Blue Raiders take perfect road record to Akron Sunday

MT is 3-0 on the road

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee men's basketball wraps up its road trip against the Akron Zips on Sunday. Tipoff is slated for 2 p.m. ET at the James A. Rhodes Arena in Akron, Ohio.

GAME INFORMATION
Date: Sunday, Dec. 2
Time: 2 p.m. ET
Location: Akron, Ohio
Facility: James A. Rhodes Arena

MEDIA INFORMATION
Radio: WNSR (560 AM)/WGNS (1450 AM, 101.9 FM, 100.5 FM)/WMOT (89.5)
Play-by-Play: Chip Walters

Live Video - Live Audio - Live Stats

Twitter: @MTAthletics, @MT_MBB

SERIES INFORMATION

- Overall: MT leads, 15-9
- In Akron: UA leads, 7-5
- Under coach Davis: MT leads, 1-0
- First meeting: MT 66, UA 55 (1/12/80 in Murfreesboro)
- Last meeting: MT 77, UA 53 (12/4/11 in Murfreesboro)
- Current Streak: MT, 4 games
- Longest MT streak: 4 games (twice, last 1/7/89 - present) // Longest UA streak: 3 games (2/8/86 - 3/8/86)
- Noteworthy: MT has not lost to Akron since Dec. 5, 1988 in an 81-65 decision.
- Noteworthy: MT has not played in Akron since a 64-61 win on Dec. 4, 1989.
- Noteworthy: Both teams were formerly members of the Ohio Valley Conference.

BLUE RAIDER FASTBREAK POINTS

- The Blue Raiders currently rank 19th in the country with 16.8 assists per game.
- Shawn Jones posted his third career double-double and second in as many games against Texas Southern on Nov. 24 with a career-high 21 points and 12 rebounds to earn Sun Belt Player of the Week honors.
- After starting last season 4-0 and with the 5-1 start this season, MT is off to its best back-to-back starts since the 1986-87 and 1987-88 seaons. MT started 1986-87 5-0 and 1987-88 6-1.
- MT got off to a 2-0 start for the second year in a row, marking the first back-to-back occurrences since the 1995-96 and 1996-97 seasons.
- The 97 points against Alabama State in the season-opener marked the most since MT scored 109 against Houston Baptist on Feb. 13, 2010.
- 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.

SCOUTING AKRON

- Sunday's contest will be the first for the Zips in 14 days
- Akron finished last season as the regular-season MAC champs with a 22-12 overall and 13-3 league record
- Akron returned nine letterwinners, including four starters, from last year's squad
- 2012 MAC Defensive Player of the Year Zeke Marshall leads the Zips with 11.6 points and 8.4 rebounds per game
- Three other Zips are also averaging double-figure scoring: Brian Walsh (11.4 ppg), Jake Kretzer (10.8 ppg) and Alex Abreu (10.8 ppg)

LAST TIME OUT

Four Blue Raiders scored double figures as Middle Tennessee earned a 72-58 victory over Louisiana in the Sun Belt opener on Thursday night at the Cajundome. James Gallman paced MT with 14 points and Marcos Knight added 12. Jason Jones and Tweety Knight rounded out the double-figure scorers with 11 and 10 points, respectively.

The Blue Raiders got half of their points from the bench, overpowering the Ragin' Cajun bench, 36-3. All 10 Blue Raiders that saw action also scored.

Although MT pulled away in the end for the 14-point victory, it was a seesaw affair through the first 30 minutes. Louisiana never led by more than two, but forced six ties and eight lead changes.

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONES'

Shawn Jones raked in the Sun Belt and Tennessee Sports Writers Association Player of the Week awards on Nov. 27 after posting a pair of double-doubles against UCF and Texas Southern. He tallied 18 points and 13 rebounds, both career-highs, in a 75-61 win over UCF on Tuesday. The Hialeah, Fla., native followed that up by setting a new career-high with 21 points and also grabbed

12 boards in a 79-52 victory over Texas Southern on Saturday. For the week, Jones averaged 19.5 points and 12.5 rebounds while shooting 66.7 percent from the field. He is the only Blue Raider to start every game this season and has scored double figures in three of the last four games.

