Softball faces tough test at South Alabama

Series begins Saturday with DH at 1 p.m.

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MOBILE, Ala. -- The Middle Tennessee softball team returns to the road this weekend when the team travels to Mobile, Ala., to take on South Alabama in a three-game Sun Belt series beginning Saturday.

Game 1 of Saturday's doubleheader is set for 1 p.m. CT with the second contest following at 3 p.m. The teams will close the series on Sunday at noon.

The Blue Raiders (12-15, 2-4 Sun Belt) are coming off a doubleheader split with Jacksonville State on Tuesday. After their comeback came up just short in a Game 1 8-7 defeat, the squad responded with a 10-2 five-inning victory to cap the day.

South Alabama enters play this weekend with a 20-9 record overall, 8-2 in the Sun Belt. The Jaguars knocked off Troy 6-3 in a single game on Wednesday night following taking two-of-three from Florida Atlantic last weekend in Boca Raton, Fla.

"It is pivotal that we come out ready to play our best this weekend as South Alabama presents us with a tough challenge," said Middle Tennessee head coach Sue Nevar. "If we play to our potential, I like our chances of having a good weekend."

Caty Jutson and Shelby Stinnett have guided the Blue Raiders in the circle this season. Stinnett pitched all five innings in Middle Tennessee's Game 2 win against Jacksonville State, allowing just a pair of first-inning runs en route to her third-consecutive complete-game victory. She now leads the team with five complete games including two shutout performances and has allowed just three

earned runs over her last 19.1 innings pitched to lower her ERA to a team-low 2.68.

Jutson meanwhile is second on the squad with four complete games with one coming in a shutout performance. The senior paces the pitching staff with 63.2 innings pitched on the season while making 17 appearances including 10 starts. Like Stinnett, she has been especially impressive of late, surrendering just four earned runs in her previous 19.2 innings tossed.

Senior catcher Natalie Ysais has spearheaded a balanced Middle Tennessee attack at the plate recently. She has tallied a .417 batting average over her last nine games with three home runs and nine runs batted in.

The Blue Raiders have also gotten solid play recently from freshman Samantha Nieves. The Covina, Calif., native has batted .450 over her last nine games while continuing her solid play at shortstop as she has committed just one error in her previous 15 games.

Live stats will be available for each game of the series and can be accessed here. Periodic updates will also be provided via the Middle Tennessee softball social media pages on Twitter @MT_Softball and on Facebook at the MTSU Softball page.

Fans are encouraged to follow the Blue Raiders via Facebook and Twitter during their road trip to Mobile. Behind-the-scenes pictures and videos will be uploaded to the sites throughout the weekend.

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