

Blue Raiders Earn Share Of San Juan Shootout Championship

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico -

Mike Dean, who has been struggling with his shot lately, nailed a three-pointer with 37 seconds left in overtime to give Middle Tennessee a 73-69 win over Delaware at the San Juan Shootout. The Blue Raiders finished 2-1 in San Juan to earn a share of first place and will now set their sights on Big East foe Villanova on Dec. 27 in Philadelphia. Michael Cuffee, who earned all-tournament honors, paced four Blue Raiders in double figures with 16 points, while Dean added 14, Marcus Morrison 12, and Steve Thomas 11. It appeared the Blue Raiders (7-3) would

get out with a win in regulation, but Delaware's Andrew Washington connected on a three-pointer at the top of the key as time ran out to send the game into OT. In the extra period, Dean and Cuffee scored four points each and Marcus Morrison added three to put the Blue Raiders over the top. After four free throws by Fats Cuyler, Cuffee, Dean, and Morrison, the Blue Raiders scored their first field goal of overtime on a beautiful play by Cuffee at the 1:18 mark. Morrison picked up a loose ball, spotted Cuffee behind the defense and threw a perfect lob that Cuffee slammed home while being fouled. The Philadelphia, Pa., native completed the three-point play to put the Blue Raiders up, 68-66. The Blue Hens struck back with three straight points to lead, 69-68, before Dean connected on the long range dagger that put the Blue Raiders ahead for good. Morrison provided the final points with two free throws. In the first half, Middle Tennessee struggled with its shooting and in the rebounding department. The Blue Raiders shot a dismal 42 percent compared to 52 percent by the Blue Hens, and Delaware won the board battle, 16-10. Trailing 19-12, Middle Tennessee went on a 7-2 run to pull within two points at 21-19. During the run, Thomas accounted for five points as the Blue Raiders got as close as they would get in the first half. Delaware responded with a 6-0 run to extend its lead to 27-19 and went into the locker room with a 31-24 advantage. The Blue Hens stormed out to a 12-point lead in the second period at 39-27, but the Blue Raiders quickly reeled off six straight points to cut the lead in half. Middle Tennessee then put together its best run of the game by outscoring Delaware, 13-4, over the next few minutes to grab its first lead of the game at the 9:59

mark. The basket that put the Blue Raiders on top came on a dunk from Darrio Scott. The game seesawed back and forth the rest of the way. **GAME NOTES:** Middle Tennessee is now 46-30 all-time in overtime and 3-2 under Kermit Davis ... The Blue Raiders' 7-3 start is their best mark after 10 games since the 1997-98 squad began the year 8-2 ... The two wins at this year's San Juan Shootout marked Middle Tennessee's most wins in a regular season tournament since picking up two victories at the 1996 Top of the World Classic in Fairbanks, Alaska ... Today's win marked Kermit Davis' 40th at Middle Tennessee ... The Blue Raiders were outrebounded today for only the second time this season ... Fats Cuyler played a career-best 35 minutes, including all 20 minutes of the second half and the five minute overtime ... The Blue Raiders scored 25 points off of Delaware's 19 turnovers ... Michael Cuffee has now scored in double figures in 15 straight games and has now led the Blue Raiders in rebounding eight times in 10 games this year.

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