

March 8, 2010

## Blue Raiders fall to Denver in quarterfinals

**O'Neil leads all scorers with 14 points**

*MT Athletic Communications*

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**HOT SPRINGS, Ark.** - Two seven minute scoring droughts spelled doom for the Blue Raiders as they fell 73-58 to the Denver Pioneers in the quarterfinals of the Sun Belt Championships on Sunday night.

Middle Tennessee had two scoring droughts totaling almost seven minutes each as senior [Calvin O'Neil](#) was the only player in double figures with his 14 points. O'Neil made just three field goals in the game but was steady at the free throw line making 8 of his 10 opportunities.

Denver had a long scoring drought of its own totaling almost seven minutes but made 12 free throws over the stretch to keep a sizeable lead.

The Blue Raiders shot 43.5 percent from the field as seniors [Desmond Yates](#) and [Montarrio Haddock](#) each had nine points in the game while junior [Trevor Ottley](#) added eight of his own.

Yates also led Middle Tennessee with four rebounds and two blocks. The Blue Raiders had 23 rebounds in the game only five of which were on offense.

"I'm very proud of our team, to share the conference championship but I just hate that we would go about 12 minutes without scoring like we did. It is not indicative of our team," head coach Kermit Davis said. "We got down nine, panicked and started guarding them the exact wrong way. Panicked offensively and all of a sudden a four or five possession game went to 18 or 19."

Denver began the second half with an 13-2 run to take a 38-27 lead with 14:58 on the clock. Nate Rohnert had a three-point play to make it 43-32 with 11:12 left as the Blue Raiders had another long scoring drought. Middle Tennessee went almost seven minutes in the second half without scoring as a three-pointer by Washington broke the drought with 7:04 on the game clock to make it 53-35.

Ottley accounted for Middle Tennessee's first six points and a three-point play by O'Neil gave the Blue Raiders a 6-3 lead with 14:47 on the clock. Then the Blue Raiders got very cold not making a field goal for 6:57 but made their free throws. Yates put the team back on track putting them up 20-15 with 5:50 to play.

Denver performed very well at the charity stripe tying the game at 20 after made free throws and took a 25-24 lead after two by Rohnert with 1:08 to play. A free throw by O'Neil with nine tenths of a second tied the game at 25 at the half.

Middle Tennessee made eight field goals in the first half shooting 42.1 percent while holding the Pioneers to 33.3 percent shooting from the field. O'Neil led all scorers with nine points after going 2-3 from the field and making 5-6 free throws. Ottley added eight of his own after going 3-3 from the field and 2-3 at the charity stripe.

The Blue Raiders end the 2009-10 season 19-13 and co-champions of the Sun Belt East Division. Middle Tennessee won a school record 13 games in Sun Belt Conference action on its way to claiming a share of the league title.

"I am excited about our team and the year we had," Davis said.



Senior Calvin O'Neil was the only Blue Raider in double figures with his 14 points. (Bradley Lambert)

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