

Raiders Extend Streak to 20 with 78-63 Victory

Blue Raiders win 20th straight; claim regular season championship and top seed in SBC Tournament

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky. - In a heavyweight fight, you must absorb the opponents' best punch. Middle Tennessee did that early in the game and then delivered its own to start the second half, going on a 16-5 run, as the 18th-ranked Blue Raiders remained perfect in Sun Belt action with a 78-63 victory over Western Kentucky Sunday at E.A. Diddle Arena. It was the 20th consecutive victory for the Blue Raiders overall this season and 15th straight in conference play. With the victory, Middle Tennessee wraps up the top seed for the Sun Belt Championships in three weeks and claims its first regular season Sun Belt title since joining the league seven years ago. WKU got out of the gate quickly, jumping out to a 16-9 lead at the 12-minute media timeout behind six points from Dominique Duck and five by Tiffany Zaragoza. But the Blue Raiders responded behind Amber Holt, who scored 18 points in the opening 20 minutes, leading an 11-5 run midway through the half to cut the Lady 'Topper lead to one at 21-20. Chrissy Givens tied the contest and gave Middle Tennessee the lead with a 3-



point play with 5:16 left in the half, and the Blue Raiders took a 34-33 advantage to the intermission. The Blue Raiders (23-3, 15-0 Sun Belt) scored 16 of the first 21 points of the second half, with Krystle Horton scoring six straight points out of halftime, Starr Orr with a jumper and a 3-pointer, and Johnna Abney's trifecta with 14:10 remaining that put Middle Tennessee ahead, 50-38. The Blue Raiders continue to increase the advantage in the second half, leading by as many as 20 with 5:23 left in the contest. Holt finished with 24 points and Givens had 22 and 12 rebounds, her fifth double-double of the season. Horton added 13 and Orr had 10, as the Blue Raiders shot 59 percent in the second half in pulling away. Middle Tennessee hosts Florida International Thursday at 5:30 p.m., the first of three regular season games remaining for the Blue Raiders. **NOTES**

SUN BELT CHAMPIONSHIPS TICKETS ON SALE: Fans may purchase ticket booklets for the Sun Belt Championships, scheduled for March 3-6 at the Cajundome in Lafayette, La., by calling the Middle Tennessee Ticket Office at 615/898-2103 or 1-888-YES-MTSU. Ticket booklets for the tournament are \$84 for all eight sessions, which includes 14 total games. The ticket booklet covers both the men's and women's games. The Middle Tennessee women would begin action in the tournament on Saturday, March 3, with the semifinals on Monday, March 5 and the championship game set for Tuesday, March 6. **RICK INSELL RADIO SHOW TONIGHT:** Head coach Rick Insell's weekly radio show returns Monday at Bluesboro on the square in Murfreesboro. The show begins at 6 p.m. with Coach Insell and the Voice of the Blue Raiders, David Reed, discussing last week's games against Louisiana-Monroe and Western Kentucky and looking forward to this week's home game versus Florida International. The show can ONLY be heard at 88.3 FM WMTS or on GoBlueRaiders.com and there ARE NO call-ins for the show.

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