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Blue Raiders announce 2009 schedule MT will face nine opponents from 2008 NCAA Tournament

MT Athletic Communications



The Blue Raiders will begin the 2009 season by playing their first seven matches at home which includes two tournaments. (Bradley Lambert)

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's volleyball program will play host to two tournaments and 10 matches during the 2009 season as announced by head coach Matt Peck on Wednesday.

The Blue Raiders will begin the 2009 season by playing their first seven matches at home which includes two tournaments. The Middle Tennessee Invitational, Aug. 28-29, and includes teams from Kansas, Murray State and Xavier.

The following weekend, Sept. 4-5, Middle Tennessee will play host to the Blue Raider Bash where it will face Georgia Tech, Northern Illinois and Northern Iowa. Then on Sunday, Sept. 5 it will play a single match with Ohio.

Middle Tennessee will then hit the road for two tournaments the first being the Florida International Tournament in Miami and then to San Antonio, Texas, for the UT-San Antonio Classic. The Blue Raiders will face teams from Miami (Fla.), Florida State, Rice and Washington in the two tournaments.

Middle Tennessee will face nine opponents who participated in the 2008 NCAA Tournament: Washington, Saint Louis, UAB, Ohio, Rice, FIU, Western Kentucky, Northern Iowa and Albany. Five of those teams had an RPI of below 25 to end the 2008 season.

"We are returning five starters plus our libero and have a 2007 starter coming back after an injury, combined with the tremendous recruiting class we had for 2009. We really wanted to play a very tough schedule in 2009, and I think we got exactly that," Peck said.

Middle Tennessee will face eight teams who had an RPI below 75 and will play schools from 10 different conferences.

The Blue Raiders will have one more non-conference match with UAB before opening Sun Belt action at home with Western Kentucky on Sept. 25.

"The Sun Belt is the most improved conference in the country from 2007 to 2008, and having two at-large teams get into the NCAA Tournament for the first time attests to that," Peck said. "I think the conference will be even better overall in 2009. Every single one of our non-conference opponents will challenge our team, and that's what this team needs."

Middle Tennessee will play host to eight other conference matches rotating between two weekends at home and two weekends on the road. After traveling to Florida for matches with FAU and FIU, the Blue Raiders will return home to play Arkansas State, UALR, North Texas and Denver from Oct. 9 through Oct. 18.

Then on Tuesday, Oct. 20 the Blue Raiders will travel to Bowling Green, Ky., to play the Hilltoppers again. The match with Western Kentucky will begin a four match road swing which includes the three Louisiana schools.

Middle Tennessee will round out its home schedule with South Alabama, Troy, FAU and FIU from Oct. 30 to Nov. 7.

The Blue Raiders will travel to Alabama for matches with USA and Troy to round out the SBC regular season.

The Sun Belt Championships will begin the next week, Nov. 19-21, as hosted by Western Kentucky.

Middle Tennessee will play one match after the SBC Tournament as it normally does as a tune-up for the NCAA Tournament. The Blue Raiders will travel to St. Louis, Mo., to face Saint Louis on Saturday, Nov. 28.

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