Softball hosts Western Kentucky in crucial Senior Day doubleheader

Senior Day, Pink Game festivities on tap

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -- The Middle Tennessee softball team has plenty on the line this weekend as the Blue Raiders welcome Western Kentucky to Murfreesboro for a doubleheader Saturday beginning at 1 p.m. CT.

This weekend's doubleheader will be the conclusion of the squads' three-game season series. The Blue Raiders defeated the Lady Toppers 8-4 on April 24 in Bowling Green.

Middle Tennessee (16-31, 5-16 Sun Belt) will not be without motivation on Saturday against conference foe Western Kentucky (29-23-1, 9-12-1 Sun Belt). In addition to the long-time animosity that exists between the two schools, the Blue Raiders will be playing for a berth in next week's Sun Belt Tournament. The squad is currently tied with Florida Atlantic for the eighth and final spot in the field and Saturday's doubleheader coupled with the Owls' results this weekend against FIU will determine who receives the final berth. Also, with Saturday being Senior Day, the squad will be battling to send out its five seniors with what would certainly be a memorable sweep of the Lady Toppers.

Saturday's opener will be the 44th all-time meeting on the diamond between the two schools. Middle Tennessee currently holds a 23-21 lead in the series following last month's victory.

"There is certainly lots on the line this weekend," said Middle Tennessee head coach Sue Nevar. "We have been playing very good ball lately and have had a great week of practice, so we feel extremely prepared and are looking forward to Saturday. We are also very excited to honor our five seniors this weekend and we would love to send them out the right way."

Senior Caty Jutson enters play Saturday coming off a pair of solid performances including a terrific outing in relief the last time the two squads met. The Phoenix, Ariz., product allowed just one earned

run in six innings to help lead the Blue Raiders to their 8-4 victory. She followed that up with a complete game last weekend against Florida Atlantic in which she limited the Owls to two earned runs en route to Middle Tennessee's 11-4 win.

The Blue Raiders have been led at the dish by their trio of senior starters. Natalie Ysais hit .500 last week to up her season average to .289. She also added a home run, four RBIs and three runs scored to help Middle Tennessee to a 3-1 record. Meanwhile Kelsey Woodruff has tallied eight hits in her last 18 at-bats while smashing three long balls, knocking in seven runs and crossing the plate five times.

Kaycee Popham also had a productive final week of April at the plate. The Silver Creek, Ga., native has hit .471 over her last five games with a home run and five runs scored. She paces the team with 10 dingers, 27 RBIs and 27 runs scored.

Live stats will be available for both games of the doubleheader 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 arrive early on Saturday as Middle Tennessee's five seniors will be honored prior to the opener. The festivities are scheduled to get under way at approximately 12:35 p.m. Also, please enjoy a closer look at this year's seniors by taking a look at the Senior Profiles linked below. 2012 Blue Raider Senior Profiles

Meanwhile the mother of Blue Raider freshman Bethany Jones will throw out the first pitch prior to Game 2 as Middle Tennessee will also be celebrating Pink Day.

The Blue Raiders will know their status for the Sun Belt Tournament by the end of the day Saturday. Stay tuned to the teams' social media pages throughout the weekend for updates.

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