

Blue Raiders welcome Alabama State in season-opener Friday

Tipoff slated for 7:45 p.m.

November 8, 2012 · @MTAthletics

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Basketball season officially arrives on Friday when the Blue Raiders host Alabama State in the regular season opener at 7:45 p.m. in Murphy Center. The first 250 students that enter beginning with the women's game at 5:30 p.m. will receive a free t-shirt with their student ID.



Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for ages 3-11 and kids two and

under are free. Students receive free admission with a valid MTSU ID and student guest tickets are \$5. Tickets are available on the day of the game at Murphy Center or prior to the contest by visiting the Blue Raider Ticket Office at Gate 1A of Floyd Stadium or by calling 1-888-YES-MTSU. Tickets are also available online by clicking [here](#).

GAME INFORMATION

Date: Friday, Nov. 9

Time: 7:45 p.m. CT

Location: Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Facility: Murphy Center

MEDIA INFORMATION

Radio: WNSR (560 AM)/WMOT (89.5 FM)/Delayed at 11 p.m. on WGNS (1450 AM, 101.9 FM, 100.5 FM)

Play-by-Play: Chip Walters

Analysis: Kyle Turnham

Live Video/Audio/Stats: Available [here](#).

Twitter: @MT_MBB, @MTAthletics

SERIES INFORMATION

Overall: MT leads, 6-2

At MT: MT leads, 5-0

Under Davis: MT leads, 2-0

First meeting: MT 132, ASU 101 (1/15/86 in Murfreesboro)

Last meeting: MT 67, ASU 62 (12/17/03 in Montgomery)

Last meeting in Murfreesboro: MT 71, ASU 48 (12/4/03)

Current Streak: MT, three games

BLUE RAIDER FASTBREAK POINTS

--MT is one of seven schools in the country receiving votes or ranked in the ESPN/USA Today Coaches Poll in football, men's and women's basketball. It is the only non-AQ school in the mix, as Notre Dame, Michigan, Louisville, Georgia, Stanford and UCLA comprise the group.

--MT was unanimously picked to win the Sun Belt East Division this year by the league's head coaches.

--Four Blue Raiders earned preseason all-conference honors. Marcos Knight was named to the first team, JT Sulton and Bruce Massey to the second team and Raymond Cintron to the third team.

--Raymond Cintron was rated as the No. 39 shooter in the country according to CBSSports.com's Top 50 shooters.

--MT received three votes in the preseason ESPN/USA Today Coaches Poll.

--MT returns 10 of its top 12 scorers from last season.

--MT hit 17 3-pointers in the exhibition against Auburn-Montgomery, marking what would have been a school record in a regular season game.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2011-12

--MT won the Sun Belt regular season championship with a 14-2 league record.

--The Blue Raiders earned an NIT bid and made it the quarterfinals, knocking off Marshall and Tennessee in the first two rounds. It marked MT's first win in the postseason since 1989, the first win over the Vols since 1988 and the first win at Tennessee in program history.

--LaRon Dendy was named the 2012 Sun Belt Player of the Year and Kermit Davis earned the league's Coach of the Year honor. It was the first time MT received the Sun Belt's top player award, while the top coaching accolade was the second for Davis.

--Marcos Knight was named second-team all-conference and JT Sulton earned third-team honors.

--With MT's 71-66 win over FIU on Dec. 29, 2011, head coach Kermit Davis surpassed Jimmy Earle as MT's all-time winningest coach. It marked Davis' 165th MT victory, eclipsing Earle's mark of 164.

--MT's 27 wins and 14 league victories were both the most in program history.

--MT's 20-2 start was the best in program history, topping the previous mark of 18-2 in the 1974-75 season.

--MT's 10-0 league start was the best in program history. It topped the previous mark of 9-0 set in the 1974-75 season when the Blue Raiders were a member of the OVC.

--MT's 12-game winning streak from Dec. 10 through Jan. 26 was the longest in 26 years and is tied for the third-longest in school history.

