

# Lady Raiders Host FIU in Key Sun Belt Match-up

February 21, 2003 · MT Media Relations

**MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -** Middle Tennessee women's basketball will have a lot on their minds when the Lady Raiders host Florida International at 2 p.m. on Saturday in the Murphy Center.

Not only will the Lady Raiders be honoring seniors Paula Penttila and Mia Parviainen, the team will also be recognizing Head Coach Stephany Smith's 100<sup>th</sup> win she picked up earlier in the season. But more importantly, Middle Tennessee is trying to clinch the second seed in the Sun Belt Conference East race, if they can get a victory over rival Florida International.

"We have a lot of things going on tomorrow, but I believe this team is focused and ready to play," Smith said. "The team knows the game against FIU is huge, but I believe we are ready to play and they aren't ready to pack up camp. They want to be playing post-season basketball."



Middle Tennessee has been on quite a tear as of late. The Lady Raiders are 4-1 in their last five games, with their only loss coming against FIU on February 1 in a 65-63 nail-biter.

The team has benefited from the return of freshman sensation Tia Stovall, who sat out 10 games due to a broken foot. Since her return the team is 4-0 and has won three straight Sun Belt Conference road games.

"It was a big boost to have Tia back," Smith said. "Her presence on the court was something we missed, and now with her return, we have a different look as a basketball team."

If Middle Tennessee can pick up a win against FIU, the Lady Raiders will receive a bye in the Sun Belt Conference Tournament. If the Lady Raiders loose, Middle Tennessee could still get the second seed, but Middle Tennessee would have to defeat Western Kentucky on March 1 and Florida International would have to either loose at Arkansas State or Arkansas-Little Rock.

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*Printed on July 23, 2014*

*Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/1743>*