Blue Raiders welcome Akron for Sunday showdown

Tipoff slated for 1 p.m. CT in Murphy Center

December 3, 2011 · Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee looks to extend its three-game winning streak when Akron comes to town Sunday. The Blue Raiders and Zips tip off at 1 p.m. CT in Murphy Center.

GAME INFORMATION
Time: 1 p.m. CT
Location: Murfreesboro, Tenn.
Facility: Murphy Center

MEDIA INFORMATION
Radio: WGNS (1450 AM, 101.9 FM, 100.5 FM)/WNSR (560 AM)/WMOT (89.5 FM)
Play-by-Play: Chip Walters
Analysis: Kyle Turnham
Live Video/Audio/Stats: Available here

SERIES INFORMATION
Overall: MT leads, 14-9
In Murfreesboro: MT leads, 9-1
Under Coach Davis: First meeting
Current Streak: MT, 3 games
Last meeting: MT 80, Akron 76 (2/5/90 in Murfreesboro)
Longest MT streak: 4 games (1981-82) // Longest Akron streak: 3 games (1986-87)
Noteworthy: MT and Akron were both members of the Ohio Valley Conference from the 1980-81 season through the 1986-87 season before Akron turned independent.

SCOUTING THE Zips
The defending MAC champions enter Sunday's contest with a 3-3 record. Akron has dropped three of its last four contests, including a 77-56 loss at West Virginia on Monday. The Zips, however, opened the season with a 68-58 victory at Mississippi State, which is currently ranked No. 21/24 in the polls. Akron has a pair of players averaging double figures in Nick Harney (10.8) and Quincy

Diggs, while Zeke Marshall tops the team with a 71.9 field goal percentage. Additionally, the Zips lead the MAC in 3-point percentage offense (.391) and defense (.256). **ALL ABOUT MT**

No. 500

Sunday's contest will mark the 500th game for Kermit Davis as a head coach. He has a career record of 297-202, which includes a 231-177 record at the Division I level. **Quadruple Threat**

It's no surprise MT's offense is not only one of the best in the Sun Belt, but also in the nation. Four of the top six shooters in the league are Blue Raiders. Shawn Jones (.667) ranks first, LaRon Dendy (.574) is third, JT Sulton (.541) is fifth and Marcos Knight (.535.) rounds out the group in sixth. **It's Not Just Offense**

While the Blue Raider offense has been hot, the defense is no slouch either. MT leads the Sun Belt in field goal percentage defense (.384) and 3-point defense (.275), holding each of its opponents under 50 percent shooting thus far. In fact, six of eight opponents have shot under 40 percent against the Blue Raiders. **Oden in the Clutch**

Senior guard Jimmy Oden was clutch against Tennessee State on Dec. 1. Oden finished with a career-high 14 points, going 11-for-12 from the stripe. In the final two minutes of the contest, Oden hit 10 consecutive free throws to seal the 77-62 victory. **Statistically Sound**

MT is currently one of the hottest offensive teams in the nation, leading the country in field goal percentage (.545) according to the NCAA as of Nov. 27. Additionally, the Blue Raiders rank in the top 35 in four other categories:

Field Goal Percentage: 1st (.545)
3-Point Percentage: 11th (.445)
Assists Per Game: 22nd (16.9)
Scoring Offense: 31st (81.1)
Scoring Margin: 35th (16.4)

Nation Taking Notice

The Blue Raiders were listed among those receiving votes in the third week of the season. MT received two votes for the Nov. 21 edition of the poll. The Blue Raiders currently rank No. 22 in the CollegeInsider.com Mid-Major Top 25. **Starting It Off Right**

The Blue Raiders got off to a 4-0 start this season, marking the first 4-0 start since the 1994-95 season. It also marked the first time in program history MT defeated three Division I opponents to open the season. The 7-1 start for MT is the best since 1986-87 when the Blue Raiders also started 7-1. An 8-1 start would be the best since 1980-81 when MT started 12-1. **Davis Nearing Record**

