Softball to compete at USF Tournament

Team prepared to improve after slow start

March 11, 2010 · Christian Lemon

CLEARWATER, Fla. -

Sue Nevar and the Middle Tennessee softball team has something to prove as they travel to Clearwater, Fla., this weekend to compete in the 2010 USF Under Armour Showcase as the squad enters it's last non-conference tournament of the season with a 4-8 record overall.

"This is our last bunch of games we will have in one weekend before we get going into to the bulk of our conference schedule," said Nevar. "We play five good teams, but these are not teams we are not capable of beating. Our goal is to finish 3-2 at the worst in this tournament."

Teams from Temple, Maine, Radford, Penn State and Fairfield await the Blue Raiders as the squad will look to record wins after the lackluster start to the season. In the first eight games, Middle Tennessee has totaled a batting average of .191 while allowing an opponent average of .312.

Blue Raider slugger Corrie Abel commented, "We are not hitting the way we want to at the moment, but we have to keep swinging. Everyone knows they can hit the ball and the team had some success last week. We just have to keep swinging and the hits will come."

Last week at the conference opening series at Troy and the Bulldog Invitational in Athens, Ga., Brittney Banania led the team with a batting average of .412 and five RBIs. Natalie Ysais drove in a four runs while hitting .278. Ysais holds the top team average overall, .312. In the stretch, the team

dropped three games in Troy before taking two of four in Athens including a 10-2 victory over Minnesota. Freshman Janele Robinson led the MT pitching staff posting an ERA of 0.76 in 12.0 innings over four games with a strikeout to walk ratio of 7/6.

As the team prepares to enter the 2010 USF Under Armour Showcase, the Blue Raiders must prepare to face teams who are all averaging over four runs a game. At the moment MT is average just under three runs a game.

Nevar said, "We are playing teams from strong conferences who can play ball. Each team has their player they go to for power. You neutralize power by changing speeds and pitch location to confuse hitters and try to pitch around big bats. Our pitchers must play well for us to have success, but we do not change our game plan based on teams with strong hitters."

Senior pitcher Lindsey Vander Lugt needs four starts to tie Blue Raider great Jennifer Martinez for most starts by a pitcher in Middle Tennessee history. Vander Lugt currently has 109 starts in her career while Martinez finished her illustrious career with 113. The senior passed Martinez for most appearances by a pitcher last week against Troy.

The team will open play with a Friday night doubleheader beginning at 5 p.m. with Temple to be followed at 7 p.m. with a contest against Radford. Saturday the team plays a morning doubleheader against Maine at 10:30 a.m. to be followed with a clash with Penn State at 12:30 p.m. Middle Tennessee will conclude play against Fairfield on Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

"Every part of our team's game must come together in order for us to have success. Our hitting, pitching and fielding must come together in the same games.

If the team was to sweep the current series, Middle Tennessee sit at 9-8 holding a winning record for the first time in the program's history since 2004 when the team finished

Livestats, full results and coverage will be available on GoBlueRaiders.com following each contest.

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