

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Missouri State Secures Impressive Win in Paradise Jam

Missouri State Bears emerge as champions with a decisive 87-68 win over Abilene Christian.

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Missouri State Bears team at UVI's Sports & Fitness Center in St. Thomas on Monday night. By. PARADISE JAM

The Missouri State Bears triumphed in the 2023 Paradise Jam championship, securing an 87-68 win against Abilene Christian on Monday night at the University of the Virgin Islands in St. Thomas.

Alston Mason led the team with an impressive 21 points, contributing significantly to the Bears' victory.

The game began with Abilene Christian setting a fast pace, quickly gaining a 10-point lead (19-9) just five minutes into the game. This lead persisted until around the 9:49 mark, with the Wildcats holding a 30-20 advantage. However, Missouri State started to close the gap, trailing by only one point (33-32) with 6:48 left in the first half. The Bears then managed to equalize the game on a free throw and subsequently took the lead with a 3-pointer by Chance Moore. Heading into halftime, Missouri State had built an eight-point lead (45-37), outscoring Abilene Christian 17-4 in the final 7:45 of the first half.

The second half saw Abilene Christian attempting a comeback, narrowing the lead to just one point (55-54) with 13:53 left in the game. However, Missouri State maintained their composure, outscoring ACU 12-6 in the subsequent minutes, including a perfect 3-of-3 from the floor and 4-for-4 at the free-throw line, extending their lead to 67-58. The Bears continued to dominate, pushing their lead into double digits and securing their victory.

Missouri State's Matthew Lee and Donovan Clay were named to the all-tournament team, alongside Abilene Christian's Ali Abdou Dibba and Hunter Jack Madden, Kent State's Chris Payton Jr., and San Jose State's Myron Amey. This victory marks Missouri State as the second consecutive Missouri Valley Conference team to win the Paradise Jam title, following Drake's 2022 championship.