--MT finished the season ranked fourth in the country in field goal percentage. The Blue Raiders shot 49.5 percent from the field.

--MT set a school-record with a 71.4 shooting percentage at UCLA on Nov. 15. The Blue Raiders shot 70.8 percent in the first half and 72 percent in the second half of the contest.

--The Blue Raiders' 11 road wins were the most in program history.

--MT had the sixth largest attendance increase in college basketball.

SCOUTING ALABAMA STATE

--Alabama State defeated Huntingdon College, 90-73, before earning a 69-58 win over Fort Valley

State in a pair of exhibitions.

--The Hornets return seven letterwinners, including one starter.

--ASU's roster features 15 newcomers.

--Joshua Freelove led the Hornets in the pair of exhibition games, averaging 15.5 points per game.

--Stephawn Brown was the leading rebounder with 10.5 boards per game.

ALL ABOUT MT

EXHIBITION RECAP

MT hit 17 3-pointers in the 107-65 exhibition victory over Auburn-Montgomery on Monday. Senior guard James Gallman paced the Blue Raiders with a 7-of-9 performance from beyond the arc for 21 points. Senior guard Raymond Cintron added four triples and 14 points. Newcomers Neiko Hunter and Trantell Knight also made solid debuts, as Hunter scored 10 points and Knight produced a game-high seven assists.

AMONG THE NATION'S ELITE

MT is one of just seven schools in the country with the football, men's and women's basketball teams each currently receiving votes or ranked in the ESPN/USA Today Coaches Polls. Men's basketball received three votes in the preseason poll, the women's team received 28 votes in the preseason poll and football received two votes in the latest poll. The men's and women's basketball teams represent the only Sun Belt teams in their respective polls.

RECEIVING VOTES

On the heels a record-breaking season, the 2012-13 Blue Raider men's basketball team is already receiving recognition in the USA Today coaches' preseason poll. MT, the Sun Belt's only representative in the poll, received three votes after finishing 27-7 last season.

BLUE RAIDERS PICKED TO WIN EAST

MT was picked unanimously to win the Sun Belt's East Division according to the preseason coaches' poll released by the league on Oct. 24.

Four Blue Raiders were selected to the preseason all-conference teams, the most of any school. Senior guard Marcos Knight earned a first-team nod, senior forward JT Sulton and senior guard Bruce Massey were voted to the second team, and senior guard Raymond Cintron was named to the third team.

CINTRON RECEIVES RECOGNITION

Raymond Cintron was listed at No. 39 on CBSSports.com's Top 50 shooters for the upcoming season after hitting 43.2 percent of his shots from beyond the arc last season. The San Juan, Puerto Rico, native ranked sixth in the Sun Belt in 3-point shooting and was ninth with 2.0 treys per game. Overall, Cintron shot 45 percent from the field and averaged 8.4 points per game. Middle Tennessee will also face four shooters on the list throughout the 2012-13 season. Florida's Erik Murphy, Texas Southern's Omar Strong, Belmont's Ian Clark and Tennessee State's Robert Covington were listed among the top 50.

DENDY UPDATE

The regular season is underway for former Blue Raider LaRon Dendy. The 2012 Sun Belt Player of the Year has started all four games for Kolossos this year and has helped the Greek team to a 3-1 record. The Greenville, S.C., native is currently the team's leading scorer, averaging 19.0 points per

game.

SEASON TICKETS

Season tickets are also on sale now for \$140, or purchase both men's and women's season tickets for \$199. Price includes a ticket to the Blue Raiders' game against the Commodores at Bridgestone Arena. To purchase, call the Blue Raider Ticket Office at 1-888-YES-MTSU or to buy online, click [here](#).

SEASON PREVIEW

The Blue Raiders begin the highly anticipated 2012-13 campaign with 10 of their top 12 scorers returning from last season's record-breaking squad. MT finished 27-7, marking the most wins in program history, and 14-2 in the Sun Belt, which set a school mark for league wins. After earning wins over UCLA and Ole Miss during the regular season, MT earned its first postseason berth since 1989 in an NIT bid. The Blue Raiders knocked off Marshall in the first round before downing Tennessee for the first time since the 1988 NIT, but MT's run ended in the quarterfinals against Minnesota.

