Kennesaw State visits Raiders in first round of WNIT

Tip set for 5:30 pm as MT opens 38th season

November 8, 2012 · MT Athletic Communications

- **WNIT Bracket**

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The 38th season of Middle Tennessee women's basketball tips off Friday evening when the Blue Raiders host Kennesaw State in the first round of the Preseason WNIT Tournament. Game time is set for 5:30 p.m. at the Murphy Center.

SERIES INFORMATION

Overall: MT leads, 1-0
At MT: MT leads, 1-0 - W, 83-66, Jan. 4, 1988
Under Rick Insell: First Meeting
First Meeting: Jan. 4, 1988, MT 83, KSU 66

GAME INFORMATION

Date: Friday, Nov. 9, 2012
Time: 5:30 p.m.
Location: Murfreesboro, Tenn.
Arena: Murphy Center (11,520)

MEDIA INFORMATION

Radio: WMOT (89.5 FM)/WGNS (1450 AM, 101.9 FM, 100.5 FM)
Play-by-Play: Dick Palmer
Color Analyst: Duane Hickey

Quick Hitters...

• All five starters and 10 letterwinners return to this year's Middle Tennessee women's basketball team, led by head coach Rick Insell who is entering his eighth season at the helm.

• The Blue Raiders were picked by the league's head coaches to win the Sun Belt's East Division, defending a crown they have won the last four years outright.

• Three Blue Raiders (Icelyn Elie, Kortni Jones and Ebony Rowe) earned preseason first team All-Sun Belt accolades, a first in school history.

• MT earned votes in three preseason polls. The Blue Raiders were ranked No. 23 nationally in the ESPN.com preseason Top 25 poll. MT was voted 27th in the Associated Press Top 25 poll, while garnering 33rd in the USA Today Sports / ESPN Coaches' preseason poll. The Raiders were also selected preseason No. 24 in two national publications (Athlon and Lindy's).

• Should the Blue Raiders win over KSU, Sunday is Veteran Appreciation Day at the Murphy Center. All military personnel and their families will receive a free ticket to Sunday afternoon's game, which is set for a 2 p.m. tipoff.

Notes...

Preseason All-Sun Belt awards

Middle Tennessee placed three on the first team Preseason All-Sun Belt Teams. Kortni Jones, Icelyn Elie and Ebony Rowe garnered First Team accolades following a vote of the league's head coaches. The honors are the second for Elie and Rowe, while being the first for Jones.

Early Predictions

The Blue Raiders were chosen to finish first in the East Division of the Preseason All-Sun Belt poll, as voted upon by the league's head coaches. Middle Tennessee received 10 of a possible 11 first-place votes and 65 overall points, the most by any team in the league, by the 11 coaches.

Among the Nation's Elite

Middle Tennessee's basketball programs garnered a total of seven All-Sun Belt Conference honors in the preseason. Only Marist of the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) had that many between two programs. St. Joseph's, Baylor, Toledo, Davidson, North Dakota State, and Memphis each had a combined five preseason all-conference selections.

Raiders Surge Cruise in Exhibition Victories

Middle Tennessee had five Blue Raiders reach double-figure scoring with Kortni Jones leading the way with 20 points and seven rebounds in a 97-64 win over UAH last Thursday. Against Lincoln Memorial, Janiece Johnson and Laken Leonard led the way with 12 points each as MT picked up a 73-38 win against the Lady Railsplitters. Leonard was 4-of-9 behind the arch.

Earning the Respect

Middle Tennessee is just one of seven schools that has football, men's and women's basketball teams receiving votes or ranked in ESPN/USA Today Coaches Polls. MT, Notre Dame, Michigan, Louisville, Georgia, Stanford and UCLA are the only programs to boast that accomplishment.

Welcome Aboard

Middle Tennessee welcomes three new faces to the 2012-13 squad: junior Janiece Johnson, freshman MacKenzie Sells and freshman Caroline Warden. Johnson, at 6-7, is the tallest Blue Raider in school history. She comes to MT after two seasons at Chipola JC. Sells starts her collegiate career after a strong high school campaign at Livingston Academy. Warden joins Laken Leonard as another Jackson County standout.

In-Season Tournament History

• Middle Tennessee plays in its third in-season tournament in three years.
• Last year, the Raiders went 1-1 at the Lady Lion Classic, Nov. 11-13, in University Park, Pa. MT defeated UNC Wilmington, 79-60, before falling to Penn State, 65-49.
• MT owns a 8-3 record under Insell during the four previous in-season tournaments. The Raiders have won four out of their last five games in tournament action.
•The Blue Raiders own a 63-54 all-time record during 54 in-season tournaments during the program's history.

About the WNIT

• For the second time in the Insell era, the Blue Raiders are participating in the Preseason WNIT Tournament. MT opened the 2008-09 campaign with a win over Lafayette College before falling to No. 2 Oklahoma and rebounding against Indiana.
• MT holds a 1-0 record against Kennesaw State with a 88-66 victory against the Owls in 1988. The winner of Friday's contest will take on the winner of the Grambling State/Memphis game on Sunday. If MT wins, the contest would be held at 2 p.m. on Sunday at the Murphy Center.
• The Blue Raiders have never met Grambling State.
• MT and Memphis have met on 16 previous occasions with both teams tied at eight in the all-time series.

Blue Raiders vs. Atlantic Sun

• Middle Tennessee holds a 5-0 clip against opponents in the Atlantic Sun. The Blue Raiders last met an A-Sun school last season when the Raiders knocked off ETSU, 78-63.

