Season begins this weekend for defending champions

Soccer at home Friday and Sunday

August 18, 2011 · Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – Middle Tennessee soccer will open its 16th season and defense of its Sun Belt Tournament crown at 7 p.m. Friday when the Blue Raiders play host to Dayton at Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium. Another home contest, at 2 p.m. Sunday against Jacksonville State, will conclude opening weekend fesitivites.

“We have been anxiously anticipating this day for a long time,” head coach Aston Rhoden said. “Dayton is an extremely strong team with a lot of tradition. We have to come prepared, play our game and capitalize on our opportunities in order to give us the best chance at a positive result.

“Jacksonville State is another team that we cannot afford to overlook. Every time we have played them it’s been close and competitive and we expect nothing different Sunday.”

Middle Tennessee enters its 10th season under Rhoden’s guidance, which included the Sun Belt’s automatic bid into the NCAA Tournament last fall. Despite their success, the Blue Raiders were picked third in the preseason Sun Belt poll following a vote of the league’s head coaches. No Middle Tennessee players were tabbed to the preseason all-conference team.

“We know we have a solid team returning that plays really well together. We may not have a big-

name player who stands out from the rest right now, but hopefully by the end of the season, many of our players will earn that type of consideration around the league."

The Blue Raiders finished 2010 with a 13-9-2 record after dropping a NCAA Tournament First Round match at No. 15 Florida State. Middle Tennessee entered the national event having allowed a goal or less in 15 consecutive matches, including all 14 Sun Belt contests in the regular season and tournament.

Eight starters and 14 letterwinners return this fall, including captains Rebecca Cushing, Paige Goeglein and Whitney Jorgenson. Joining Cushing as seniors who will be playing their final Blue Raider campaign include Shan Jones, Laura Lamberth, Luisa Moscoso, Elisabeth Sikes and Hope Suominen.

Ten newcomers, nine freshmen and a junior transfer, also join the program this fall.

Middle Tennessee traveled to Belmont Sunday for an exhibition match and came away with a 3-0 victory behind goals from Jessika Oseguera, Kaci Kratch and Jones. Cushing and Jessica Gilchrist split time in between the pipes for the shutout.

Dayton concluded its 2010 season with a 19-3-1 record after advancing to the NCAA Tournament Second Round for the second-straight season. The Flyers captured the Atlantic 10 regular season and tournament titles before being eliminated in the NCAAs by Ohio State on penalty kicks following a 0-0 tie. Head coach Mike Tucker is set to begin his 17th season in charge of the program.

The two teams have met once previously with the Flyers claiming a 4-0 victory Aug. 30, 2009, in Dayton.

Jacksonville State also returns eight starters from last year's squad that posted a 3-14-1 overall record, including 1-7 in the Ohio Valley. The Gamecocks, under the direction of seventh year mentor Julie Davis Carlson, tied Kennesaw State 1-1 in exhibition action Friday.

The Jacksonville State series stands tied 3-3-1 after the two teams tied 1-1 Aug. 23, 2008, in Jacksonville, Ala. The last Blue Raider win was in 2006, a 4-1 decision, in the last meeting in Murfreesboro.

This weekend Middle Tennessee will welcome its summer camp participants back to catch the Blue Raider action. The annual Rhoden Soccer Academy camps attract hundreds of youth players from the Mid State area.

Printed on June 19, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/54280