Despite the graduation of leading-scorer and 2012 Sun Belt Player of the Year LaRon Dendy, the Blue Raiders return four starters and a wealth of experience in six seniors. Senior guard Marcos Knight leads the way as the team's top returning scorer with 11.8 points per game last season. A second-team all-conference performer last year, Knight posted 24 double-digit games and was also named to the NABC All-District Second Team. The Rentz, Ga., native is the only returner that started every game last season.

Senior forward JT Sulton, along with Knight, is the top returning rebounder at 5.2 boards per game in 2011-12. One of the league's most accurate shooters a year ago, Sulton's 53.3 percent field goal shooting was fifth in the Sun Belt, and he finished the season third on the team with 10.3 points per game. The Yazoo City, Miss., native earned third-team all-league honors, posted 20 double-figure games and started all but one contest as a junior.

Undoubtedly, senior guard Bruce Massey's most memorable performance came in the Blue Raiders' 71-64 NIT victory at Tennessee. The defensive specialist had a breakout game, posting his first double-double with 20 points and 10 rebounds, both career-highs. Massey ranked as the league's best in assist-to-turnover ratio (2.1) throughout the season and finished fourth in assists (3.9) and steals (1.6).

In addition to Knight, Sulton and Massey as last year's regular starters, senior guard Raymond Cintron started 17 contests and finished the 2011-12 season as one of the league's best 3-point shooters. A native of San Juan, Puerto Rico, Cintron ranked sixth in the Sun Belt in 3-point field goal percentage (.432) and ninth in 3-pointers per game (2.0). The team's fourth-leading scorer with 8.4 points per game, Cintron posted 15 double-digit performances and led the squad with a 90.7 free throw percentage.

It isn't just the regular starters from last season, however, that form the foundation for the 2012-13 squad. MT also returns a deep bench, with four other players who also made starts during last year's campaign. Junior guard Kerry Hammonds made 11 starts and averaged 4.9 points per game. Senior guard Jason Jones looks to bounce back from a back injury that hampered most of his junior year, where he made three starts and averaged 4.9 points per game. Senior guard James Gallman made

three starts last year and finished the season with the team's second-most 3-pointers. Junior forward Shawn Jones also earned a start last year and averaged 7.3 points per game to go along with 37 blocks, second-most on the team behind Dendy.

Junior center Torin Walker, sophomore forward Jacquez Rozier and junior guard Zane Gibson round out the returning Blue Raiders, while junior guard Trantell Knight and junior forward Neiko Hunter will likely be the impact newcomers.

NOTES FROM 2011-12

BLUE RAIDERS RAKE IN AWARDS

Middle Tennessee head coach Kermit Davis was named the Sun Belt Coach of the Year and senior forward LaRon Dendy took home the Sun Belt Player of the Year honor. In addition to Dendy also earning first-team accolades, Marcos Knight was named to the all-conference second team and JT Sulton took home third-team honors. MT's three All-Sun Belt selections were the most since joining the league for the 2000-01 season. The last time at least three Blue Raiders were named to all-conference teams was in 1989 when MT had two on the All-OVC First Team and one on the second team.

It also marked the first time a Blue Raider earned the Sun Belt's top player award, while Davis earned the league's top coaching honor for the second time in his tenure, having also received the accolade in 2003. Davis and Dendy become the first duo from the same school to take home coach and player of the year honors since Denver's Terry Carroll and Yemi Nicholson did so in 2005.

STELLAR SHOOTING

The Blue Raiders finished the 2011-12 campaign as one of the top shooting teams in the country. Middle Tennessee ranked fourth nationally with a 49.5 field goal percentage. Only Missouri (50.4), Creighton (50.4) and Iona (50.2) topped the Blue Raiders.

