MT opens SBC Tournament action on Wednesday

No. 2 seed Raiders take on No. 7 seed USA

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Sun Belt Conference Tournament action opens on Wednesday as No. 2 seed Middle Tennessee takes on host No. 7 South Alabama in a quarterfinals match at 7 p.m.

The Raiders (13-4-1, 8-1-1 Sun Belt) are coming off a 1-1 double-overtime draw with WKU on Friday evening. The tie gave the Blue Raiders their first regular season Sun Belt title since 2004. MT shared the championship with FIU and North Texas.

Coming into tournament play, the Raiders rank second nationally with a 3.00 scoring offense. MT is led offensively by senior Paige Goeglein, who has 14 goals for 32 points in 18 matches this season. MT has four others with double-digit points: Whitney Jorgenson (23), Kate Loye (20), Regina Thomas (16) and Tori Hawkins.

South Alabama (8-9-3, 3-5-2 SBC) enters the 2012 Sun Belt Tournament as the No. 7 seed after finishing conference play with a 3-5-2 record. The Jaguars closed the regular season with a 2-1 loss to Troy in overtime. Clarissa Hernandez leads South Alabama with six goals and four assists. Goalkeeper Melissa Drish is second in the Sun Belt in save percentage (.848) and fourth in goals against average (1.03). South Alabama is 5-3-2 at home this season.

MT leads the overall series with South Alabama 8-6-1. The Blue Raiders scored two goals 25 seconds apart in the second half to defeat the Jaguars 2-1 at Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium on Oct. 14. The two sides have met twice in the Sun Belt Tournament with each team winning one. In 2005, South Alabama won 1-nil in Mobile with MT returning the favor 2-0 in 2006 in Lafayette, La.

The winner of the Middle Tennessee/South Alabama match on Wednesday will face either No. 3 FIU or No. 6 Troy in the semifinals Friday night at 7 p.m. The Blue Raiders beat both the Panthers and

the Trojans by identical 3-1 scores during the regular season. The Blue Raiders last reached the semifinals of the Sun Belt Tournament in 2010 when MT defeated WKU on penalty kicks to reach the championship match. MT won the conference tournament that year as well.

Live stats and video of this Wednesday's quarterfinal match will be available online thru SunBeltSports.org.

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