ROAD WARRIORS

MT has picked up where it left off last season after setting the school record with 11 road wins. The Blue Raiders are off to a 3-0 start on the road this year, including one victory in Sun Belt play. MT has won 47 league road games under the direction of Kermit Davis, the most among any conference school.

HALFTIME ADJUSTMENTS

MT has taken advantage of making halftime adjustments this year. The Blue Raiders are shooting 47 percent in the second half compared to 41.4 percent in the first, including 41.5 percent from 3-point range in the second compared to 37.5 percent in the first. Opponents are shooting 45.1 percent in the second half compared to 37.1 in the first, with a difference in 3-point shooting of 26.9 percent in the second to 29.8 percent in the first.

BENCH PRODUCTION

With 10 of the top 12 scorers returning from last season's team, it's no surprise that MT has a deep bench. The Blue Raider bench currently owns a 233-72 advantage over its opponents.

SPEAKING OF DEPTH

All 10 Blue Raiders that saw action at Louisiana on Nov. 29 also scored in the contest. Through six games, four different Blue Raiders have been the leading scorer and seven Blue Raiders have combined for 17 double-figure scoring performances.

RPI OUTLOOK

MT is currently ranked 49th according to the Pomeroy College Basketball Ratings. The Blue Raiders are the highest ranked Sun Belt team.

OUT-REBOUNDING OPPONENTS

The Blue Raiders have out-rebounded their opponent in all five contests this season. MT currently owns a 233-184 rebounding advantage, an average of 38.8 compared to 30.7.

ONE-TWO PUNCH

Bruce Massey and Tweety Knight have already established themselves as a strong one-two punch at point for MT. Knight ranks first in assist-to-turnover ratio (3.2) and is averaging 3.2 apg, seventh in the league. Massey ranks 10th in the league with 2.8 apg.

SIX GAMES, FIVE LINE-UPS

Through the first six games, head coach Kermit Davis has used five different lineups. The only mainstay each game has been Shawn Jones. James Gallman has made five starts, while Bruce Massey, Marcos Knight and Neiko Hunter each have four starts. Tweety Knight and Kerry Hammonds have started two games apiece and Jacquez Rozier, Raymond Cintron and JT Sulton have each started one game.

A LITTLE HELP

After ranking 21st nationally in assists per game last year, MT's unselfishness has already been apparent in its first two games. Through six games, the Blue Raiders have 94 assists on 149 field

goals, which means about 63 percent of field goals have come from an assist. The Blue Raiders rank 19th nationally with 16.8 assists per game.

HOME SWEET HOME

MT has continued to defend its home court this season after finishing 15-2 in Murphy Center last year. The Blue Raiders are 2-0 at home this year and haven't lost a regular-season game in Murphy Center since Nov. 20, 2011 when MT dropped an 87-84 double overtime decision to Belmont. That's 15 straight regular-season home victories for the Blue Raiders.

HIGH SCORING

The 97 points against Alabama State on Nov. 9 marked the most since MT scored 109 against Houston Baptist on Feb. 13, 2010. MT cracked the 90 plateau twice last season, scoring 90 against Austin Peay and 94 against ULM.

CINTRON RECEIVES RECOGNITION

Raymond Cintron was listed at No. 39 on CBSSports.com's Top 50 shooters for the 2012-13 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. 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.

BROTHERLY LOVE

The 2012-13 MT squad features two sets of brothers. Marcos Knight is the older brother of Tweety Knight, with both joining the Blue Raiders via Chipola Junior College. Zane Gibson is the older brother of Gavin Gibson, both coming to MT from Baylor School.

DENDY UPDATE

The regular season is underway for former Blue Raider LaRon Dendy. The 2012 Sun Belt Player of the Year has started every game for Kolossos this year. The Greenville, S.C., native is currently the team's leading scorer and rebounder, averaging 16.6 points and 4.4 boards per game.

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