Blue Raiders Fall Just Short

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| CHATTANOOGA, Tellil. |
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| The Middle Tennessee Blue |
| Raiders had the ball down |
| three in the final 25 seconds |
| but could not convert and |
| dropped an 82-75 decision to |
| the homestanding |
| Chattanooga Mocs Monday |
| night at McKenzie Arena in the |
| opening round of the Dr |
| Pepper Classic. |
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The Blue Raiders (5-4) battled back in the second half, as the Mocs built the lead to as many as 16 points at the 11:12 mark. But Middle Tennessee chipped away at the lead, cutting the deficit to five with 3:32 to play on two free throws by Mike Dean.

by Mike Dean.

UTC's Ray Trowell made a layup on the ensuing possession and was fouled on the play.

Chattanooga's Ashley Champion got the rebound on the missed free throw and put it home to extend the lead to nine again.

But Tommy Gunn answered with a three-pointer, his only make in eight tries, and Michael Cuffee connected with another three on the next possession down the floor to cut the UTC advantage to three.

Dean hit a three to make it a two-point lead, but after a Trowell free throw, Dean's three attempt was errant.

The Mocs (7-4) made four foul shots in the final 16 seconds to preserve the win and extend their unbeaten streak at home this season.

Dean led the Blue Raiders with 19 points, including 4-of-7 from behind the arc, while Gunn added 15, 13 in the second half, and Cuffee had a dozen. Redshirt freshman Kyle Young grabbed a game and career-high 12 rebounds in the loss.

Middle Tennessee had no answer for UTC's post players, as Champion led all scorers with 25 points, including 16 in the first half. Alphonso Pugh also had his way in the paint, scoring 13 points, while Jason Rogan added 11.

The Blue Raiders play South Carolina State in the consolation game Tuesday at 6 p.m. ET of the Dr Pepper Classic. SCSU dropped a 76-63 decision to LaSalle in the first round Monday night.

GAME NOTES

Mike Dean's three-pointer in the first half extended Middle Tennessee's streak to 226 straight games with a made trifecta ... Redshirt freshman Kyle Young grabbed a game and career-high 12 rebounds in the contest, including nine in the first half ... The Blue Raiders lost for the first time this season when they outrebounded their opponent, as Middle Tennessee won the battle of the boards, 37-26 ... Monday's game was the 1800th in school history, with the Blue Raiders compiling a 921-879 overall record ... Freshman Bryan Smithson played a season-high in minutes for the second straight contest, logging 36 in the loss after playing 33 against Austin Peay last Tuesday ... Michael Cuffee made a season-high five field goals.

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