Lady Raiders Win Sun Belt Tournament, Headed to the Big Dance

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No audio available.

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. - Middle Tennessee (23-7) got its dance card punched for the NCAA Tournament with a 79-57 win over Western Kentucky (18-13) in the Sun Belt Tournament Championship game Tuesday.

Lady Raider guard Patrice Holmes led six Middle Tennessee players in double figures with 18 points. She also added six rebounds and two steals and was named the tournament's Most Outstanding Player for the second straight season. Chrissy Givens added 12 points on 5-of-6 shooting.

Middle Tennessee shot a scorching 55 percent from the field, including a 61 percent clip in the second half. The Lady Raiders were also 17-of-18 from the free throw line (94 percent).

The Lady Raiders never trailed in the contest and had a double-figure lead for much of the game. Middle Tennessee opened the game with a 9-0 advantage before Western Kentucky scored.

The Sun Belt Tournament title is the first for Middle Tennessee and it will be the team's first trip to the NCAA Tournament since 1998.

Freshman Krystle Horton and sophomore Tia Stovall were named to the Sun Belt All-Tournament Team. Other selections included Carla Bartee and Tiffany Porter-Talbert from Western Kentucky and Sinnamonn Garrett from New Mexico State.

The Lady Raiders will find out where they are seeded in the NCAA Tournament on Sunday March 14.

NOTES:

GOIN DANCIN: Middle Tennessee won its first Sun Belt Tournament title with a 79-57 win over Western Kentucky. It is the Lady Raiders first trip to the NCAA Tournament since 1998, which was Stephany Smith's first year as the Middle Tennessee Head Coach.

FIFTH TIME THE CHARM: Middle Tennessee defeated Western Kentucky for the first time in five meetings. Senior Keisha McClinic predicted the win as she was quoted in saying "Fifth time was the charm" and cited her jersey number "5."

JJ'S LONG BALL: Senior Jennifer Justice was a perfect 3-for-3 from the three-point line in the Championship game. It was a career high for Justice, who had only hit four treys in the season.

HOT FROM THE CHARITY STRIPE: Middle Tennessee was near perfection from the free throw line as the Lady Raiders were 17-of-18 from the charity stripe for 94.4 percent.

THREE ON ALL-TOURNAMENT: Patrice Holmes was named Sun Belt Tournament Most Outstanding Player for the second year in a row averaging 21 points in the three games. Tia Stovall got a nod on the All-Tournament team for the second year in a row as well, and freshman Krystle Horton got her first selection.

SHOOTING THE LIGHTS OUT: Middle Tennessee had the hot hand in the Sun Belt Championship game as the team shot 54.9 percent overall and 60.9 percent in the second half.

GIVENS SHOWS UP: Freshman Chrissy Givens averaged 10.7 points per game in the tournament. Overall she averages 4.3 points per game.

FIRST TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONSHIP SINCE 1998: Middle Tennessee's last tournament title was 1998 when the Lady Raiders were in the Ohio Valley Conference.

MOVING UP THE CHARTS: Patrice Holmes has recorded 1,351 points in her three years and moves into ninth in the Lady Raider record books.

MCCLINIC OWNS SECOND: Keisha McClinic owns second place in the Lady Raider record books with 234 steals. She has recorded 103 this season and owns the single-season thefts record.

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