DENDY MAKES BLUE RAIDER HISTORY

Dendy became MT's first conference player of the year since Jerry Beck earned Ohio Valley Conference Player of the Year honors in 1981 and 1982. He was the fourth Blue Raider to earn a league's player of the year award, joining Tim Sisneros (1976) and George Sorrell (1975), in addition to Beck. He was also the fourth Blue Raider to earn All-Sun Belt First Team honors, along with Lee Nosse, Tommy Gunn and Desmond Yates.

A MASSEY-TERFUL PERFORMANCE

Bruce Massey finished with career highs in points (20), rebounds (10), field goals (6) and free throws (8) against Tennessee in the second round of the NIT. He was the only Blue Raider during the season to lead the team in points, rebounds, assists, blocks and steals all in one game. He had four assists, the Blue Raiders' only block and three steals in the contest.

HOME SWEET HOME

With 15 wins at home last season, the Blue Raiders have collected double-digit home victories in each of the past five seasons and in eight out of 10 years during Davis' tenure. The 15 home wins also tied for the most in program history. MT has twice previously won 15 home games (1978-88, 1975-75), each of those seasons including two postseason home victories.

MT's 8-0 home record in conference play was the best since the Blue Raiders finished 6-0 in 1988-89 as a member of the OVC. It marks the sixth time in program history MT has finished undefeated

at home in conference play, but the first time during the Sun Belt era.

DENDY CLAIMS LOU HENSON FAN VOTE

LaRon Dendy took first place in the fan vote for the Lou Henson Player of the Year Award, edging Creighton's Doug McDermott by 58 votes to claim the title. Murray State's Isaiah Canaan rounded out the top three. Dendy received 773 votes, accounting for 16.53 percent of the overall voting. McDermott collected 715 votes (15.29%) and Canaan had 457 votes (9.78%). The Lou Henson Award is presented annually to the top mid-major player in Division I basketball.

NABC HONOREES

LaRon Dendy and Marcos Knight earned NABC All-District 24 honors. Dendy was named to the first team, while Knight received second-team accolades. Dendy and Knight represent the third and fourth NABC selections in MT history, joining James Washington and Desmond Yates, who each earned first-team honors. It marked the first year the Blue Raiders have had multiple honorees in the same season.

ANOTHER MILESTONE

The Blue Raiders added to an already historic season with their first postseason victory since 1989. The 86-78 win over Marshall marked the first postseason victory for MT since 1989 when the Blue Raiders earned a 97-83 win over Florida State in the NCAA tournament. The last time MT won an NIT game was in 1988 against Georgia in the tournament's second round, a game that also took place in Murfreesboro. Ironically, the team the Blue Raiders defeated in the first round of the 1988 NIT was Tennessee and MT is now 2-0 against the Vols in the postseason. MT snapped a nine-game skid against the Vols and earned its first win at Tennessee.

AND MAKING SUN BELT HISTORY

With the win over Marshall, the Blue Raiders became the first Sun Belt team to win a game in the NIT since WKU in 2005. The win over Tennessee made MT the first Sun Belt team since UAB in 1989 to advance past the second round of the tournament. UAB made it all the way to the semifinals before falling to St. John's, then defeated Michigan State in the consolation final.

AMONG THE NATION'S ELITE

The Blue Raiders were one of 10 teams with at least 26 wins and 10 road wins last season. All 10 teams qualified for postseason play, with seven of them among the NCAA field of 64 (Harvard, Murray State, Belmont, Lehigh, Creighton, VCU, Wichita State) and three in the NIT (MT, Oral Roberts, Drexel). Only four teams, including the Blue Raiders, have at least 27 wins and 11 road wins (Murray State, Lehigh, Drexel).

NATION TAKING NOTICE

MT received votes for 11 consecutive weeks in the ESPN/USA Today Coaches Poll before falling out in the poll released March 12. The Blue Raiders also received votes in the AP Top 25 earlier twice this season. MT garnered nine votes on Jan. 23 and also received two votes for the Nov. 21 edition of the AP poll. It marked the first time in program history the Blue Raiders have received votes in either poll.

