

March 21, 2009

## Blue Raiders set for tournament opener against Spartans

Middle Tennessee making 12th NCAA appearance in school history live on ESPN2 Sunday

*Athletic Communications*

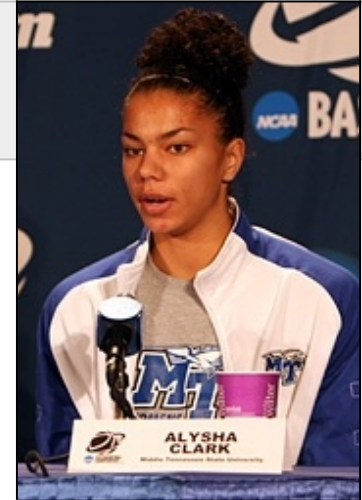
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**EAST LANSING, Mich.** - The No. 25-ranked Middle Tennessee women's basketball team will open its 12th NCAA Tournament as a No. 8 seed at No. 9 seed Michigan State in the Berkeley Region at 11 a.m. Central Sunday inside the Jack Breslin Student Events Center in East Lansing, Mich.

- **Photos:** [NCAA Tournament Gallery](#)

The Blue Raiders automatically qualified for the 64-team event after capturing the Sun Belt Championship March 10 with a 74-54 victory against UALR. The meeting between MT and MSU will be the first in the series. ESPN2 will broadcast the game nationally with the Murfreesboro and Mid-State regions protected against the network's whip-around coverage on a standard definition television. Those watching the contest on high-definition will receive the whip-around coverage, showcasing three other tournament games from across the country.



The Sun Belt Player of the Year answers questions during Saturday's press conference. (Bradley Lambert) 

Michigan State enters the field with a 20-10 mark and receives an at-large bid from the Big Ten Conference. Second-year mentor Suzy Merchant coaches the Spartans.

Middle Tennessee is 5-11 all-time in its 11 previous appearances, including a 1-2 mark under head coach Rick Insell.

The game can be heard on the radio on 89.5 FM WMOT; 100.5 FM, 101.9 FM and 1450 AM WGNS; and 106.7 FM WNFN with Dick Palmer on the call.

Middle Tennessee Press Conference Quotes Saturday, March 21, 2009

### Head Coach Rick Insell

#### *Opening Statement...*

We are excited about being here, and we are ready to get started.

#### *On how [Alysha Clark](#) fulfills her role on the team...*

Our offense is what we call our system, and Alysha is that system in a position that Amber Holt was in last year and Chrissy Givens before that. She does a good job by catching the basketball well and scoring. She also does a good job of getting the ball back out to her teammates. We are very proud to have Alysha, but we are more than just [Alysha Clark](#) and I think she will tell you that also.

#### *On their potential to break up the rematch between Joanne P. McCallie and Michigan State...*

We have not even talked about that to be honest with you. We don't think about all that because our focus is taking care of Middle Tennessee State University and we will let everyone else take care of themselves as well. We want to come in and play our game, and be worried about what we are going to do and we know what we have to do both defensively and offensively, and we are not going to change. Michigan State is great team, has a lot of size, is well coached, and fundamentally sound. We have looked at a lot of film on them, and I am sure they have looked at a lot of film as us so it's going to be a great game.

#### *On the status of [Emily Queen](#) and [Brandi Brown](#)...*

Emily is about 95 percent right now. She was probably 80 to 85 percent in the conference tournament and after she came back from spring break she has been looking good. She has had some of her best practices recently, and before she got hurt she had started 22 or 23 games for us. [Brandi Brown](#) is a unique person because she is a tough match up. She can play in the post, even though she doesn't like to, but she can play the post as well as anyone. She is 6-3 but she can also go out and shoot from about 26 or 27 feet and is pretty accurate. She is very intelligent as well, with an unreal basketball

IQ. She is also a great passer and goes along with the uniqueness of our team that includes Chelsia (Lymon), Emily (Queen), Alysha (Clark), [Anne Marie Lanning](#), the other young ladies we have on this team. Everyone plays a role on this team, and everyone knows what their role is.

**Junior forward [Alysha Clark](#)**

*On the challenges Michigan State poses...*

We've definitely noticed their size. Their guards are bigger than our guards, and then of course in the post. I don't think it will be a problem for us, though, because all year we've been playing against opponents that are bigger than us at that position, so we don't really approach it any differently than we have all season.

*On Michigan State's junior center Allyssa DeHaan...*

She definitely has size. The post player from Arizona who is 6-7 and Kelley Cain from Tennessee who is 6-6 and of course the Paris twins down in Oklahoma, they all have their own strengths and their own weaknesses. Playing against the different types of taller girls has helped me throughout the season, and our team especially, to know what type of big girl is down in the post.

*On positional match-ups against Michigan State...*

I definitely think speed is one of my strengths and that's what I have to use against taller players, because obviously I can't shoot over them. As Coach was talking about Brandi [Brown], she is one of the best shooters in the country and I would put money on her everyday because that's how much confidence I have in her and we know what she can do. He was saying how our team is so unique, because we may not have the tallest players, but against bigger teams if you go back and look at stats, we get off as many shots as we do when we are playing against teams our size. That obviously says something and I think that is credit to our IQ as a team. We have to be smarter than other teams because we are not as big or fast, but I think an IQ can hurt more than athleticism.

**Junior guard [Jackie Pickel](#)**

*On MTSU's strengths compared to Michigan State's strengths...*

I think we can use their big size to our advantage if we play well on defense. We have to be smart especially as guards because they are going to post us up. We're known for our press defense and running the ball and we're not going to change anything. We are going to play our game and I think maybe that can be our advantage.

*On the team's press and fast break...*

One of the things Coach Insell always likes to say to us is that we need to be the team that goes to them, we don't need to let them come to us. We have to put pressure on them and make the tempo go for our advantage. Everybody is more athletic than us and everybody is taller than us, so if we just stand back and let them play their game, that is going to be more to their advantage and our disadvantage. We have to use our press and really just pressure them and see what happens from there.

*On the importance of junior guard [Chelsia Lymon](#)...*

She is very important. On defense, she is usually at the top of the press and she gets us going with her pressure. And then on offense, there might be some that can match up with her in the country, but I don't think there is any better point guard in the country. For our team, she is probably the most important. She is the head of the snake on offense and defense.

*On the team's ability to shoot the 3-pointer...*

I think first of all, our confidence in the three comes from practices all year long. If we have an inch of an opening, we better put the ball up or we're going to get yelled at. I think that puts confidence in every one of our players. Everybody on our team can shoot the three at any time and we all have the green light. I think that works well to our advantage. Against a team like Michigan State who can defend the three well, it's hard to match up against a team like us because you have Alysha [Clark] on the inside and if you double up on her, we're a very good passing team, so if she passes it out to us we're very good at making the extra pass and we just have to use that to our advantage and put the ball up.