

Blue Raiders clinch share of East Division

Down Owls 66-57 in regular season finale

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BOCA RATON, Fla. - The Blue Raiders, led by seniors Calvin O'Neil and Desmond Yates, clinched a share of the Sun Belt East Division title with a 66-57 win over Florida Atlantic on Saturday night. O'Neil guided the team throughout the night by scoring 13 points and going 7-for-8 at the charity stripe. Yates, who missed most of the first half due to foul trouble, led the team with 14 points after going on a big run in the second half. It is the first time the Blue Raiders have won a share of the Sun Belt title and the first time a Blue Raider team has won at least a share of any league title since 1988-89. Middle Tennessee is now 19-12 on the season which is the first 19-win season since 2004-05, head coach Kermit Davis' third season. In Sun Belt action, the Blue Raiders ended the season with a 13-5 mark, their best record since joining the league in 2000-01. "I am tickled to death for our players to be regular season



Sun Belt Champions. To go win seven games on the road in league play is not easy. It's tough to go on a road swing and have to sweep to win your league. The assistant coaches did a fantastic job and I am proud of our players and excited for our fans. We still have a lot of work to do but it will be fun celebrating this week," Davis said. The Blue Raiders shot 50 percent from the field in the second half and 43.1 percent for the game. Junior Rod Emanuel led the bench with 11 points after going 3-4 from behind the arc. The Blue Raider bench outscored FAU's reserves, 18-4. The Blue Raiders pulled down 36 rebounds led by junior Trevor Ottley's eight, while senior Montarrío Haddock and freshman J.T. Sulton added seven caroms each. Ottley also blocked a career high six shots, with

many coming at key points in the game. The Blue Raiders began play with a 6-2 run and never looked back. FAU's Hugley hit a layup cutting the lead to one, 6-5, with 15:42 but that was as close as the Owls would come to the lead. Two three-pointers by Haddock made it a six point lead and started a huge run for the Blue Raiders. The Blue Raiders pulled ahead by 15 points, 30-15, with four minutes to play after a 24-9 run. FAU ended the half on a 7-0 run to cut the Middle Tennessee lead to 10, 32-22. Middle Tennessee began the second half on a 14-9 run, led by Yates who scored eight, for a 46-31 lead at the first media timeout. The Owls tried to come back but the Blue Raiders maintained a 15-point lead, 60-45, after a jumper by Washington with less than three minutes remaining. Middle Tennessee will find out its seed and when it will play the Sun Belt Conference Championships on Sunday, Feb. 28 when it is officially released by the league office. Once the seeds and brackets have been announced by the Sun Belt all tournament information will be posted on goblueraiders.com.

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