Rowe adds another POTW honor; Blue Raiders return home Wednesday

Freshman named Sun Belt's best for third time

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – Freshman forward Ebony Rowe continues to add hardware to her mantle, garnering her third Sun Belt Player of the Week honor Tuesday for Jan. 4, as she and the rest of her Middle Tennessee women's basketball teammates prepare for their first home game in nearly a month. The Blue Raiders will return to the friendly confines of the Murphy Center at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday when they play host to North Texas in the first game of a MT doubleheader.

Rowe, a Lexington, Ky., native, led the charge in the last three games, helping Middle Tennessee own the Sun Belt's top overall record at 10-4, including a 1-0 start in league action. During the trio of contests, she guided the Blue Raiders to a pair of wins, versus Kansas State at the UTSA Holiday Classic in San Antonio, Texas, and in the Sun Belt opener at South Alabama.

She averaged a double-double of 22.7 ppg and 12.3 rpg after posting a double-double in each game, capped by a career-high 26 points and career-best tying 16 rebounds at South Alabama in her conference debut.

She was one of two Middle Tennessee players, joining sophomore Icelyn Elie, on the All-UTSA Holiday Classic Team, after tallying 17 points and 10 rebounds against Kansas State in leading the

Blue Raiders to the tournament title.

In between the two games, Rowe returned to her hometown at No. 11 Kentucky and finished with game-high honors of 25 points and 11 rebounds to close the non-conference slate.

She has registered a double-double in four consecutive games and seven overall and ranks among the conference's leaders for scoring (17.6 per game – second), rebounding (9.9 per game – first), field goal percentage (58.5 – second), offensive rebounds (4.4 per game – second) and defensive rebounds (5.5 per game – second).

Her player of the week accolade is the 39th in school history and 28th under head coach Rick Insell. Since Insell took the reins of the program in 2005-06, the 28 honors are 10 more than second-place Western Kentucky.

Middle Tennessee has won four of its last five entering Wednesday's tip with the Mean Green. Rowe and senior Anne Marie Lanning, who each poured in 26 points, led the Blue Raiders in their Sun Belt opener Sunday. Lanning's 26 points included four 3-pointers, making her just the fifth player in school history with at least 200, and moved her into 29th on the program's all-time scoring chart with 924 points, just 76 shy of becoming the 25th player to reach the 1,000-point plateau.

Middle Tennessee also became just the 33rd women's basketball program in NCAA history to reach 700 victories, reaching the milestone at South Alabama. The Blue Raiders join Tennessee, Tennessee Tech and Belmont as schools from the state to accomplish the feat.

North Texas owns a 3-12 overall and 0-2 Sun Belt ledger on the season after dropping a pair of league games to UALR and Louisiana to begin the conference schedule. Head coach Shanice Stephens, in her third season with the Mean Green, guides a squad with two players averaging in double figures with Denetra Kellum at 16.6 ppg and last season's SBC Freshman of the Year, Jasmine Godbolt, with 14.1 ppg.

Middle Tennessee owns a commanding 11-4 edge in the all-time series, having won the last six meetings. The Blue Raiders have topped the 100-point mark in each of the last three contests, including a school-record 119 in last year's regular-season matchup in Murfreesboro before also attaining the century mark in the Sun Belt Tournament Quarterfinals.

The game, the first at home since Dec. 12, is slated to start at 5:30 p.m. with Dick Palmer and Duane Hickey calling all the action on the Blue Raider Network. Local stations carrying the broadcast include WNGS (100.5 FM, 101.9 FM, 1450 AM), WMOT (89.5 FM) and WBRY (96.7 FM, 1540 AM).

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