

Blue Raiders set to host EA Sports Maui Invitational Regional Games

MT will face UNC Greensboro Saturday at 5:15 p.m. CT

November 18, 2011 · Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee men's basketball returns home after a successful trip to California as the Blue Raiders look to extend their winning streak when they host UNC Greensboro Saturday. Tipoff is slated for 5:15 p.m. CT at Murphy Center following a 2:30 p.m. contest between Belmont and Towson as part of the EA Sports Maui Invitational Regional Games. Click [here](#) for tournament central, including ticket information, bracket, schedule and live stats. **EA SPORTS**

MAUI INVITATIONAL SCHEDULE

Saturday

Towson vs. Belmont

Time: 2:30 p.m. CT

UNC Greensboro vs. Middle Tennessee

Time: 5:15 p.m. CT

Sunday

Consolation Game

Time: 1 p.m. CT

Championship Game

Time: 3:30 p.m. CT



MEDIA INFORMATION

Radio (MT games only): WGNS (1450 AM, 100.5 FM, 101.9 FM)/WNSR (560 AM)/WMOT (89.5 FM)

Play-by-Play: Chip Walters

Analysis: Kyle Turnham

Live Audio (MT games only): Available [here](#)

Live Stats (all games): Available [here](#)

SERIES INFORMATION

MT vs. UNC Greensboro: Spartans lead, 2-1

Last meeting: UNCG 70, MT 58 in Greensboro, N.C. (11/30/02) MT vs. Belmont: Blue Raiders lead, 19-11

Last meeting: BU 88, MT 87 (2OT) in Nashville, Tenn. (12/7/10)

MT vs. Towson: First meeting

OPPONENT INFORMATION

Scouting the Spartans (1-2)

Coming off a 7-24 finish last year, the Spartans picked up their first win of the 2011-12 season on Thursday night with a 71-58 victory over UNC Pembroke. Prior to that, UNCG dropped back-to-back road contests to Tennessee and Georgetown. Trevis Simpson has led the way for the Spartans with 14.3 points per game, including a 22-point performance in Thursday's victory. **Scouting the Bruins (0-2)**

The Belmont Bruins are the reigning Atlantic Sun Conference regular season and tournament champions. Belmont went 30-5 last season, advancing to the second round of the 2011 NCAA Tournament. The Bruins received 21 votes in the Nov. 14 Associated Press Top 25 poll and are currently No. 3 in the CollegeInsider.com Mid-Major Top 25 poll. Although Belmont is off to an 0-2 start, the Bruins have faced tough competition in No. 6 Duke and No. 10 Memphis. Five Bruins are averaging double-figure scoring, led by J.J. Mann with 15.0 points per game. Ian Clark (14.5 ppg) Kerron Johnson (14.0 ppg), Drew Hanlen (10.5 ppg) and Mick Hedgepeth (10.5 ppg) are also averaging double-digits. **Scouting the Tigers (0-2)**

The Towson men's basketball team is one of the youngest squads in the nation. Under first-year head coach Pat Skerry, the Tigers are the only Division I team to return just one letterwinner off their 2010-11 roster. Additionally, Towson is one of just three teams (Texas, Boston College) to return no starters and the Tigers bring back just 5.3 percent of last year's scoring. The young Tigers began the season at No. 13 Kansas and at No. 17 Michigan, dropping both contests. Senior Robert Nwankwo has been a bright spot for Towson, posting double-doubles against both the Jayhawks (14 points, 10 rebounds) and Wolverines (16 points, 10 rebounds). **All About MT (3-0)**

Starting It Off Right

The Blue Raiders are off to a 3-0 start for the first time since 2001-02 and only the second time since 1995. It marks the first time in program history MT has defeated three Division I opponents to start the season. The last time MT started the season 4-0 was the 1994-95 season. **Shooting the Lights Out**

MT's shooting performance against UCLA was one for the ages. The Blue Raiders smashed the school record, shooting a 71.4 percent clip from the field and surpassing the previous mark of 68.9 percent set in 1981. MT has now had three halves of basketball this season shooting 70 percent or better:

11/15 vs. UCLA 2nd half: 72.0%

11/15 vs. UCLA 1st half: 70.8%

11/11 vs. Austin Peay: 70.0% On record, the Blue Raiders have bettered the 70-percent mark in one half only three times in program history:

.833 vs. Akron (2/4/82)

.800 vs. Tennessee Tech (1/8/81)

.724 vs. Austin Peay (1/12/87) Raining Threes

Not only did MT set a record from the field, but the Blue Raiders also hit a Sun Belt record 90.9 percent of their 3-pointers against UCLA. The mark, also a school record, surpassed the previous league record of 90.0 percent set by UAB in 1986 and is tied for fourth in NCAA history.