Head coach Kermit Davis is on track to become the winningest coach in MT history. Davis is four wins shy of matching former coach Jimmy Earle's 164 all-time coaching victories. This season, Davis joins Earle, who spent a decade guiding the Blue Raiders, as the longest tenured coaches in program history. **Keeping Up with the Jones'**

Both Shawn and Jason Jones have played key roles for the Blue Raiders this season. Shawn has had three double-figure games, including 13 points on a 6-of-6 performance against Austin Peay on Nov. 26. He is tied for 16th nationally with a .667 shooting percentage, according to ESPN.com, and also ranks second on the team with 11 blocks. After missing the first four games, Jason has since produced three double-figure games in four appearances. He also has chipped in six assists and three steals. **Playing Extra**

MT and Belmont played into double overtime on Nov. 20, marking the first overtime game of the season for the Blue Raiders. Last season, MT played four overtime games, including one double-overtime contest, ironically, a loss to Belmont on Dec. 7, 2010. The two contests against Belmont are the only double-overtime games for the Blue Raiders since a triple overtime loss to New Mexico

State in 2002. **Shooting the Lights Out**

MT's shooting performance against UCLA on Nov. 15 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 four halves of basketball this season shooting 70 percent or better:

11/22 vs Cumberland 2nd half: 75.0%
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 had only bettered the 70-percent mark in one half three times in program history prior to this year:

.833 vs. Akron (2/4/82)
.800 vs. Tennessee Tech (1/8/81)
.724 vs. Austin Peay (1/12/87)

Raining Three's

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, 10 Blue Raiders have had at least one double-digit performance this year.

It's Good to be 80

With multiple scoring threats, it's no surprise MT has cracked the 80-point mark six times in the first eight games. The Blue Raiders scored 80 or more only seven times all of last season. **Closing It Out**

MT consistently closed out its opponents early in six of the first seven contests. The Blue Raiders never trailed in the final 29:30 against Austin Peay, 16:24 against Loyola Marymount, 27:31 against UCLA, 22:15 against UNCG and 39:12 against Cumberland. At Austin Peay, MT led for the entire contest, then led for the final 12:23 at Tennessee State. This means out of the total 280 minutes in those contests, the Blue Raiders went 158:15 without falling behind, which is nearly 57 percent of the time. **Hammonds Stepping Up**

Sophomore guard Kerry Hammonds reached double-figures for the third time in his career with 11 points against Cumberland, including a 3-for-3 performance from beyond the arc. Hammonds also recorded career-highs in assists (5) and blocks (4). **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. Sulton has reached double figures in five out of eight contests this season. **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 first on the team in scoring (14.0 ppg) and blocks (12) and third on the team with 17 assists. **Tremendous Transfers**

In addition to Dendy, three other transfers have seen considerable time for the Blue Raiders through seven games:

Chipola Junior College transfer Marcos Knight has started each contest. Knight is the team's second-leading scorer with 13.9 points per game points and tops the team with 6.6 rebounds per game. He posted his first career double-double with 17 points and 11 rebounds against Belmont. Knight became the third Blue Raider to post a double-double this season and has reached double-figures in all but one contest.

Bruce Massey dished out a career-high eight assists against Belmont and leads the team with 29 assists this season. 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, and scored a season-high 14 points. He made it back-to-back games in double figures with 11 against UNC Greensboro. His 15 steals are second to Knight's 16.

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 11 points. He followed that performance with a career day against Belmont, going 5-for-9 from 3-point land en route to a career-high 18 points. **Painting the Town Blue**

In seven out of the first eight games, the Blue Raiders have dominated their opponent in the paint. Altogether the Blue Raiders own a 268-177 advantage in the paint.

vs. Austin Peay: 38-16 (+22)
at LMU: 24-18 (+6)
at UCLA: 40-28 (+12)
vs. UNCG: 28-18 (+10)
vs. Belmont: 34-42 (-8)
vs. Cumberland: 42-8 (+34)
at Austin Peay: 34-23 (+11)
at Tennessee State: 28-24 (+4)