Softball to play Louisiana in SBC Tournament Opener

Game to be broadcast on SBC Extra

May 11, 2010 · Christian Lemon

MOBILE, Ala. - The Middle Tennessee softball team will open its 2010 Sun Belt Conference tournament play against Louisiana's Ragin' Cajuns on Wednesday at 3:00 p.m. at Jaguar Field in Mobile, Ala.

After an up and down regular season, the Middle Tennessee softball team is riding high upon stealing the eighth and final post-season tournament slot from rival WKU last Saturday at Blue Raider Field. MT swept a crucial doubleheader with Western Kentucky to qualify for this week's tournament. Superb pitching from ace Lindsey Vander Lugt and the awaking of punishing MT bats, stunned the Hilltoppers, 8-0 and 11-3, both by a mercy rule.

The Lady Raiders must now regain focus and prepare for what will be difficult task in the nine-time SBC champion Louisiana's Ragin Cajuns. Fortunately, MT has the distinction of being just one of three SBC teams in 2010 to defeat the perennial champs.

In the 2010 conference series in Murfreesboro, Middle Tennessee had Louisiana on the ropes as Vander Lugt stymied the potent UL offense allowing just one run in the first game for a 4-1 Middle Tennessee victory. It was just the third time in school history the Blue Raiders defeated the Ragin' Cajuns. In the second game, freshman Janele Robinson also found strength in adversity, throwing her best game of the season, in a 2-1 extra inning win for Louisiana. Vander Lugt would prove to be

a tough match-up in the series finale, frustrating the Ragin' Cajuns for four innings before UL's Lana Bowers blasted her third homerun of the series to blow the game open en route to a 10-4 UL win.

The Blue Raiders' success in this year's tournament will be directly correlated to the play of senior pitcher Lindsey Vander Lugt. Coming off the WKU doubleheader, Vander Lugt is 19-19 overall with a 2.45 ERA and 193 strikeouts. She has the second most innings pitched in the conference with 227.2, leading to 27 complete games with eight shutouts and 12 games in which she has not allowed an earned run. Because each team only plays one game a day, Vander Lugt is likely to start all the remaining contests this season.

At the plate for Middle Tennessee, Corrie Abel has been the consistent lead-off hitter with a .350 average. Natalie Ysais holds the top season power numbers, with 24 RBIs and a .400 on-base percentage. Kaycee Popham could be a determining factor in the team's success, as the Silver Creek, Ga., native boasts a team-leading 13 RBIs and .463 slugging percentage in the last 20 games. She had four RBIs and two doubles last weekend against WKU.

Depending on the Blue Raiders' outcome versus Louisiana, the team will then move on to play the winner or loser of a Wednesday night game between FAU and host South Alabama. MT won the 2010 series at USA earlier this season and was swept at FAU two weeks ago. The Sun Belt tournament's double-elimination format would then determine if Blue Raiders would continue action in this year's tournament.

The Sun Belt Conference will provide live streaming video of all the tournament action at SunBeltSports.org and GoBlueRaiders.com. Full results and coverage will be available at GoBlueRaiders.com.

Printed on April 17, 2014
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/46042