Volleyball to take on rival WKU for Sun Belt title on Friday

A win would give the Blue Raiders their first regular season crown since 2007

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - It will all come down to the final conference match for the Middle Tennessee volleyball team, as the Blue Raiders will travel to arch-rival Western Kentucky to decide the Sun Belt regular season championship on Friday. The meeting concludes conference play for each school, who are tied atop the league with matching 14-1 records. "We've been in this position before, and it seems like it's almost always with Western Kentucky," head coach Matt Peck said. "Both of us are usually in the mix at the top of the conference. It's a great match-up, and I don't think we could be more excited. If you're a collegiate athlete, I don't think you could be asking for better situation than playing your biggest rival for a championship in the last match of the season. " Middle Tennessee will be looking to take home their first Sun Belt regular season title since 2007. The Blue Raiders are entering the match with four consecutive victories over the Hilltoppers, including a sweep at Alumni Memorial Gym last month. MT posted a pristine 3-0 record against WKU in 2009, ending Western Kentucky's season on their home floor in the Sun Belt Tournament semifinals in Bowling Green. "We've had a lot of success playing at Western lately," Peck said. "We won both of our matches there last year, and I think our team has a lot of confidence. However, I think Western will play us better there than they did here earlier this season, and we expect them to give us everything they have." Izabela

Kozon will be leading the Blue Raiders into the match. After an injury last month, the senior has been on a tear lately, winning each of the last two Sun Belt Player of the Week awards. She has now garnered the honors five times this season, tying a conference record. Kozon currently holds the team lead in kills with 383 kills at a .296 clip and boasts of a Sun Belt-best 4.12 kills per set. She's also been a dependable defender, ranking second on the team with 199 digs. Aside from Kozon, Middle Tennessee boasts of a number of other outstanding offensive players, led by Ashley Adams with 260 kills. Maria Szivos is third on the team with 232 and hitting a remarkable .308. Both Stacy Oladinni and Lindsay Cheatham have also posted triple figures in the category with 188 and 173, respectively. Cheatham owns the Sun Belt's top attack percentage, hitting .395 for the season and .473 in conference play. At setter, Angela Peyton has come on strong as of late and holds the team lead with 676 assists, averaging 6.83 per set. Morgan Peterson has also earned significant playing time and is second with 561 helpers. The duo has combined to help direct a Middle Tennessee offense that ranks 31st nationally in assists per set (13.06) and 10th in attack percentage (.290). The stellar play of Oladinni and Cheatham keys a Blue Raider defense at the net that ranks 36th in blocks per set. Oladinni leads the team with 109 blocks, averaging 1.12 per set. Cheatham has 98 this season and is averaging 1.07 per frame. Brynne Henderson has been the anchor of the reception game with 380 digs. Kendall Howard is also a key cog in the defense and has recorded 184. Friday's match vs. the Hilltoppers will be played at E.A. Diddle Arena in Bowling Green, Ky. Match time is set for 7 p.m.

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