

Western Kentucky in Blue Raiders' crosshairs

Tipoff set for 7 p.m. Thursday night in Bowling Green, Ky.

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

The men's basketball team will head 97 miles up the road to face its biggest rival Western Kentucky on Thursday, Feb. 10. The Blue Raiders won both meetings between the two schools last season and the team will be looking for its third straight win over the Hilltoppers for the first time since the 1929-30 season. Middle Tennessee won six consecutive meetings between the 1924-25 season and 1929-30 season and has been unable to win more than two straight since then. Middle Tennessee has won five of its last six games and is currently second in the East Division of the Sun Belt Conference with a 7-4 record. The Blue Raiders are now 12-12 overall on the season. The Hilltoppers (10-12, 5-5) are on a hot streak like the Blue Raiders winning five of their last six games. Unlike Middle Tennessee however Western Kentucky lost its last home game 80-76



to South Alabama last Thursday. Western Kentucky is 4-5 this season at home and is 2-3 in E.A. Diddle Arena in Sun Belt action. The Hilltoppers are led in Sun Belt action by Sergio Kersch who is currently averaging a double-double with 19.7 points and 10 rebounds per game. Also aiding the team in league action are Steffphon Pettigrew and Juan Pattillo who are averaging 15.1 and 14.4 points per game respectively. Middle Tennessee is led in scoring by senior James Washington and r-sophomore Jason Jones. In Sun Belt play, J. Jones is averaging 14.5 points per game while Washington is averaging 13.6. J. Jones also leads the team in rebounding in league action with his 5.5 rebounds per game. Tipoff is set for 7 p.m. at E.A. Diddle Arena with Chip Walters and Kyle Turnham calling all the action on the Blue Raider Network. Middle Tennessee returns to Murphy

Center for the weekend with a Saturday matchup against FIU. The game with the Panthers is set for 4:30 p.m. on the front end of a doubleheader with the women's team. It will also be the Learning Circle Honor Roll Day with area school children receiving free admission with a voucher. The Sun Belt Championships will be held in Hot Springs, Ark., March 4-8. Tickets for all sessions are \$83 and on sale through the Blue Raider Ticket Office by contacting 1-888-YES-MTSU or by visiting goblueraiders.com. **NOTES AND HIGHLIGHTS Freshman Breaks Through...** Freshman Kerry Hammonds got hot against South Alabama and never looked back. The Murfreesboro, Tenn., native scored 28 points setting the record for points in a game by a freshman. Hammonds ended the day 9 for 10 from the field, 5 for 6 from behind the arc and 5 for 7 at the free throw line. Hammonds' broke the record set by Mike Buck, who scored 26 points on March 16, 1989 against Florida State in the NCAA Southeast Regional. Hammonds' 28 points are also more than his father, Kerry Hammonds, ever scored in a game during his career as a Blue Raider (1985-87, 1989). The elder Hammonds scored his career high 24 points as a freshman against Miles College during the 1984-85 season. **Dual Threat...** Senior James Washington and r-sophomore Jason Jones have proved they are a force to be reckoned with on the court. The pair has scored in double digits in the same game 15 times this season including seven of the last nine games. Middle Tennessee is 7-8 in those games but in Sun Belt action is 5-3 including a win on the road at FIU. **Moving on up...** With the win over Tennessee State, head coach Kermit Davis passed former Blue Raider coach Bruce Stewart for second on the all-time wins list at Middle Tennessee. Stewart coached at Middle Tennessee from 1985-91 and posted a 141-76 record during his career. Davis is now 149-122 during his nine-year stint with the Blue Raiders.

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