Defending champs look to retain title at home

Soccer to play host to Sun Belt Tournament in November

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2011 Schedule (html)
2011 Schedule (pdf)

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Ten matches plus a chance to secure another Sun Belt Tournament championship on its home turf highlight the 2011 Middle Tennessee soccer schedule as announced by head coach Aston Rhoden.

"We are looking forward to an exciting season, including hosting the Sun Belt Tournament for the first time," Rhoden said. "We have lined up a number of quality opponents, both at home and away, to challenge ourselves before we begin conference season.

"Also, an important note, we are have a home match the day following every home football game this fall, so our fans can enjoy consecutive days of exciting Blue Raider action."

The Blue Raiders captured the first Sun Belt Tournament title in program history last fall, advancing to the NCAA Tournament. During the first week of November 2011, Middle Tennessee has a chance to accomplish the feat again, this time on its home field, Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium, for the first time in program history.

"Hosting the conference championships is huge for our program and a testament to the hard work of our student-athletes, administration and community. We look forward to putting on a first-class event for the conference. We want to put ourselves in the best position possible to reclaim our title and advance to another NCAA Tournament."

However, before it plays host to the league championships, Middle Tennessee must combat a 19-match schedule which features 10 home contests, one-half of which are against conference opponents.

The slate begins with back-to-back home games, starting August 19 against Dayton before Jacksonville State comes to town two days later. The Blue Raiders will then hit the road for three SEC matches in a four-game stretch. MT will travel to Auburn (Aug. 26) and Tennessee (Sept. 2) before returning home to play host to UT-Martin (Sept. 4) and finishing the stretch at Vanderbilt (Sept. 9).

Two more home contests are next on the docket, rounding out the non-conference schedule, are Alabama A&M (Sept. 11) and Tennessee Tech (Sept. 16).

Middle Tennessee then begins the Sun Belt slate Sept. 23 at Denver, facing the Pioneers for the first time since advancing past them in the tournament title matchup and for the final time in regular-season action. Denver will depart the conference after the 2011-12 academic year. The opening weekend continues two days later at North Texas in Denton, Texas.

The Blue Raiders return home to open a four-match homestand, its longest of the season, Sept. 30 against Arkansas State and Oct. 2 against UALR. The following weekend, Florida Atlantic (Oct. 7) and FIU (Oct. 9) come to town.

A mid-October swing through Louisiana to face the Ragin' Cajuns in Lafayette and ULM, Oct. 14 and 16, respectively, precedes the final home regular-season match of the campaign. Middle Tennessee will step onto the home field for the final time before the conference tournament when it plays host to South Alabama Oct. 20.

Road games at Troy (Oct. 23) and Western Kentucky (Oct. 28) conclude the regular-season slate.

The eight-team Sun Belt Tournament then begins with the quarterfinals Nov. 2. The semifinals are the next day before the championship match Nov. 5 in the single-elimination format.

Home game times for weeknight matches are set at 7 p.m., while Sunday's matches are slated for 2 p.m. with the lone exception of the Oct. 9 contest with FIU, scheduled for 1:30 p.m.

2011 Middle Tennessee Soccer Schedule
Aug. 14 - at Belmont (exh.) - 6 p.m.
Aug. 19 - Dayton - 7 p.m.
Aug. 21 - Jacksonville State - 2 p.m.
Aug. 26 - at Auburn - 7 p.m.
Sept. 2 - at Tennessee - 6 p.m.
Sept. 4 - UT-Martin - 2 p.m.
Sept. 9 - at Vanderbilt - 7 p.m.
Sept. 11 - Alabama A&M - 2 p.m.
Sept. 16 - Tennessee Tech - 7 p.m.
Sept. 23 - at Denver* -- 8 p.m.
Sept. 25 - at North Texas* -- 1 p.m.
Sept. 30 - Arkansas State* -- 7 p.m.
Oct. 2 - UALR* -- 2 p.m.

Oct. 7 - Florida Atlantic* -- 7 p.m.
Oct. 9 - FIU* -- 1:30 p.m.
Oct. 14 - at Louisiana* -- 7 p.m.
Oct. 16 - at ULM* -- 1 p.m.
Oct. 20 - South Alabama* -- 7 p.m.
Oct. 23 - at Troy* -- 1 p.m.
Oct. 28 - at Western Kentucky* -- 6 p.m.
Nov. 2-5 - Sun Belt Championships (Murfreesboro, Tenn.) - TBA

* - Sun Belt Conference match
Home matches in **bold** played at Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium

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