

Blue Raiders-Red Wolves set to battle Tuesday

Game will be on ESPN2

November 1, 2010 · Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee and Arkansas State, two of the more inconsistent teams in the Sun Belt Conference, will battle in Jonesboro, AR, on Tuesday night. The winner will still be in the hunt for at least a piece of the SBC title, and would move the Blue Raiders to the .500 mark for the season.

The game will begin at 6 pm, and will be nationally televised on ESPN2, with Mark Neely doing play-by-play and Robert Smith handling analysis. The Blue Raider Network will also be carrying the game live. Chip Walters (PxP) and Kelly Holcomb (color analyst) will be joined in the booth by producer Bob Saunders. It will also be available online at GoBlueRaiders.com



Meanwhile, the thuds you heard on Saturday from Florida and Louisiana were the last two unbeaten teams in the Sun Belt Conference, Florida International and Troy, falling to underdog opponents on the road. FIU was upset at rival Florida Atlantic, and Troy fell to ULM in a stunner in Monroe. For the Blue Raiders, a win would give them a share of the league lead with Troy and FIU, each with one loss.

For Middle Tennessee, this breathes new life and motivation into the 2010 season. While the Blue Raiders do not have the tie-breaker against Troy, they can still force at least a tie for the Sun Belt Championship by winning out and hopefully securing one of the SBC's bowl bids.

But, as Coach Rick Stockstill always preaches, the next game is always the most important game of

the season. Taking care of business at ASU has never been an easy task for Middle Tennessee. While the Blue Raiders hold a 9-2 series edge, their last trip to Jonesboro resulted in a 31-14 drubbing. MTSU did return the favor last year, thumping the Red Wolves 38-14 in Murfreesboro.

Inconsistency has plagued both teams. Neither has won back-to-back games this season, and both have lost games that they could have won. Arkansas State lost on a last minute score at Troy and by two points at Indiana. Middle Tennessee has a couple of disappointing non-conference losses they would like to have back.

If stats are any indication of what is likely to happen in Jonesboro Tuesday night, then don't leave your seat or you may miss something. The fast-paced, up-tempo spread offenses of both teams are capable of lighting up the scoreboard in a hurry.

Middle Tennessee and Arkansas State are two of the fastest scoring teams in the conference. The Blue Raiders have 14 scoring drives of less than two minutes so far this season, with six of them taking less than 60 seconds. The Red Wolves have a dozen scoring drives in less than two minutes, and a pair in less than a minutes.

"It could turn into a shootout, but I hope not," said Stockstill. "If it does, we need to be prepared."

With quarterback Dwight Dasher rapidly getting back into 2009 form, the Middle Tennessee offense should be potent, and if the Raiders need to control the ball to run off some clock, senior Philip Tanner, junior D. D. Kyles and sophomore Ben Cunningham have given the offense a solid ground game all season.

Quarterback Ryan Aplin is having a great season for ASU, hitting 60 percent of his passes for 260.5 yards per game and 13 touchdowns. He has also run for 294 yards and seven touchdowns. ASU has scored at least 24 points in each of its eight games.

The defense of both teams can be very good, and both have a pair of All-Sun Belt Conference players. The Red Wolves are headed by lineman Bryan Hall and linebacker Damario Davis, while the Blue Raiders tout end Jamari Lattimore, who leads the Sun Belt in sacks, and safety Jeremy Kellem, who heads a veteran secondary that has three senior starters with all-conference credentials.

"Our defense is starting to play like we did last season. It was very good last week against ULM," noted Stockstill.

The kicking game slightly favors Middle Tennessee with junior Alan Gendreau being named All-Sun Belt last season as the conference's leading scorer. Gendreau has 39 points so far this season including a 55-yarder at Memphis, but trails ASU's Bobby Zalud, with has 43 points. MTSU's punting duo of Josh Davis and Nathaniel Toulson has averaged 44.2 yards per punt, while ASU's Neely Sullivent and Dean Gericke has averaged nearly 41 yards per punt.

BRN affiliates for the live broadcast are Murfreesboro flagship stations, WGNS 1450 AM, WMOT-FM 89.5, and Nashville flagship WNSR 560 AM.

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/49031>