

NCAA Tournament Notebook: Familiar faces and places

The Blue Raiders are in well-charted territory this weekend

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

When the Middle Tennessee volleyball team takes to the court this Friday, they'll face an all-too-familiar opponent in Louisville in an all-too-familiar place in West Lafayette, Ind.

This year marks the third time in the last five years that the Blue Raiders will be facing Louisville and the fourth that the two schools have been drawn in the same subregional.

"I think they're a familiar team in that the coach is the same and they still play the same type of style," head coach Matt Peck said. "We kind of know what to expect from them, but they're not as tall as they've been in the past. They are still a good blocking team, which concerns me a bit, but I think we match-up pretty well."



West Lafayette is also familiar territory for Peck and the Blue Raiders. In 2008, Middle Tennessee made the trip up to the city on the banks of the Wabash River, defeating Mid-American Conference foe Miami in a five set thriller before falling to host Purdue in similar fashion on the following day.

"We're playing in an environment that at least half the team is accustomed to, which I think will be huge," Peck said. "We played well up there two years ago. We're a team with a lot of tournament experience, so we're pretty savvy in these kind of situations."

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Q&A with Morgan Peterson

You missed last season with a redshirt, how are you approaching playing in your first NCAA Tournament this week?

"I'm excited. Hopefully, I'll do well. I'm looking forward to it, and I hope it will be a good experience."

You've been splitting time at setter with Angela Peyton this season, is that something new for you?

"Yeah, I've never really had experience with it. It's a bit of an adjustment, I definitely like playing on the front row more than on the back row, and I think she's better on the back row."

How is this team different from last year's at this point?

"I think we're pretty similar, but I also think we have potential to go further than some of the teams of the past few years."

How do you think sitting out last season prepared you for this season and this tournament?

"It helped me because I got to watch Leslie Clark all year and learn from her, and figure out what works and what doesn't."

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Q&A with Brynne Henderson

You've taken on a larger role this season, how have you adjusted to taking over the libero position?

"It's a lot more responsibility. I think there's a bit more pressure, but I've grown since my freshman year, and I think I've been able to handle it."

You were a part of the team that played in the West Lafayette subregional in 2008, how was the environment up there?

"Chaos. Last time we played up there it was so much fun. I'd never experienced it before, and it was exciting."

How do you think this year's team compares to the previous two?

"I think we have a lot of depth compared to the past. We really don't have any weak links on this team. Everyone on our team plays and has played all season. I think that we've become more of a team because of it."

Freshmen have played a huge role in this year's team, how do you feel that they've responded to the challenge. You were in a similar position as a freshman, correct?

"They've done great. I'm so proud of Kendall Howard coming in, so I understand what she's going through. We've been real supportive of each other all year long, whether or not we're getting subbed for each other. Angela Peyton's doing great too."

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Middle Tennessee is preparing to take on Louisville in the opening round of the NCAA Tournament on Friday. The match is slated to begin at 4 p.m. at Holloway Gymnasium on the campus of Purdue in West Lafayette, Ind.

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