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No. 24 Blue Raiders to open exhibition slate Monday

Middle Tennessee welcomes Carson-Newman to the Murphy Center

Athletic Communications

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The 24th-ranked Middle Tennessee women's basketball team will begin its 2009-10 season with a 7 p.m. Monday exhibition game against Carson-Newman inside the Murphy Center.

The Blue Raiders earned the No. 24 ranking by the Associated Press in its preseason poll released Friday. It marked the first time in school history MT has been listed in the preseason rankings.

Middle Tennessee is coming off a 28-6 campaign in which it advanced to the NCAA Tournament for the 12th time in school history after winning the Sun Belt Tournament. Head coach Rick Insell's squad returns all five starters and 10 letterwinners, along with five newcomers, to the court this winter.

All-American redshirt senior [Alysha Clark](#), the nation's leading scorer from a year ago at 27.5 ppg, has been tabbed the Preseason Player of the Year in the Sun Belt and as a member of the All-Sun Belt First Team. Fellow senior [Brandi Brown](#), the only other Blue Raider to average double-figure scoring last year with 11.9 ppg, joined her on the first team.

Senior point guard [Chelsia Lymon](#) was also garnered preseason all-league honors, as she was picked as an All-Sun Belt Second Team choice.

Senior [Jackie Pickel](#) also returns in the backcourt after knocking down 78 of her 105 field goals from 3-point territory, while classmate [Dana Garrett](#) looks to make more of an impact in her final season.

Juniors [Anne Marie Lanning](#) and [Emily Queen](#) also are back after starting a combined 40 games a year ago. Queen was second on the team in rebounding with 5.7 per game.

The newcomers feature all Tennessee products: [Jamila Ajanaku](#) (Memphis), [Icelyn Elie](#) (Lebanon), [Kortni Jones](#) (Oak Ridge), [Lauren March](#) (Lewisburg) and [Dymon Raynor](#) (La Vergne).

Carson-Newman is coming off a 19-11 season in which the Lady Eagles advanced to the first round of the NCAA Division II Tournament. Head coach Dean Walsh's squad welcomes back three starters and nine letterwinners, including leading scorer Ashley Kyle, who scored 14.7 ppg as a junior.

The two teams have never met on the court despite Middle Tennessee entering its 35th season overall.



Senior Jackie Pickel is one of six seniors on the 2009-10 Middle Tennessee women's basketball team. (Bradley Lambert)

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