

Middle Tennessee vs. South Alabama
May 28, 2005 – Miami, Fla.
Sun Belt Tournament Championship Game

RAIDERS SET FOR ANOTHER TITLE GAME APPEARANCE: Middle Tennessee is making its fourth SBC Tournament championship game appearance and third straight since joining the league five years ago. The Blue Raiders are 1-2 in the three previous outings, including an 11-2 loss to South Alabama in 2001 in Lafayette, La. Middle Tennessee has split the last two championship games with Western Kentucky, winning 8-5 in 2003 in Lafayette and dropping a 14-4 decision to WKU in 2004 in Mobile, Ala. South Alabama has won 11 of the 17 meetings with Middle Tennessee since the Blue Raiders joined the Sun Belt, including three of the five regular season series. The Blue Raiders won season series in 2001 and 2004, the two years Middle Tennessee won regular season league titles.

WALTERS WILL FACE RAIDERS AGAIN: South Alabama sophomore P.J. Walters will face Middle Tennessee on the mound for the second time this season. Walters allowed nine hits but just one run in a 3-1 USA victory on Sunday in Murfreesboro this season, giving the Jaguars a 2-1 series win in three very tightly-contested games. The USA righthander walked one, struck out nine, and seemed to get every big out when he needed it. Walters is 2-0 in his career against the Blue Raiders with a pair of complete games, also winning on Saturday in 2004 in Mobile after giving up four runs on eight hits with seven strikeouts in a 9-4 USA triumph.

SWING GETS THE CALL FOR MIDDLE TENNESSEE: Senior Chase Swing will draw the starting nod in Saturday's Sun Belt Tournament championship game, his sixth start of the season and 16th appearance. The righthander worked 2.2 scoreless innings of relief on Saturday against the Jaguars in Murfreesboro earlier this season and has made one relief appearance in each of the last three seasons against South Alabama, tossing 7.0 innings and giving up just one run. Swing picked up a save versus USA in 2003 in Murfreesboro, tossing three shutout innings in a 7-3 triumph on Friday.

MCNAMEE THE CATALYST DOWN THE STRETCH, IN THE TOURNAMENT: Senior Eric McNamee has been a machine in the Sun Belt Championships, collecting eight hits in 12 at-bats (.667) with eight runs scored, walking twice and also being hit. He reached in eight straight plate appearances to start the tournament before making outs in the final two at-bats Thursday night against Western Kentucky, and has been retired only four times in 15 plate appearances in three contests in the tourney. The Nashville, Tenn., native enters Saturday's championship game on a career-best 14-game hitting streak, posting a .500 batting average (28-for-56) with 12 walks and 21 runs scored during the stretch.

HINES CONTINUES CONSISTENT PLAY: Nathan Hines has quietly put together one of the most productive seasons by a freshman in Blue Raider history, and has continued with his consistent play during the Sun Belt Championships. The Murfreesboro, Tenn., native has started the past 44 games in centerfield, taking over when Todd Martin was hurt in early March. Hines is second on the squad with 53 RBIs and needs to drive in three more runs to reach the single-season Top 10, with no other freshman appearing on the list. Only one underclassmen is currently in the Top 10 (Justin Sims drove in 66 as a sophomore in 2001). Hines is 6-for-13 (.462) with two runs scored and three RBIs in the SBC Championships, including a 4-for-5 performance against Western Kentucky on Thursday. He has hit safely in 30 of the last 36 contests and owns the third highest on-base percentage (.414) for regulars on the club.