NCAA Tournament run begins Sunday night

Blue Raiders on ESPN2 at 6:30 p.m.

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AUBURN, Ala. - The 14th NCAA Tournament appearance in Middle Tennessee women's basketball history begins at 6:30 p.m. Sunday when the Blue Raiders face Georgia in First Round action inside the Auburn Arena in Auburn, Ala. Middle Tennessee, seeded No. 11 in the Dallas Region, square off against the sixth-seeded Bulldogs live on ESPN2 with Cara Capuano handling play-by-play and LaChina Robinson serving as the color analyst.

Both teams earned a spot in the field of 64 by virtue of at-large berths from their respective conferences. The Blue Raiders' at-large bid is just the second in school history, joining the 1996 squad, as the other 12 appearances in program history were automatic selections.

Middle Tennessee and Georgia have faced each other 12 times previously with the Blue Raiders claiming a 70-62 win in the last matchup, Dec. 7, 2007, in Athens, Ga., when the Bulldogs were ranked No. 8. It marks the lone MT triumph in the series, while head coach Rick Insell is 1-1 against Georgia in his six seasons at the helm of the program.

Middle Tennessee enters the game with a 23-7 record and is in the NCAA Tournament for the third-straight season and fifth time under Insell's watch. The Blue Raiders are 5-13 overall in the NCAAs but their last win came in 2007, Insell's second campaign.

Senior Anne Marie Lanning and freshman Ebony Rowe pace the squad as the only two players to

start all 30 games this year. Both were named to the All-Sun Belt First Team, while Rowe collected the league's freshman of the year accolade.

Georgia enters the game after posting a 21-10 record, including a 10-6 mark in the Southeastern Conference. The Bulldogs won their first SEC Tournament game against South Carolina before falling to Tennessee.

Jasmine James paced head coach Andy Landers' squad with 12.1 ppg, followed by an 11.1 average from Porsha Phillips. Phillips also tops the team with 10.8 rebounds per game.

The winner of Sunday's game will face the victor of No. 3 Florida State and No. 14 Samford in Tuesday's Second Round, also at 9,121-seat Auburn Arena.

Florida State earned an at-large bid from Atlantic Coast Conference, while Samford captured the Southern Conference's automatic berth.

The Middle Tennessee-Georgia matchup can be heard on the Blue Raider Network (WGNS-100.5 FM, 101.9 FM, 1450 AM, WMOT-89.5 FM, WBRY-96.7 FM, 1540 AM) with Dick Palmer on the play-by-play and Duane Hickey serving as the color analyst.

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