# Blue Raiders drop heartbreaker at Auburn

## Washington scores 25 in two-point loss to Tigers

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**AUBURN, Ala. -** Middle Tennessee battled Auburn up until the final minutes after letting a first half lead slip away in a 68-66 loss on Sunday afternoon to wrap-up play at the Global Sports Hoops Showcase.

The Blue Raiders had three opportunities in the final 24 seconds to tie the game and send it to overtime but just could not get a shot to fall.

Senior James Washington led the team with 25 points after a 7 for 11 performance from the field and 7 for 8 at the free throw line. Washington also received all-tournament honors for his play throughout the three games of the tournament.

Sophomore JT Sulton also performed well by posting 17 points of his own after going 7 for 12 and 3 for 4 from behind the arc. As a team, the Blue Raiders shot 42 percent while the Tigers posted a 45.3 percent clip from the field. The Blue Raiders were also outrebounded in the first half and never caught up as Auburn had 40 total rebounds compared to 27 by Middle Tennessee. Senior Trevor Ottley had a team high four rebounds in the game.

"I've got to give Auburn a lot of credit, I thought Tony (Barbee)'s team played with a lot of toughness. They were on a losing streak, and hadn't played very well. It was thirty to fourteen, they were more physical than us for an eight minute period and just killed us on the boards and scored in the paint," head coach Kermit Davis said. "We've got to be more physical around the goal with our fours and fives, and that was the difference in the game. Just like the Campbell loss, it was points in the paint. We missed three front end one and one shots, Jason Jones missed a couple of buckets, JT (Sulton)

didn't follow his shots. I'll give our team a lot of credit, we came back but we missed a lot of easy opportunities in the paint and we missed two free dunks. I thought James Washington played his heart out, he made that extra pass there at the end and we got it to one of our best shooters, James Gallman. You can't get a better look than that, he just didn't make the shot. This was a very tough loss for us but I give Auburn a lot of credit."

Middle Tennessee jumped out to an early eight-point, 10-2, lead behind Sulton, who had the first eight points for Middle Tennessee including the first made treys in his career with two.

It continued to rain threes for the Blue Raiders as the team hit four more jumping out to a 15-point lead, 24-9. Auburn went on a 12-6 run to cut the Middle Tennessee lead to ten, 32-22, with six minutes remaining in the half.

The Tigers extended that run to 23-10 to make it a three-point game, 34-31, with less than two minutes on the clock. Middle Tennessee played solid defense and took its three-point lead into the half.

Sulton led all scorers at the break with 13 after going 5 for 6 from the field. Middle Tennessee shot 46.2 percent from the field while holding Auburn to 39.3 percent shooting. The Tigers did have more rebounds however with 25 compared to 10 for Middle Tennessee.

Auburn tied the game at 35 after two free throws by Malone and took its first lead after a dunk by Forbes to make it 37-35 with 17:18 left to play.

The Tigers kept the momentum and grabbed a 50-41 advantage with under 12 minutes remaining on the clock. A three-point play by Washington put Middle Tennessee back within four points, 59-55, with right at six minutes to play. Then he hit a trey making it a one-point game, 59-58.

The two teams traded points with Auburn keeping a three-point lead, 63-60, with 1:56 remaining on the clock.

The Blue Raiders will return home to Murphy Center for its next action against Evansville on Wednesday, Nov. 24 at 7 p.m.

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