# Softball Season in Review

## Looking back at 2012

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**MURFREESBORO, Tenn.** -- The Middle Tennessee softball season came to a close this past weekend with the Blue Raiders dropping a pair of games to Western Kentucky and consequently failing to qualify for the 2012 Sun Belt Softball Tournament.

Middle Tennessee finished tied for eighth place in the Sun Belt with Florida Atlantic. However, due to the Owls holding the tiebreaker advantage, they received the No. 8 seed, leaving the Blue Raiders out of this year's field.

While the season may have ended in disappointing fashion, the Blue Raiders achieved many great successes in 2012.

The squad began the season by going 3-1 in both the College of Charleston Cougar Classic and the Lipscomb Lady Bison Classic during its preconference schedule. In Charleston, S.C., the Blue Raiders knocked off the host Cougars as well as Virginia Tech and Wagner. Meanwhile at the tournament in Nashville, the team posted wins over Drake, Eastern Michigan and Alabama State in composing a three-game winning streak.

The three-game stretch was not the longest of the season for Middle Tennessee, however. The Blue Raiders registered four-straight victories at Blue Raider Field in late March. After sweeping a doubleheader from Eastern Illinois, the squad took the first two games of its three game series with UL-Monroe.

The 2012 campaign also featured its share of memorable moments. Middle Tennessee tallied three walk-off wins this season highlighted by Kristi Marquez's game-winning single in the bottom of the ninth against FIU on April 18. Additionally, the team's victory over Drake at the Lady Bison Classic

came via Laura Dukes' solo home run in the top of the seventh which broke a 1-1 tie and sent the team on to its 2-1 win.

Several Blue Raiders set new single-season and career records this year. Senior first baseman Kaycee Popham became the all-time leader in Middle Tennessee history with 1,284 career putouts. Meanwhile junior center fielder Nina Davenport took over the top spot in the all-time triples category as she has now tallied 10 during her first three years in Murfreesboro. In addition, three Blue Raiders finished the season in the top 10 of the single-season home run chart. Popham's 10 long balls places her 2012 season tied for second on the list while senior Kelsey Woodruff is tied for fifth with eight and sophomore Nina Dever is tied for eighth overall with seven dingers.

Middle Tennessee will say goodbye to a well-accomplished group of five seniors from 2012. Pitcher Caty Jutson, first baseman Kaycee Popham, right fielder Kelsey Woodruff and catchers Abbey Sanders and Natalie Ysais all played very different but vital roles during their careers in Murfreesboro. The quintet made a tremendous mark on the program and will leave with many great memories from their time spent wearing blue.

While the team will undoubtedly face a tough challenge in replacing this year's seniors, many underclassmen made tremendous strides this season and showed that they are ready to take the lead of the squad. Sophomore Kayla Toney will lead a group of six returning starters ready to take the program to the next level.

Middle Tennessee will also welcome a new class of Blue Raiders to the team next season. Joining a talented bunch of Blue Raiders that is hungry to win, the future certainly looks bright for Middle Tennessee softball.

Fans are encouraged to enjoy a closer look at this year's seniors with the Senior Profiles linked below.

2012 Blue Raider Senior Profiles

Continue to follow the Blue Raider softball team during the offseason on Twitter @MT_Softball and on Facebook at the MT Softball page. Photos and videos will continue to be posted as we keep up with the team while they are away from the diamond. Also, stay up-to-date on the team with the latest softball news and information at the "Softball Notebook" page which can be found here.

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