Trip to south Florida opens Thursday afternoon against Panthers

Second meeting of season with East Division foe

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – The Middle Tennessee women's basketball team will begin its first extended conference road trip of the season when it travels to Miami to face the FIU Panthers at 4:30 p.m. (CST) Thursday inside the U.S. Century Bank Arena. The Blue Raiders own a six-game win streak entering the contest, having most recently picked up a 104-53 victory over Louisiana Saturday to improve their overall record to 12-5 and remain as the lone unbeaten in league play with a 4-0 mark. Five players reached double-figure scoring in the win over the Ragin' Cajuns and Middle Tennessee hauled 50 team rebounds, the highest total in head coach Rick Insell's tenure. The Blue Raiders were led by junior Icelyn Elie's double-double of 22 points and 12 rebounds. FIU is on a winning streak of its own coming into Thursday, having captured victories in its last four games since the first meeting between the two schools this year. The Panthers, coached by 33rd-year head coach Cindy Russo, have won their last six at home and are 8-2 this season when playing in Miami. Thursday's tilt will be a matchup of the last two Sun Belt Players of the Week, as MT's Ebony Rowe claimed the honor Jan. 2 followed by this week's recipient, FIU's Jerica Coley. Coley netted a career-high 36 points in the Panthers' last game, a 65-55 triumph over ULM Saturday. It marked her sixth 30-plus point outing of the campaign. Middle Tennessee captured a 58-53 win in the first meeting between the two schools this year, Dec. 21 in Murfreesboro, as it

opened its 12th season as a Sun Belt member. The Blue Raiders held on for the victory in their final contest before the holiday break with three players scoring in double digits, including 18 from Kortni Jones to take game-high honors. Rowe added 15 points and 13 rebounds, while Elie chipped in 10 points. The triumph improved MT's record in the all-time series to 15-8, including back-to-back victories after a WBCA Pink Zone triumph over the Panthers last February inside the historic Murphy Center. Dick Palmer will call all the action on the Blue Raider Network of WMOT (89.5 FM) and WGNS (1450 AM, 100.5 FM, 101.9 FM). In addition, 2012 Sun Belt Conference Tournament booklets are now on sale at the Middle Tennessee athletic ticket office. Cost per booklet is $83 and includes a ticket to all eight sessions of the Sun Belt Championships, March 3-6, in Hot Springs, Ark. Fans can purchase booklets by calling 1-888-YES-MTSU or visiting goblueraiders.com. Also, it was announced that due to the Blue Raider men's game at Denver Feb. 4 being now televised on either ESPN or ESPN2, the Middle Tennessee women's contest against the Pioneers the same day has been shifted to 5:30 p.m. (CST) to accommodate the TV broadcast.

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