Blue Raiders ready for NCAA Tournament to begin

Seniors Clark, Mead, Waugh and Yancey will guide team

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Blue Raiders are set for their fourth consecutive NCAA tournament appearance when they face Colorado State on Thursday, Dec. 3. Middle Tennessee has not lost a first round match under head coach Matt Peck and will look to continue that precedence on Thursday. Senior First Team All-Sun Belt setter Leslie Clark and junior First Team All-Sun Belt outside hitter Izabela Kozon will help guide the Blue Raiders as they have all season. Clark 1,296 assists this season, marking her fourth consecutive 1,000 assist season, while Kozon is second on the team in kills with 403. Senior Second Team All-Sun Belt outside hitter Ashley Mead and sophomore Second Team All-Sun Belt opposite Stacy Oladinni will also guide the Blue Raider offense. Mead leads the team with 403 kills and has posted double-digit kills in her last eight matches. Oladinni is currently ninth in the country in hitting percentage with a .404 and has posted a .385 attack percentage or higher in the Blue Raiders' last three matches. Senior middle blocker Janay Yancey has led the net defense throughout the season recording 135 total blocks. Yancey received all-tournament honors after performing well at the Sun Belt Championships which included 12 total blocks in the title game against Florida International. Junior Alyssa Wistrick has added assistance at the block with 71 total of her own. Senior libero Ashley Waugh will guide the backcourt defense as she has done all season with assistance from Kozon, sophomore Brynne Henderson and freshman

Halie Vannoy. The Blue Raiders' last played Colorado State in 1998 and have never face Northern Colorado who is one of the other opponents at the Fort Collins, Colo., site but played Washington earlier this season. Middle Tennessee lost to the Huskies 3-0 but was without Waugh. Waugh missed four of the six games during its six-match losing streak which ended after the loss to Washington and played hurt in the two she did not miss. Since that losing streak the Blue Raiders have won 21 of the last 24 matches with two losses coming to Sun Belt regular season champion Florida International and the other to No.22 Saint Louis. In 2007, Middle Tennessee stunned the volleyball community when it defeated No. 9 Hawai'i 3-1 in the second round, the first time the school had ever lost in the second round, to advance to the round of 16. Last season, the Blue Raiders battled with No. 17 Purdue in the second round before losing 3-2. The Blue Raiders will play Colorado State at 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec.3. With a win, the team will then play the winner of Washington and Northern Colorado at 8 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 4. Live stats will be available for all of the Blue Raiders' matches in the NCAA tournament as linked on goblueraiders.com.

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