In-state clash set for Wednesday night

Blue Raiders continue long-standing series with TTU

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – The first of three consecutive in-state games for the Middle Tennessee women's basketball team will tip-off at 7 p.m. Wednesday as the Blue Raiders play host to Tennessee Tech inside the historic Murphy Center. Also included in the stretch will be road games at ETSU Saturday and Tennessee Tuesday.

The long-time series, which dates back a three-game set during Middle Tennessee's first varsity season of 1975-76, will continue with the 74th all-time meeting Wednesday. The Golden Eagles hold a slight 38-35 edge, however, the Blue Raiders own a 23-10 mark in games played in Murfreesboro.

Middle Tennessee also has won the last six matchups, all under the direction of head coach Rick Insell, and nine of the last 11 since the Blue Raiders left their former Ohio Valley Conference rivals to join the Sun Belt. Last year, MT claimed a 71-58 decision in Cookeville to match its longest winning streak in the series.

This season, Middle Tennessee is off to a 2-2 start, having alternated wins and losses through the first four games. The Blue Raiders dropped a 60-46 decision Sunday at James Madison in their last contest but own a 1-0 home record this year after knocking off South Dakota State 59-49 Thursday.

Three players average double-figure points, led by 15.0 ppg apiece from juniors Icelyn Elie and Kortni Jones. Sophomore Ebony Rowe also adds to the mix with 13.5 ppg.

On the glass, Rowe tops the squad with 10.0 rebounds per game, just ahead of Elie's 8.8 rpg. Jones has handed out a team-high 13 assists, while Elie and Rowe have swiped a team-best 10 steals apiece.

Jones also has hit roughly one-half of MT's 3-pointers thus far, draining 10 out of the team's 21 from behind the arc.

Tennessee Tech brings a 2-2 record into town Wednesday after defeating Tennessee Wesleyan Monday night in Cookeville, 66-52. The Golden Eagles started the campaign by playing in the Preseason WNIT, winning their opener at ETSU before falling to then-No. 22 UCLA and Long Island.

Head coach Sytia Messer is in her third season in charge of the Tennessee Tech program, guiding the team to a WNIT berth last year after posting a 23-8 record.

Tacarra Hayes leads the Golden Eagles in scoring with 15.3 ppg, while she is also the team's top rebounder at 4.8 per game.

Wednesday's game can be heard on the Blue Raider Network of stations, including WMOT (89.5 FM) and WGNS (1450 AM, 100.5 FM, 101.9 FM) with Dick Palmer and Duane Hickey on the call.

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