

# Middle Tennessee returns to court and opens tournament play Sunday

## Blue Raiders aim for third-straight league title

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**HOT SPRINGS, Ark.** - The Middle Tennessee women's basketball team puts its focus back on the court in pursuit of its third-straight conference tournament title when it opens Sun Belt Tournament action at Noon Sunday against Arkansas State inside the Summit Arena in Hot Springs, Ark. The Blue Raiders, who shared the league's top overall record and won the East Division for the third-consecutive year, enter the 12-team field as the No. 1 seed out of the East and will face the No. 4 seeded Red Wolves from the West Division.

Middle Tennessee owns the conference's best overall mark at 23-6, including a 14-2 league ledger, during the regular season. The Blue Raiders defeated rival Western Kentucky 64-56 in their last outing, Sunday in Murfreesboro, to cap a year in which they bested preseason predictions of a second-place division finish.



Ebony Rowe, the 2011 Sun Belt Freshman of the Year, leads the squad with averages of 17.3 points and 10.2 rebounds and was named the league's player of the week four times, a single-season conference record for a first-year player. She was the lone rookie to be named to the All-SBC First Team, joining teammate, senior Anne Marie Lanning, and holds a listing among the conference's elite in several statistical categories.

Lanning picked up her first postseason league accolade with the award, as she ranks second on the team with 13.4 ppg, while also ranking among the conference leaders in several statistics, including 3-pointers made (70) and free throw percentage (85.1).

Arkansas State enters the game after defeating Florida Atlantic in Saturday's first round, 66-52, to advance to the quarterfinals. A trio of players, Quinishia McDowell, Meghan Lewis and Sherina Scott led head coach Brian Boyer's Red Wolves with 15 points apiece in the meeting, helping to increase their record to 17-13 on the campaign.

The Blue Raiders faced Arkansas State once during the regular season, a 57-52 win in Jonesboro, Ark., Jan. 16, in a matchup televised live on the Sun Belt Network. Rowe led MT with a double-double of 11 points and 10 rebounds, while sophomore Kortni Jones poured in a team-high 13 points to lead a quartet in double figures.

Although the game is not televised, it can be viewed on the SBC Extra web steaming packing. For more information on the broadcast, a link is available on the GoBlueRaiders.com homepage under the At a Glance section.

Dick Palmer and Duane Hickey will be calling all the action on the Blue Raider Network, including WGNS (100.5 FM, 101.9 FM, 1450 AM), WMOT (89.5 FM) and WBRY (96.7, 1540 AM).

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