Blue Raiders take championship with 3-1 win over ULM

Team earns automatic berth to NCAA tournament

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TROY, Ala. - The Blue Raider pitching staff helped hand the squad an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament with a 3-1 win over ULM on Sunday in championship game of the Sun Belt tournament. Junior Kenneth Roberts worked six innings allowing one run on four hits with five strikeouts in his second appearance of the tournament as he was Most Outstanding Player. Junior Coty Woods picked up his 14th save of the season after working three innings allowing two hits with six strikeouts. "We had decided that the maximum we would go with Coty was four but we only wanted to go three. We were hoping to get four or five innings out of Kenny but it was a pitch count game from the beginning," head coach Steve Peterson said. "We had some big defensive plays that I don't know if we win the game if we don't make those plays. "Everyone expects that it is going to be a slugfest but today shows you why baseball is the best game around because you don't what to expect day to day." The Blue Raider offense was quieter than it had been throughout the tournament as it scored all of its runs in the third inning. Seniors Nathan Hines, Zach Dean and Taylor Dennis led the offense as each had two hits on the day. Hines, who received All-Tournament honors, drove in a run and scored a run while Dean had one RBI. It is the second Sun Belt tournament title for the Blue Raiders since joining the league in 2001 and it will be the 14th NCAA appearance in school history. "I coached the game to get

situations like this where we could win the championship. We are always trying to win championships and it is a great feeling that you never get tired of. I am very proud for my players and the university. We have won a lot of championships and to win a league and tournament championship shows dominance by a team that doesn't happen very often," Peterson said. Middle Tennessee broke the record for wins in a season after picking up its 43rd win and improving to 43-16 on the season. The Blue Raider bats came alive in the third inning as it started the inning with a single by Hines to right field allowing Burnett to score. Then Brentz single to left allowing Bishop to score and then Dean singled allowing another run to score. Middle Tennessee took a 3-0 lead after stringing together the three hits. ULM scored one run in the sixth after a single by Prevost scored Smith from third. ULM had three hits in the inning but the Blue Raiders got out of the inning after Hudson threw out Collins trying to turn his hit into a double. With the tournament win the Blue Raiders received the automatic bid to the NCAA tournament. Middle Tennessee will watch the NCAA Selection show at Coach's Grill on Monday, May 25 to find out where it will be playing next weekend. The selection show will begin at 11:30 a.m. on ESPN and the team will meet at Coach's Grill at 11 a.m. The public is invited to attend and see where the Blue Raiders will be playing. **All-Tournament Team Nathan Hines (Middle Tennessee, Sr., CF) Bryce Brentz (Middle Tennessee, So., LF) Rawley Bishop (Middle Tennessee, Sr., 3B)** Corey Brown (ULM, Jr., P) Ben Soignier (ULM, Sr., SS) Perry Smith (ULM, Jr., RF) Matt Hightower (WKU, Sr., P/LF) Chad Cregar (WKU, Sr., RF) Scott Hawkins (UL-Lafayette, Sr., 1B) Justin Robichaux (UL-Lafayette, Jr., P) Mike Albaladejo (FAU, Fr., C) Charley Williams (Troy, Sr., CF) Bart Carter (WKU, Jr., P) **Most Outstanding Player Kenneth Roberts (Middle Tennessee, Jr., P)**

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