Blue Raiders set to face Mean Green Sunday

MT to face North Texas in quarterfinals

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HOT SPRINGS, Ark. - The Middle Tennessee women's basketball team begins its quest for a sixth Sun Belt Tournament title in the last seven seasons at 2:15 p.m. Sunday when it faces North Texas in quarterfinal action inside the Summit Arena in Hot Springs, Ark.

The Blue Raiders enter the field as the No. 2 seed after winning the Sun Belt's East Division with a 17-1 league record. Middle Tennessee finished with a 22-5 overall mark, the seventh consecutive year of at least 20 wins.

North Texas, the No. 10 seed in the tournament, brings a 9-21 overall record, including a 5-13 Sun Belt regular-season ledger, into the contest. The Mean Green advanced to the quarterfinal round after a 61-51 win over No. 7 seed FIU Saturday.

All-American and two-time Sun Belt Player of the Year Alysha Clark leads the Blue Raider offensive attack with a national-best tying 26.9 ppg and 11.2 rpg. She has 71 career double-doubles, ranking seventh in NCAA history, to go along with 2,703 career points to place 17th all-time.

Jackie Pickel and Brandi Brown, a Second Team and First Team All-Sun Belt choice, respectively, round out a trio of Middle Tennessee players in double-figure scoring. Pickel, who also was tabbed the league's Defensive Player of the Year, pours in 14.3 ppg, while Brown adds 14.1 ppg.

Rounding out the probable starters for head coach Rick Insell's squad are senior Chelsia Lymon and junior Anne Marie Lanning. Lymon averages 9.2 ppg and Lanning chips in 7.9 ppg to the fourth-

highest scoring offense in the country with 81.1 ppg.

North Texas finished the regular season fourth in the SBC's West Division under second-year head coach Shaniece Stephens.

Jasmine Godbolt, the league's Freshman of the Year, and Third Team selection Brittney James pace the Mean Green attack. James averages a team-high 13.8 ppg, while Godbolt contributes 11.8 ppg through the victory over the Golden Panthers.

The Blue Raiders lead the all-time series 10-4, including a current five-game winning streak. Middle Tennessee has topped the 100-point mark in each of the last two meetings, including a school-record 119 in this year's triumph January 30 in Murfreesboro.

North Texas won the first three contests in the series, but the Blue Raiders have since taken care of business in 10 of the last 11. Insell is 5-1 against the Mean Green in his MT career, only losing in his first matchup.

Dick Palmer and Duane Hickey will have the radio call on the Blue Raider Network. The game can be heard on WMOT (89.5 FM), WBRY (96.7 FM, 1540 AM) and WGNS (100.5 FM, 101.9 FM, 1450 AM).

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