Softball to open conference action at FIU

Team looking for early momentum in conference

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee softball will open 2011 Sun Belt Conference play on Tuesday at FIU with a scheduled doubleheader at 4 p.m. The team will wrap-up the opening series Wednesday at 1 p.m.

After a tough start in the early goings on the season, the Blue Raiders are looking to find their stride when it matters most as they commence league action.

"This conference opening series is very important for us," head coach Sue Nevar said. "It is crucial this team goes out and gets a couple of wins. We do not want fall behind early in a very competitive league."

With a 5-13 overall record going in, the Blue Raiders will have their hands full attempting right the ship. The squad is 8-24 in league games all-time against the FIU and 5-11 on the road. In their history, MT is 17-33 in opening conference series and 7-11 in conference opening games. Last season, the team lost three games in the conference opening series at Troy.

When FIU and Middle Tennessee faced off last year, the Golden Panthers swept the Raiders, taking all three games. In the set, Natalie Ysais went-off, going 5-11 with four RBIs on the weekend. Her two doubles and one homer gave her a combined .909 slugging percentage. Kelsey Dorcth also had five hits in the series.

Pitcher Janele Robinson was solid in her one career start against FIU. The Toledo, Ill., native gave up three earned runs in seven innings of work last season.

The Blue Raiders enter the three-game set off of a 0-4 showing at last weekend's FAU Invitational in Boca Raton, Fla.

In the four games at FAU, the team squared off with Hofstra, Michigan State, Purdue and Rutgers. After a tight opening 3-2 loss to the Pride, Middle Tennessee fell 12-2 to MSU. Saturday saw the team lose 5-4 to Purdue, before dropping their tournament finale 2-0 to the Scarlet Knights. Dortch led the Blue Raiders with five hits and a .455 average over the four game stretch. The Milan, Tenn., native boasts a .302 average after 18 games. This is the only time in her career she has batted above .300 this deep in a season. Kaycee Popham and Kayla Toney's each led the team with two RBIs.

"Last weekend we had some heartbreaking defeats, but were very tight in three of our games. They easily could have been wins. If our team can make the necessary minor adjustments, we will be rolling at the right time."

Results and coverage for the Blue Raiders' mid-week conference opener with FIU will be available on GoBlueRaiders.com. Live in-game updates and video will be available on Twitter.com/MT_Softball.

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