(Min. 10 made)

03/06/11 - 93.3%, Ohio State (14-15) vs. Wisconsin

12/03/00 - 91.7%, Drexel (11-12) vs. Delaware

12/11/04 - 91.7%, Northern Arizona (11-12) vs. Willamette

11/15/11 - 90.9%, Middle Tennessee (10-11) at UCLA

02/01/88 - 90.9%, Duke (10-11) vs. Clemson

01/16/93 - 90.9%, Hofstra (10-11) vs. Rhode Island

And One More Thing

MT hit its first nine treys and finished 10-of-11 from beyond the arc against UCLA. The Blue Raiders didn't miss a trey until 1:39 to go in the game. Before the streak ended, MT's 9-for-9 performance matched an NCAA record for highest perfect 3-point field goal percentage in a game, set by Minnesota against Penn State on Jan. 11, 2009.

Spreading the Wealth

MT's 10-of-11 3-point performance against UCLA was far from a one-man show. In fact, it was a six-man show. Six different Blue Raiders hit a triple, led by Raymond Cintron and Bruce Massey, who each went 3-for-3. In addition, five Blue Raiders scored double-figures. Altogether, six Blue Raiders have had at least one double-digit performance this year.

Closing It Out

MT has consistently closed out its opponents early in the first three contests. The Blue Raiders never trailed in the final 29:30 against Austin Peay, 16:24 against Loyola Marymount and 27:31 against UCLA. This means out of the total 120 minutes MT has played this season, the Blue Raiders have gone 73:25 without falling behind, which is 60.8 percent of the time. In fact, MT has never trailed an opponent by more than five points, that deficit coming in the opening minutes against LMU when the Lions jumped out to a 5-0 lead.

Sulton Reigns

Junior forward JT Sulton became the first Blue Raider to record a double-double this season, collecting 12 points and 11 rebound at Loyola Marymount. It marked the third double-double of his career, with his last coming against UALR (21 pts, 11 reb) in the 2011 Sun Belt tournament.

Dendy is Dandy

After sitting out last season due to NCAA transfer rules, LaRon Dendy has made an immediate impact for the Blue Raiders. He netted 21 points in the season-opener against Austin Peay and was one rebound shy of a double-double, collecting nine boards. He notched his first double-double of the season at UCLA, collecting 16 points and 13 rebounds. He has also shown versatility on the court, ranking second on the team with nine assists and having hit a 3-pointer in each of the first three contests.

Tremendous Transfers

In addition to Dendy, three other transfers have seen considerable time for the Blue Raiders through three games: Chipola Junior College transfer Marcos Knight has started the first three games. Knight is the team's second-leading scorer with 15 points in each contest and has a combined 18 rebounds, ranking third on the team with an average of 6.0 boards per game.

Bruce Massey dished out a game-high six assists against Austin Peay, collected three steals and four rebounds to go along with two points. Massey leads the team with 11 assists and is tied for the team high with five steals. In addition, the Dodge City Community College transfer went 3-for-3 from beyond the arc against UCLA, marking his first 3-point attempts of the season.

Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College transfer Raymond Cintron came off the bench and sank a pair

of free throws in his first D-I contest against Austin Peay, then added his first D-I triple against Loyola Marymount. He heated up against UCLA, draining 3-of-3 treys to finish 4-for-4 from the field with a career-high 11 points. **Painting the Town Blue**

In MT's first three games, the Blue Raiders have dominated their opponent in the paint. Against Austin Peay, MT held a 38-16 advantage, while owning a 24-18 edge at Loyola Marymount and 40-28 edge at UCLA. Altogether the Blue Raiders own a 102-62 advantage in the paint.

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-Lafayette (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

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

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 eight 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.

Printed on August 2, 2014

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/56670>