Men's basketball gearing up for exhibition against North Alabama

Blue Raiders tip off Monday at 7:30 p.m. CT

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee men's basketball team welcomes North Alabama for the only exhibition of the 2011-12 season on Monday at 7:30 p.m. CT in Murphy Center. The men's game will begin following the women's contest against Martin Methodist.

GAME INFORMATION

Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Murfreesboro, Tenn.
Facility: Murphy Center

MEDIA INFORMATION

TV: MTTV (Murfreesboro Ch. 10)
Live Video/Audio/Stats: Available here
Play-by-Play: Dick Palmer
Analysis: Kyle Turnham

TEAM INFORMATION

Scouting the Blue Raiders

MT is coming off a 16-16 campaign, including a 10-6 record in the Sun Belt and a second-place finish in the East Division. The bulk of the squad, including three starters and 57.4 percent of the offense, led by the team's second-leading scorer from last season, Jason Jones (13.1 ppg). Although the Blue Raiders have yet to see the court for an exhibition this season, MT played four games during a foreign trip to Canada in August. Iowa State transfer LaRon Dendy nearly averaged a double-double with 14.5 points and 9.8 rebounds per game. Dendy and Oklahoma State transfer Torin Walker will make their debuts for the Blue Raiders after sitting out last season due to NCAA transfer rules.

Scouting the Lions

The Lions finished 13-16 last season, including a 6-6 Gulf South record, placing them fourth in the

East Division. North Alabama returns two starters from the 2010-11 squad and will add nine newcomers this year. The Lions opened their exhibition season on Thursday at Ole Miss. The Rebels pulled away in the second half to claim the 91-62 victory thanks in part to a 58-37 rebounding advantage and 10 blocked shots. Beaumont Beasley led the Lions with 18 points and also grabbed seven rebounds to go along with five assists. Theron Jenkins turned in a double-double with 13 points and 12 rebounds. **SERIES INFORMATION**
Middle Tennessee leads, 13-6

The two teams have met 19 times during the regular season and Monday's meeting will mark the first between the two teams since 2008. MT has won eight in a row over the Lions. **BLUE RAIDER NOTES**

Blue Raiders Picked Second

MT was picked to finish second in the Sun Belt East Division by the league's head coaches in the preseason poll. The Blue Raiders received the fourth-most points overall (59) and one first-place vote. **2011-12 Sun Belt Preseason Poll**
WEST DIVISION
1. Arkansas State (8) - 64 pts
2. Louisiana-Lafyaette (2) - 60 pts
3. North Texas (1) - 50 pts
4. Denver (1) - 40 pts
5. UALR - 26 pts
6. Louisiana-Monroe - 12 pts EAST DIVISION
1. Florida Atlantic (11) - 71 pts
2. Middle Tennessee (1) - 59 pts
3. WKU - 41 pts
4. South Alabama - 33 pts
5. FIU - 31 pts
6. Troy - 17 pts **Jason Jones Named to Preseason All-Sun Belt Team**

Junior guard Jason Jones was named to the 2011-12 Preseason All-Sun Belt Team, as voted on by the league's head coaches. Jones was the team's second-leading scorer last year with 13.1 points per game, while his 14.6 points per game in Sun Belt contests ranked eighth in the league and third among the SBC's returning players this season. In addition to registering 25 double-digit performances, the Memphis, Tenn., native was the team's top scorer in 12 games last season and the top rebounder in 10 last year. **2011-12 SBC Men's Basketball Preseason All-Conference**
First Team
Martavius Adams, Arkansas State, Sr., F
Raymond Taylor, Florida Atlantic, Jr., G
Greg Gantt, Florida Atlantic, Jr., G
J.J. Thomas, Louisiana-Lafayette, So., F
*Augustine Rubit, South Alabama, So., F Second Team
Chase Hallam, Denver, Jr., G
DeJuan Wright, FIU, Sr., G
Jason Jones, Middle Tennessee, Jr., F/G
Tony Mitchell, North Texas, Fr., F
Will Weathers, Troy, Jr., G Third Team
Trey Finn, Arkansas State, Jr., G
Brian Stafford, Denver, Sr., G

Fred Brown, Louisiana-Monroe, Sr., G
Kedrick Hogans, North Texas, Sr., F
D'Andre Williams, UALR, Sr., G * - *Denotes Preseason Player of the Year* **More Than Half of Offense Returns**
The Blue Raiders return 57.4 percent of the offense this season. Junior guard Jason Jones was the team's second-leading scorer last year with 13.1 ppg and accounted for nearly 20 percent of the scoring last season. **Best in the Belt**
MT has been one of the most successful teams in the Sun Belt under Davis. The Blue Raiders lead the Sun Belt, along with Florida Atlantic, with 23 league wins over the past two seasons, finishing 10-6 last year and 13-5 in 2009-10. MT is the only team with double-digit conference victories in each of the past four years, earning 10 victories in 2008-09 and 11 in 2007-08. MT has been dominant on the road as well, collecting 40 conference road wins during Davis' tenure, making the Blue Raiders the winningest Sun Belt road team over the past nine years. **Davis Nearing Record**
Head coach Kermit Davis is on track to become the winningest coach in MT history. Davis is just 11 wins shy of matching former coach Jimmy Earle's 164 all-time coaching victories. He is also one season away from matching Earle, who spent a decade guiding the Blue Raiders, as the longest tenured coaches in program history. **Atop the Toppers**
Middle Tennessee has won four in a row against Western Kentucky dating back to the 2009-10 season. It marks the first such run against its rival in 81 years. **Oh Canada**
The Blue Raiders spent a week in Canada in August to gear up for the 2011-12 campaign. MT won all four games in Calgary, Alberta. LaRon Dendy nearly averaged a double-double (14.5 ppg, 9.8 rpg) to lead the Blue Raiders. In the second contest against Alberta, Raymon Cintron knocked down seven 3-pointers, while Knight notched 22 points in the first game against Alberta.

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