Season Opener History

• The Blue Raiders boast a 23-14 all-time record in season openers coming into Friday's contest with Kennesaw State.
• MT holds a 4-3 mark under head coach Rick Insell and have won four consecutive games to start the season.
• During Insell's tenure, MT has only lost once at the Murphy Center when opening the season. • That loss was to defending NCAA Champion Maryland on Nov. 10, 2006.
The First Time vs. Opponents
• Middle Tennessee owns a 32-21 record when facing an opponent for the first time under Rick Insell's watch.
Set for the Tube
• Middle Tennessee women's hoops will appear in six televised games this season.
• The could potentially come on Nov. 11 if MT should win over Kennsaw State. That contest will be

on Nov. 11.
• MT then appears on ESPN3 three more times: Dec. 6 - Xavier, Jan. 27 - Western Kentucky and Feb. 20 - South Alabama. A Fox Sports South appearance occurs on Dec. 9 when the Raiders look to continue a win streak at No. 6 Kentucky.
• The Middle Tennessee at Western Kentucky game on March 2 is scheduled for a 11am tip on the Sun Belt Network.
• This season, Coach Insell's teams will have made 64 TV appearances since his arrival to Middle Tennessee in 2004.

Scouting Kennesaw State

• Kennesaw State opens the 2012-13 season with a new face of the program. The Owls hired Mississippi State alum Nitra Perry to take over a program that finished 14-17 last season. Perry had spent the previous four seasons at Toledo, including the 2011-12 season as the Associate Head Coach.
• The Owls return nine letterwinners from a year ago, including four seniors.
• Sophomore Kristina Wells returns as the leading scorer, boasting 9.3 points and 5.5 rebounds per game last season.
• KSU's leading rebounder returns as Sametria Gideon grabbed 247 boards off the glass for an average of 8.2 rebounds per game. Gideon averaged double figures with 11.1 points a contest.

Education Day Set for Dec. 4

The Department of Athletics at Middle Tennessee and the Murfreesboro City Schools announced last month that the two institutions are partnering together for 'Education Day' on Tuesday, Dec. 4. The MT women's basketball program is scheduled to play in-state rival Austin Peay early in an 11 a.m. contest. The early time allows the 12 Murfreesboro City Schools to bring thousands of students to cheer on the Blue Raiders. This game will be part of MT's "Pack the House" challenge.

A Witness to History

• Since taking over the Middle Tennessee program prior to the 2005-06 season, head coach Rick Insell has worked tirelessly to increase attendance at Blue Raider home games.
• Each of the top-10 crowds in program history have come during the Insell era, including a 5,186 on Dec. 28, 2011 to witness the win against No. 6/6 Kentucky.
• The attendance for the game with the Wildcats ranks as the 10th best in school history and was the highest since a program-record 11,802 witnessed the contest against No. 6/5 Tennessee Nov. 25, 2009.
• Middle Tennessee has posted an 8-2 record during the 10 games with the only losses coming to No. 6/5 Tennessee and No. 1/1 Maryland.

Rowe Makes History

• Middle Tennessee sophomore Ebony Rowe made a valuable impression in her second sesaon as a Blue Raider.
• Rowe joined the school's 1,000-point club in the regular-season finale at Western Kentucky Feb. 26, 2012, and when she accomplished the feat, she became only the second among the elite group to reach the milestone as a sophomore, joining second all-time leading scorer Priscilla Robinson.
• Two other players (Alysha Clark and Amber Holt) surpassed 1,000 points in only two seasons, but

both transferred into the program and began playing as juniors.
• Rowe became the 26th member and the 10th to play at least one season for head coach Rick Insell.

Reaching the Century Mark

• Middle Tennessee led the nation with seven 100-point games during the 2009-10 campaign, including a school-record 119 points against North Texas Jan. 30, 2010.
• Overall, the Blue Raiders have posted a 37-7 record in school history in 100-point games, including 13 consecutive wins, all under Insell's watch.

Insell Climbing List

• Rick Insell became the fourth head coach in school history to reach the 150-win plateau when he guided the Blue Raiders to a 59-49 victory over South Dakota State Nov. 17.
• Insell accomplished the feat in 198 games, by far the fastest in school history and the only one of the quartet to reach the milestone in less than 200 games.
• Insell now stands just eight victories shy of tying Lewis Bivens for the all-time record after surpassing Inman with the 55-37 triumph at Florida Atlantic Jan. 14.
• Insell joins current Blue Raider men's coach, Kermit Davis, in a race to catch Bivens as the winningest basketball coach in school history. Davis became the winningest men's coach earlier last season, surpassing Jimmy Earle.

Building a Streak

• Last season, the Blue Raiders rode a 20-game winning streak, the second longest in school history, into the Sun Belt Tournament Championship game against UALR.
• Throughout its history, Middle Tennessee has registered 12 win streaks of 10 or more games, including the top four under current head coach Rick Insell.
• The longest win streak in program history was a 27-game run from Nov. 29, 2006 to March 19, 2007.

Jones Enters National List

• Because of her success in 3-pointers made last season, junior Kortni Jones has moved into the ranks of the NCAA's single-season best entering the NCAA Tournament.
• The Blue Raider ranked second nationally last season and tied for 10th all-time on the NCAA chart.
Jones Sets Another Standard
• Junior Kortni Jones set the school's single-season 3-pointers attempts mark during the UALR game, breaking a two-year old mark previously held by Jackie Pickel.
• Jones broke the Sun Belt record established by New Orleans' Shanna Cook in 2004-05 with 10 attempts at ULM Feb. 23.

Cason and Leonard Return

MT returns all five starters from last season. In addition to Kortni Jones, Ebony Rowe and Icelyn Elie, Laken Leonard and Shanice Cason are expected to make signficant contributions. Leonard returns after notching 93 rebounds and 41 steals. Cason, a Siegel High product, handed out 132 assists and

picketed 67 steals in her rookie campaign.

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