Volleyball to face Saint Louis in NCAA Tournament prelude

Blue Raiders and Billikens set to square off at noon

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - A day before learning of their NCAA Tournament destiny, the Middle Tennessee women's volleyball team will take on Saint Louis in the regular season finale at Alumni Memorial Gym on Saturday at noon.

"We realize that this is an important match for us," head coach Matt Peck said. "We're 27th in RPI right now, and we'd like to get that a little better if we can. We're aware of the fact that Saint Louis feels that a win over us at our place gives them a better shot to get into the NCAA Tournament, and we will be ready to play.

Middle Tennessee is entering the match after taking home the Sun Belt Tournament championship last weekend. The Blue Raiders, who also won the Sun Belt regular season title, are on an eleven-match winning streak, and have posted wins in 25 of their last 26 matches.

The Blue Raiders have taken on the Billikens in the week following the Sun Belt Tournament in each of the past two seasons, losing on both occasions.

"Our seniors and juniors remember those two matches," Peck said. "A five-set loss here and a four-set loss at SLU. I think our team will be looking for a little bit of satisfaction after that."

Playing in what might be her final home match, Middle Tennessee is led by Sun Belt Player of the Year and Sun Belt Tournament Most Outstanding Player Izabela Kozon. The senior has 440 kills this season and is averaging a Sun Belt-best 4.11 per set. She's also a stout defender with 228 digs and 56 blocks.

Ashley Adams and Maria Szivos are both coming off All-Sun Belt First Team campaigns and are second and third on the team in kills with 289 and 266, respectively. Stacy Oladinni was an All-Sun Belt Second Team selection, and is fourth with 218. As a team, MT ranks 26th in the nation in kills per set, averaging 14.11.

Both Szivos and Oladinni also took home All-Sun Belt Tournament honors last weekend.

Morgan Peterson and Angela Peyton have been responsible for directing a potent Blue Raider attack that ranks ninth in the nation in attack percentage at .294. Peyton leads the team with 761 assists, and Peterson is second with 639.

Defensively, Middle Tennessee boasts of a pair of intimidating presences at the net. Oladinni holds a Sun Belt-best 1.14 blocks per set average, and Lindsay Cheatham isn't far off, averaging 1.03 stoppers per frame. Playing in limited action due to an injury earlier in the year, Sasha McGlothin has posted 34 blocks this season in just 27 sets played.

Brynne Henderson anchors the reception game with 423 digs, averaging 3.53 per set. Kendall Howard has also been key for the Blue Raiders and has put up 210 digs this season.

Middle Tennessee will take on Saint Louis at noon on Saturday at Alumni Memorial Gym. On Sunday, the Blue Raiders will host an NCAA Selection Show party at The Boulevard Bar and Grille, which is located on the corner of Middle Tennessee Blvd. and Main St. The selection show is slated to begin at 2 p.m. on ESPNews.

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