

Tall order for Blue Raiders Thursday night

MT plays host to No. 4/5 Xavier on CSS/ESPN3.com

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. –

The Middle Tennessee women's basketball team, coming off a three-game road trip, will return to the friendly confines of the Murphy Center when it plays host to No. 4/5 Xavier at 7 p.m. Thursday in a televised matchup. The contest will be shown regionally on Comcast/Charter Sports Southeast (CSS) and nationally on ESPN3.com.

The Blue Raiders currently own the Sun Belt's top overall record at 6-2 despite 11 sophomores and freshmen on this year's roster. Middle Tennessee went 2-1 during the recent road swing, picking up wins at Tennessee Tech and at UCF.

Freshman Ebony Rowe continues to pace the squad with 16.1 ppg and 9.4 rpg, ranking among the league leaders in both categories. She is joined by senior Anne

Marie Lanning in double-figure scoring, as the local product has poured in 10.1 ppg thus far in her final campaign.

Xavier brings an unblemished 8-0 ledger into Thursday's meeting, the seventh in the series that is tied 3-3. The Musketeers, under the direction of ninth-year head coach Kevin McGuff, were a possession away from reaching the Final Four a year ago. Xavier features a pair of All-Americans in the frontcourt, as 6-5 redshirt senior Amber Harris and 6-6 senior Ta'Shia Phillips form a powerful duo.

The Blue Raiders have won two of the last three meetings between the two programs and captured



a win in the only previous time in Murfreesboro, in January 2005. The No. 4/5 ranking represents the second highest for an opponent inside the Murphy Center during the Rick Insell era (2006-present), following No. 1 Maryland Nov. 10, 2006.

Thursday's matchup will also serve as the annual Pack the House Challenge game, a NCAA-sponsored contest Middle Tennessee has won the Sun Belt title in two of the last three years.

Blue Raider director of broadcasting Chip Walters will handle the televised play-by-play action and he will be joined by analyst Kyle Turnham. The CSS channel is 27 locally in the midstate region.

Dick Palmer will have the call on the Blue Raider Network of radio stations, with analyst Duane Hickey also providing insight. The game can be heard on WGNS (100.5 FM, 101.9 FM, 1450 AM), WMOT (89.5 FM) and WBRY (96.7 FM, 1540 AM).

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