

Blue Raiders win battle over Hilltoppers 3-1

Face FIU in championship match Saturday

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky. -

Senior Ashley Mead and sophomore Lindsey Cheatham block an attack by Western Kentucky's Tiffany Elmore to defeat the Hilltoppers 3-1 (25-21, 23-25, 25-14, 26-24) to advance to the championship match of the Sun Belt Championships. Mead knocked down a team high 15 kills in the match for a .345 hitting percentage while junior Izabela Kozon and sophomore Stacy Oladinni recorded 10 and 12 kills of their own. "I think once Stacy got on track especially having Leslie in back row we were spreading ball around which offset their defense I love that we came back in game four after being down and how ironic it ended on a stuff block," head coach Matt Peck said. "Ashley Mead had a great match and Iza had some serves for us that were tremendous even though we didn't have a lot of service aces overall we served very well."



The Blue Raiders had 54 kills in the match for a .267 hitting percentage while Western Kentucky had 46 kills with a .190 attack percentage. Senior Janay Yancey had five block assists in the match as each team had nine total blocks. Elmore and Jordyn Skinner each recorded double-digit kills for the Hilltoppers with Elmore adding five block assists. The Blue Raiders took an early four-point lead, 9-5, to begin the match. Middle Tennessee extended its lead to five, 13-9, after a block by Oladinni and Yancey at the halfway point. The Hilltoppers kept the pace going on a 5-2 run cutting the Middle Tennessee lead to one, 15-14. The Blue Raiders then went on a 7-4 run of its own to take a late 22-19 lead. Middle Tennessee called a timeout early in the second set after Western Kentucky took a 5-2 lead. The Hilltoppers then had four straight service aces to extend its lead to six, 8-2 as the Blue Raiders used their final timeout. Middle Tennessee battled back using a 9-4 run to tie

the set at 12. The two teams continued to trade points with neither taking more than a one-point advantage until the Hilltoppers took a late 23-21 lead. At the set break, the Blue Raiders had 27 total kills for a .208 attack percentage while Western Kentucky had 23 kills for a .206 hitting percentage. Mead led the pack with seven kills while Kozon added five. Middle Tennessee had just three team blocks to Western Kentucky's six and a combined 10 service errors and reception errors. The Hilltoppers had no reception errors and eight service errors as the two teams were very close statistically. The Blue Raiders began the third set slow but then pulled everything together taking a 15-5 lead. Middle Tennessee then went on another run, 6-2, extending its lead, 21-7. The Hilltoppers did not give up going on a 7-2 run to close the gap, 23-14. The Blue Raiders held on for the win and a 2-1 lead in the match. Western Kentucky took a three-point lead, 14-11, halfway through the fourth set. Middle Tennessee battled but the Hilltoppers kept a late three-point lead, 20-17. The Blue Raiders fought back tying the set at 22 and won two of the next three points for a one-point lead, 24-23. The Blue Raiders will play Florida International in the Sun Belt Championships championship game on Saturday, Nov. 21 at 3 p.m. "The team matured during this match as it has throughout whole season. We are very excited to get another chance at FIU they are an outstanding team and will be a big challenge for us. We didn't come just to make it to the finals we came to win it and are very excited for tomorrow's match. We had a great crowd from Murfreesboro here tonight and the band and cheerleaders rocked," Peck said.

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