Volleyball set to open Middle Tennessee Invitational against No. 4 Illinois

Match vs. Fighting Illini scheduled for 5 p.m. on Friday

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Blue Raider volleyball team will aim to make history this weekend as they host the Middle Tennessee Invitational at Alumni Memorial Gym on Friday and Saturday. The event will feature match-ups against fourth-ranked Illinois, 2010 NCAA Tournament participant Tulsa and perennial Big West contender Cal Poly. "We know we have to do well this weekend," head coach Matt Peck said. "These are all good teams with a lot of experience. We look for a battle from Illinois and then have to turn around and play Tulsa the next morning, and they barely missed the Sweet 16 last season. Then we have Cal Poly in the evening. It's going to be a tough weekend, but I look forward to it." The Blue Raiders will open the weekend against Illinois on Friday at 5 p.m. The Illini are currently 6-0 this season and will become just the second-ever Top 25 opponent to take on Middle Tennessee at Alumni Memorial Gym. Illinois, who will become the first Big Ten team to travel to Murfreesboro, won the only other meeting between the two schools in 3-1 fashion last season. "Last year, we actually took home the first set up at Illinois, but I think our inexperience began to show," Peck said. "We're a different team from last year though, and I think it should be a pretty good match." On Saturday, the Blue Raiders will get going early with a 10 a.m. match against Tulsa. This will mark the first meeting between the two schools. Tulsa is 4-3 on the season, but is coming off of an impressive 31-3 campaign a year ago, coming up a set short of advancing to an NCAA Regional. Following a break, the Blue and White will host Cal Poly at 5 p.m. The Mustangs (3-4) and Blue Raiders will also be meeting for the first time ever. Cal Poly's trip to Murfreesboro is just the second ever by a west coast team, and the first since Loyola Marymount in 2008. The Blue Raiders will look to a multi-faceted attack on offense, headed up by All-Sun Belt Preseason Team members Ashley Adams and Maria Szivos. Preseason Player of the Year Szivos had a big day last Saturday, registering a double-double with 14 kills and 14 digs against Auburn, and Adams, who didn't play in last year's meeting with Illinois, posted 25 kills with a .526 attack percentage to lead the Blue Raiders to a win over Missouri last Thursday. "I think Ashley has been a major factor for us this year," Peck said. "But we have other weapons too. We're not a one-dimensional team. Our middles have been playing well, and we're going to spread it out on offense." The Blue Raiders will open play at the 2011 Middle Tennessee Invitational on Friday at Alumni Memorial Gym against Illinois. First serve is set for 5 p.m.

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