

August 25, 2009

Blue Raiders picked second in Sun Belt East

Clark, Kozon named to SBC Preseason team

MT Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee has been picked to finish second in the Sun Belt Eastern Division with two players receiving preseason honors, as announced by the league office on Tuesday morning.

The Blue Raiders, who received votes in the AVCA preseason poll, received 67 total points as voted on by the Sun Belt's head coaches. Florida International was picked to finish first after collecting 72 total points and Western Kentucky was picked third with 56 points. Rounding out the Eastern Division are South Alabama (33), Florida Atlantic (23) and Troy (22).

"I'm not surprised the way the poll turned out. I think this year the East will be very strong like it has been the past few years I have been here," head coach Matt Peck said. "FIU returns everyone in addition to getting a player back who didn't play last year. We have everyone back except for Ashley Asberry but we do get [Sasha McGlothlin](#) back from an injury. I think this season will be interesting and this is good motivation for our team to see they weren't picked to finish first in the conference."

Middle Tennessee and FIU were the only schools to have two players named to the preseason team. Senior [Leslie Clark](#) and junior [Izabela Kozon](#) were named to the team after receiving a number of awards after the 2008 season.

It is the second preseason honor for Clark, who had her third 1,000 assist season and set the career assists record in 2008.

Kozon receives her first preseason honor after being named Second Team All-Conference as a sophomore.

"I think it is a great acknowledgement for our program. They have been two of our best and most consistent players the last couple of years. I think we are going to have some big years from a number of players. I think [Ashley Waugh](#) is the best libero in the conference but she didn't get recognized for that and we are going to have some outstanding middles too," Peck said. "For Iza and Leslie it is a big accomplishment and I think everyone knows what an important part they are to our program."

Florida International's Yarimar Rosa, the 2008 Player of the Year, was named as the Preseason Player of the Year for the third year in a row. Rosa is joined on the preseason team by teammate Olga Vergun.

In the Western Division, seven points separated first and second place. New Orleans came out on top with 87 total points with Denver close behind 80 points. UALR came in third with 57 total points and Arkansas State was selected fourth with 51 total points.

Rounding out the Western Division were Louisiana-Lafayette (38) North Texas (36), and ULM (15).

In addition to receiving Sun Belt preseason honors and being picked to finish second in the East, the Blue Raiders received votes in the American Volleyball Coaches Association preseason poll.

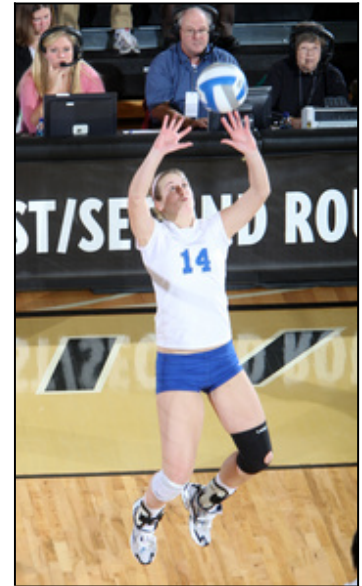
Middle Tennessee is the only Sun Belt team and the only team in the first tournament it will play mentioned in the poll.

The Blue Raiders will open the 2009 season by playing host to the Middle Tennessee Invitational on Friday, August 28 through Saturday, August 29. Middle Tennessee will face Kansas to open action at 7 p.m., on Friday, August 28 at Alumni Memorial Gym.

SUN BELT PRESEASON VOLLEYBALL POLL EAST 1. FIU - 72 points 2. Middle Tennessee - 67 points 3. WKU - 56 points 4. South Alabama - 33 points 5. Florida Atlantic - 23 points 6. Troy - 22 points

WEST 1. New Orleans - 87 points 2. Denver - 80 points 3. UALR - 57 points 4. Arkansas State - 51 points 5. Louisiana - 38 points 6. North Texas - 36 points 7. ULM - 15 points

PRESEASON ALL-SUN BELT CONFERENCE VOLLEYBALL TEAM Anita Bucur - UALR Cayla Fielder - Arkansas State Yarimar Rosa - FIU Olga Vergun - FIU [Leslie Clark](#) - Middle Tennessee [Izabela Kozon](#) - Middle Tennessee Lindsey Loyd - New Orleans Aquila Orr - WKU



Senior Leslie Clark, along with teammate junior Izabela Kozon, has been named to the Sun Belt Preseason team. ()

Preseason Defensive Player of the Year: Kacie Wikierak - Denver **Preseason Player of the Year:** Yarimar Rosa - FIU

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