Championship showdown: Blue Raiders face Missouri State for tourney title

Four reach double figures as Middle Tennessee rolls past Norfolk State, 77-56

December 21, 2008 · Athletic Communications

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. - Middle Tennessee put itself in position to play for the championship of the Basketball Travelers Tip-Off Tournament with a persuasive 77-56 win against Norfolk State at JQH Arena Sunday. The Blue Raiders (6-5) won their second straight game in the tournament as four players reached double figures. Desmond "Boogie" Yates led the way with 18 points and seven rebounds and Demetrius Green netted 17 points. The inside-out tandem combined to connect on 14-of-23 field goals. Kevin Kanaskie finished with 11 points and a game-high eight rebounds. He also dished out five assists with just one turnover and collected two steals. Montarrio "The Beast" Haddock provided 11 points and six rebounds off the bench. Senior guard Nigel Johnson also continued to show signs of improvement from a knee injury with greater explosiveness and play-making ability. Johnson scored five points, grabbed five rebounds and dished out six assists. The Blue Raiders will face host Missouri State in Monday's championship game at 8:35 p.m. Live video streaming of the game will be provided free and can be accessed on GoBlueRaiders.com or MissouriStateBears.com. Both Middle Tennessee and Missouri State are unbeaten in the tournament. The Blue Raiders are looking to win their second holiday tournament under Head Coach Kermit Davis after gaining a share of the San Juan Shootout title in 2004. "I'm proud of our team and the progress we have made in this tournament," Davis said. "We grinded out a win (against UC-Irvine) and tonight we were really good in most facets of the game. It was a complete team win and we had to play well. I thought the second half was as good of 20 minutes as we have played in a long time. Now we have put ourselves in position to play for a championship and that's a good feeling." Middle Tennessee's staunch defense, relentless rebounding and effective offensive execution were critical in Sunday's win against Norfolk State. The Blue Raiders held the Spartans to 35 percent shooting and 18 field goals - the fewest allowed by Middle Tennessee this season. The Blue Raiders had a decisive edge on the boards, 45-26, with four players collecting five or more caroms. And then there was the offense, which was as crisp as it has been in weeks. Middle

Tennessee shot 50 percent for the game, including 54 percent (14-of-26) in the decisive second half when the Blue Raiders outscored Norfolk State 44-32 to break the game open. Yates moved into 23rd on the all-time scoring list, passing Ken Riley (1,043) and Lee Nosse (1,056) with 1,061 career points entering Monday's game. Kanaskie's 11 points moved him within seven points of becoming the 29th player in school history to reach 1,000 points for his career. When he achieves that mark, Kanaskie and Yates will become the first teammates playing while in the 1,000-point club since Robert "Cateye" Taylor and Warren Kidd in 1993. Middle Tennessee never trailed although the game was still on at the half with the Blue Raiders leading 33-24. Then the second half started. That's when Middle Tennessee flexed its muscle and blew the game open. The Blue Raiders stormed out of the locker room and seized control in the first five minutes of the second half when they outscored Norfolk State 14-4 to stake claim to a 47-28 lead with 16:19 remaining. From there the Spartans never got closer than 13.

Printed on December 13, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/36133