

Exhibition opener for Blue Raiders set for Thursday

Defending SBC champs to face Lincoln Memorial

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

The Middle Tennessee women's basketball team will open the 2010-11 campaign with a 5:30 p.m. Thursday exhibition tip-off against Lincoln Memorial inside Murphy Center. The game will be the first of two exhibitions for the Blue Raiders before the regular season starts.

"We are going to place a little more emphasis on our exhibitions than we have in the past," head coach Rick Insell said. "We will be looking at a lot of different combinations and how we execute our offensive and defensive strategies.

"Because we have a new coaching staff in addition to our young team, we will be working on each coach's

responsibilities on the bench. The No. 1 priority is to look at all these different facets, see how they mesh together and on what we would need to improve.

"Depending on how practices go until the game starts, we will figure out who will play during the game and what rotations we will use. These exhibitions are big for us this year, as they will give us a really good idea of what we will have this season."

Middle Tennessee returns one starter, senior Preseason All-Sun Belt Third Team selection Anne Marie Lanning, and eight letterwinners from last year's squad that reached the NCAA Tournament for the 13th time in school history. The Blue Raiders won their second-straight Sun Belt Tournament and finished with a 25-6 overall record, including a 17-1 mark in league action.



Lanning is the team's top returning scorer with 8.4 ppg in 2009-10. As one of two seniors on this year's squad, along with Emily Queen, she enters her final campaign needing just 234 points to reach the 1,000-point plateau.

Queen was tabbed as a Preseason All-Sun Belt Second Team honoree but has not seen action since January after suffering a season-ending injury. She will be sidelined during the early portion of the slate, recovering from recent surgery.

Other letterwinners returning for Insell's sixth season are juniors Molly McFadden and Tina Stewart, along with sophomores Jamila Ajanaku, Icelyn Elie, Kortni Jones and Dymon Raynor. Redshirt freshman Lauren March will be looking to make her Blue Raider debut this season after missing all of 2009-10 after suffering a preseason injury.

A group of six freshmen also enter the mix, as Janay Brinkley, Laken Leonard, Jordyn Luffman, Stephanie Myers, Ebony Rowe and KeKe Stewart will all don the Middle Tennessee uniform for the first time.

Insell will be joined on the coaching staff by assistants Lynn Burkey, Kim Clark, Alex Fuller, director of operations Mariska Harris and graduate assistant Joe Bonham, all in their first season with the Blue Raiders.

Middle Tennessee was picked to place second in the Sun Belt's East Division in the preseason coaches poll. The Blue Raiders will open the regular season at 1 p.m. Sunday, November 14 at home against USF. Season tickets are available by calling 1-888-YES-MTSU.

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