders will face the winner of tonight's New Mexico State-Western Kentucky semifinal matchup. Middle Tennessee defeated New Mexico State 70-68 earlier this season in Las Cruces. MT and WKU split their season series with the Blue Raiders prevailing 69-65 in Murfreesboro and the Hilltoppers taking an 89-75 win in Bowling Green. All-time, the Aggies lead the Blue Raiders 4-1 and the Hilltoppers hold a 79-27 advantage.

**ESPN SLATED FOR TUESDAY EVENING:** The Blue Raider will play in their first nationally-televised game in quite some time on Tuesday evening as ESPN is scheduled to broadcast the SBC Tournament final. The game, which is set for an 8:05 tipoff, can be seen locally on Comcast Ch. 11. As a side note, the Blue Raiders are now 3-2 when playing on TV this season after Monday's win was televised on ESPN regional.

**LAST-MINUTE CHANGE:** The Blue Raider Sports Network had a switch on the fly this evening as 22-year veteran Dick Palmer was unable to call tonight's action due to a scratchy, irritated throat. Palmer did, however, get some airtime introducing the broadcast before yeilding to Chip Walters, meaning his streak of 22 years without missing a broadcast remained in tact.

**THIS AND THAT:** Junior Tommy Gunn has now scored 1,053 points, surpassing Ken Riley (1968-71) for 22nd all-time ... MT is now 4-0 on the year when scoring 80 or more points ... The Blue Raiders are now 13-2 on the year when holding the opposition under 70 points ... Gunn and Pippen have combined for 46 double figure games ... MT is now 14-2 when leading at the half and 14-4 when leading with five minutes remaining ... Middle Tennessee's 16 wins this season is the most for a Blue Raiders squad since recording 19 during the 1997-98 campaign.

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