RECORDS ABOUND

With 27 wins this season, the Blue Raiders set a new single-season school record. MT had 23 wins four times, with the most recent coming in the 1988-89 season. The Blue Raiders also cracked the

20-win mark for the first time since the 1990-91 season when they went 21-9. The last time MT cracked the 20-win mark during the regular season was the 1988-89 season when the Blue Raiders were 23-8, including three postseason victories.

MT also set the record for most league wins in a season with 14. The Blue Raiders' previous record was 13 Sun Belt wins in 2009-10. MT's 37 league wins over the past three seasons are the most of any Sun Belt team.

SUN BELT CHAMPIONS

With the win over Florida Atlantic on Feb. 18, MT clinched the Sun Belt's regular-season title. Additionally, MT's victory over ULM clinched the league's best record, as the Blue Raiders finished 14-2. The Blue Raiders have now finished atop the Sun Belt standings in two of the past three seasons, tying Troy and North Texas with a 13-5 record in 2009-10.

ROAD WARRIORS

MT finished the season 11-4 on the road after starting the season 4-0 in away contests, marking the first time since 1967-68 the Blue Raiders won four straight road games to start the season. The last time MT won at least four consecutive road games in a season was 2006-07 when MT claimed five in a row during league play.

The Blue Raiders' 11 road victories were tied for the sixth-most nationally and are the most in program history. MT had won nine road games three times in history, with the most recent coming in the 1997-98 season. With six road victories coming in league games this year, MT has collected 46 league road victories in the past 10 years, the most of any Sun Belt school.

STARTING IT OFF RIGHT

The Blue Raiders got off to a 4-0 start last season, marking the first 4-0 start since the 1994-95 season. It also marked the first time in program history MT defeated three Division I opponents to open the season. MT's 20-2 start marked the best in school history. It topped the previous mark of 18-2 in 1974-75. Additionally, MT's 13 wins before the new year were the most in school history, surpassing the previous mark of nine in 1991.

AND FOR LEAGUE STARTERS

MT's 10-0 Sun Belt start was the best conference mark in program history. The Blue Raiders broke the record of 9-0 set in the 1974-75 season as a member of the OVC.

SHOOTING THE LIGHTS OUT

MT's shooting performance against UCLA on Nov. 15 was one for the ages. The Blue Raiders smashed the school record, shooting a 71.4 percent clip from the field and surpassing the previous mark of 68.9 percent set in 1981. MT had five halves of basketball last season shooting 70 percent or better:

2/11/12 vs. UALR 1st half: 70.0%

11/22 vs Cumberland 2nd half: 75.0%

11/15 at UCLA 2nd half: 72.0%

11/15 at UCLA 1st half: 70.8%

11/11 vs. Austin Peay: 70.0%

On record, the Blue Raiders had only bettered the 70-percent mark in one half three times in program history prior to last year:

.833 vs. Akron (2/4/82)

.800 vs. Tennessee Tech (1/8/81)

.724 vs. Austin Peay (1/12/87)

RAINING THREE'S

Not only did MT set a record from the field, but the Blue Raiders also hit a Sun Belt record 90.9 percent of their 3-pointers against UCLA. The mark, also a school record, surpassed the previous league record of 90.0 percent set by UAB in 1986 and is tied for fifth in NCAA history.

AND ONE MORE THING

MT hit its first nine treys and finished 10-of-11 from beyond the arc against UCLA. The Blue Raiders didn't miss a trey until 1:39 to go in the game. Before the streak ended, MT's 9-for-9 performance matched an NCAA record for highest perfect 3-point field goal percentage in a game, held by Minnesota against Penn State on Jan. 11, 2009, until Indiana State surpassed that mark later in the season, going 12-for-12 from beyond the arc against Southern Illinois on Feb. 11.

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