

Blue Raiders fall to rival WKU in semi-final match

Asberry, Yancey lead team

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MIAMI - Middle Tennessee fell to rival Western Kentucky 3-0 (25-17, 25-13, 25-21) in the semi-finals of the Sun Belt Championships on Friday night. This is the first semi-final loss for the Blue Raiders since 2002 when it lost to New Mexico State 3-0 in Miami. It will be the first time since 2006 that Middle Tennessee has not played in the championship game of the conference tournament or received an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament. "We have played matches like this before where we have had to recover and although we put up a fight in game three we just couldn't overcome how well they were playing. A lot of that was our fault," head coach Matt Peck said. "We didn't do a good job serving and they did a good job of serving us tough and getting us out of system." Neither team had a player post double-digit kills but WKU had 42 kills for a .442 attack



percentage while the Blue Raiders had 33 for a .157 hitting percentage. The Hilltoppers set a number of records including team hitting percentage in a three-set match and Abbie Siljendahl's hitting percentage of .750 is the best by an individual. Senior Ashley Asberry and junior Janay Yancey guided the Blue Raiders throughout the match with 13 kills and five block assists between them. "I though Ashley Asberry and Janay Yancey did a great job for us tonight especially offensively. I think we had some people let us down in this match and when you have people, we had three or four, not having a good match, it is going to be tough to win especially at this point in the season," Peck said. Junior Ashley Mead led the team in kills with nine and had a team high four

block assists. "It is a disappointing loss for us we have played in the tournament finals the last three years and this year we are going home. I think it is an important lesson for our team," Peck said. "We have to regroup because we have two tough matches coming up and need to win both of them to have a shot at getting an at-large bid to the NCAA tournament." Western Kentucky took control of the first set and never looked back taking an early 16-11 lead and then pulled ahead 23-16 before taking the win. The Hilltoppers continued to control the match holding the Blue Raiders to just 13 points in the second set. At the break, Middle Tennessee had five less kills than WKU with 21 with a hitting percentage of .093 while the Hilltoppers were hitting .468. The Hilltoppers also had six blocks to Middle Tennessee's three. Middle Tennessee fell behind early in the third set as WKU took a three-point lead, 7-4. The Blue Raiders closed the gap making it a one-point game but the Hilltoppers pulled ahead by three mid-way through the set, 15-12. The Blue Raiders continued to fight but could not close the gap trailing 22-19 late. The Blue Raiders will be back in action on Saturday, Nov. 29 when it faces St. Louis at 1 p.m. and Connecticut at 7 p.m. at home in Alumni Memorial Gym.

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