Middle Tennessee set to open extended December homestand

Seven of eight games in month at home

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – A stretch of seven out of eight home games begins at 7 p.m. Saturday for the Middle Tennessee women's basketball team, as it plays host to the SEC's Arkansas Razorbacks inside the historic Murphy Center.

The Blue Raiders have played at home just twice thus far through the opening seven contests, picking up victories over South Dakota State (Nov. 17) and Tennessee Tech (Nov. 23). Saturday's clash with the Razorbacks will be the first played in Murfreesboro in the short series between the two schools.

Middle Tennessee enters the game with a 4-3 overall record after dropping an 82-43 decision Tuesday night to No. 8/8 Tennessee in Knoxville, Tenn. The setback snapped the Blue Raiders' two-game winning streak and concluded a three-game run against in-state foes.

Three players are averaging double-figure points thus far, led by junior Kortni Jones' 15.7 per game. She has converted 23 3-pointers among her 35 overall field goals, while handing out a team-high 25 assists.

Joining her in double digits is sophomore Ebony Rowe (14.0 ppg) and junior Icelyn Elie (12.9). Rowe is connecting on a team-best 54.4 percent of her field goals, while also setting the tone on the glass

with 10.0 rebounds per game.

Elie enters the Arkansas contest by averaging 12.9 points, and her 7.9 rebounds per game, rank second on the squad behind Rowe. Elie also has swiped a team-high 20 steals.

The Razorbacks have won their last five to own a 5-1 record entering Saturday's matchup. The second victory in the run was a 55-52 triumph over then-No. 13 Florida State at the WBI Tipoff Classic in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Head coach Tom Collen is in his fifth season at the helm after a five-year stint at Colorado State (1997-2002) and four-year run at Louisville (2003-07).

Arkansas has won each of the previous two meetings between the programs, including a 77-50 win last year in Fayetteville, Ark. The Razorbacks also captured a narrow, one-point decision in February 1983.

Saturday's game will be broadcast on ESPN3.com and also on the Blue Raider Network (WMOT, 89.5 FM; WGNS, 1450 AM, 100.5 FM, 101.9 FM). Veteran Middle Tennessee announcers Dick Palmer and Duane Hickey will have the call on both outlets.

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