MT returns to SBC action on Thursday

FIU and Raiders tipoff at 7pm

December 19, 2012 · @MTAthletics

After an 11-day hiatus, the Middle Tennessee women's basketball team returns to the hardwood as they host their first Sun Belt home game this season against FIU. Tipoff is set for 7 p.m. at the Murphy Center.

GAME INFORMATION

Opponent: FIU Panthers (5-4, 1-2 Sun Belt)
Date: Thursday, Dec. 20, 2012
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Location: Murfreesboro, Tenn.
Arena: Murphy Center (11,520)
Promotion: Happy Holidays
Tickets: GoBlueRaiders.com or call 1-888-YES-MTSU

SERIES INFORMATION

Overall: MT leads series, 17-8
In Murfreesboro: MT leads series, 11-1
Last Meeting: MT 63, FIU 53 - March 5, 2012 - Hot Springs, Ark. - Sun Belt Semifinals
Under Rick Insell: 12-3

MEDIA INFORMATION

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

QUICK HITTERS

• The Blue Raiders return to the hardwood to host Sun Belt foe FIU on Thursday. MT fell 68-46 at No. 7/6 Kentucky on Sunday, Dec. 9. Icelyn Elie (15p/13r) and Ebony Rowe (19p/10r) each recorded double-doubles for the Raiders. The Lexington, Ky., native moved into a tie with Priscilla Robinson for the school's all-time double-double mark (38).
• Coach Rick Insell (180) is just two wins shy of tying Lewis Bivens (182) for all-time wins at Middle Tennessee. Insell owns a .759 win percentage in eight seasons at the helm of the program.
• Three Raiders, all preseason First Team All-Sun Belt selections, are averaging double-figures in seven games so far: Ebony Rowe (19.9), Kortni Jones (14.9) and Icelyn Elie (14.7).
• Two Raiders are close to entering the 1,000-pt club: guard Kortni Jones is 16 points away, while forward Icelyn Elie is 29 shy.

Scouting FIU

• FIU (5-4, 1-2 SBC) won its third consecutive game on Saturday, defeating Dartmouth 64-57 in Miami. The Panthers overcame a seven-point halftime deficit by shooting 54.2% from the field in the second half and making 13-of-15 free throw. Junior guard Jerica Coley was named Sun Belt Player of the Week on Tuesday after scoring a career-high 39 points against the Big Green.
• The Panthers, however, are already 1-2 in the Sun Belt this season. FIU lost at WKU 62-56 on Nov. 19 and against Arkansas State 60-57 on Nov. 29. The Panthers earned their first conference win on Dec. 1 with a 63-49 victory over South Alabama in Miami. FIU was picked to finish second in the east behind Middle Tennessee.
• Coley, last season's conference Player of the Year and this season's Preseason Player of the Year, leads the Sun Belt in scoring with 22.1 points per game. She is the sixth-highest scorer in the country. Coley also leads the conference in blocked shots, averaging 2.6 per game. Junior center Marita Davydova is second on the team in scoring, averaging 10.4 points and a team-high 8.1 rebounds per game. FIU averages 61 points per game and is outrebounding opponents by 8.6 boards a contest. The Panthers also are the second-best free throw shooting team in the nation, shooting 82.4% at the foul line.
• Head Coach Cindy Russo is in her 34th season at FIU, compiling a career record of 675-355. She has the ninth-most wins among active Division I coaches and is 16th on the all-time winningest coaches list. During her tenure at FIU, the Panthers have had 18 20-win seasons and 14 postseason berths.

Series with FIU

• The Blue Raiders have won eight of the last nine meetings with the Panthers, including three wins last season. Middle Tennessee leads the overall series 17-8 and has won 11 of 12 games against FIU at Murphy Center. The Blue Raiders won the last meeting with the Panthers 63-53 in the semifinals of last season's Sun Belt Tournament. Kortni Jones led Middle Tennessee with 20 points as Ebony Rowe had a double-double of 19 points and 12 rebounds. The Blue Raiders held Jerica Coley to nine points on 4-of-24 shooting in the game.
• Middle Tennessee's average margin of victory in its 11 wins over FIU at the Murphy Center is 18 points. The Blue Raiders have held the Panthers under 65 points in each of the last nine meetings.

Sun Belt Honors Rowe for 10th time

• For the 10th time in her illustrious career, Ebony Rowe was named Sun Belt Player of the Week on Dec. 11. The junior collected three double-doubles and moved into a tie for first all-time with 38 in

her career. For the week, Rowe boasted an average 19.0 points and 12.7 rebounds in games against APSU, XU and UK.
• Rowe is second all-time at MT with eight weekly SBC honors and third in conference history. This was the 35th time a player has received this award during the Rick Insell era.

1,000-point Club Watch

• Two Blue Raiders are on the verge of becoming the 27th and 28th members of the MT 1,000-point club.
• Kortni Jones has 984 points and is just a 16 away from reaching the club.
• Senior Icelyn Elie is 29 points shy, as she has accumulated 971 points in three-plus seasons.

Recapping the Kentucky game

• Stifling defensive pressure by No. 7/6 Kentucky limited Middle Tennessee as the Blue Raiders dropped a 68-46 decision to the Wildcats on Dec. 9. The Wildcats (8-1) forced 33 Blue Raider turnovers, the most for MT since committing 30 against South Florida in 2010. Middle Tennessee (6-4) dominated the glass, picking up 45 boards to just 31 for the Cats. MT shot 15-of-48 from the field for 31 percent, and hit 2-of-14 (14 percent) behind the arc.
• Two Blue Raiders reached double-figures. Lexington native Ebony Rowe tallied 19 points and 10 rebounds to reach her sixth double-double this season. Rowe tied the school career double-double record held by Priscilla Robinson with her 38th on Sunday. She also reached double-digit scoring for the 71st time. Icelyn Elie, a product of Lebanon, answered with 15 points and 13 rebounds for her 13th career double-double. The senior shot 50 percent (5-of-10) from the field and collected two blocks in 40 minutes.

Insell Closer to All-Time Wins Mark

• Rick Insell now stands two wins shy of tying Lewis Bivens for the all-time record.
• 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 last season, surpassing Jimmy Earle.

Soaring in Attendance

• MT women's basketball has accumulated remarkable numbers in attendance so far this season. The Blue Raiders are averaging 5,603 fans per game after three home affairs. The Raiders welcomed their second largest crowd in school history with 10,107 against Austin Peay on Dec. 4.
• MT set the best attendance mark in the first two rounds of the Preseason WNIT. 5,806 fans packed the house on Nov. 9 against Kennesaw State, which ranks as the seventh largest in school history. The Raiders followed up with 3,273 against in-state foe Memphis on Nov. 11.

Rowe Leading the Way

• Junior Ebony Rowe (1,267) moved to 16th all-time at MT in scoring, passing Kay Wilbanks and Brandi Brown's total of 1,236 points. She needs just 80 points to move into the Top 15.
• Rowe is the seventh player under Coach Insell to reach MT's Top 20 scoring list.
• In 2011-12, Rowe joined Priscilla Robinson as the only Blue Raider to reach 1,000 in her sophomore campaign.

• She is also the 26th member of the 1,000-point club and the 10th 1,000-pt club member to play at least one season under coach Rick Insell.

National Statistical Rankings

• The Blue Raiders are in the top 50 in five statistical categories as released by the NCAA on Monday, Dec. 17. MT is 49th in steals per game (11.8), 56th in 3-pt field goals per game (6.4), 62nd in turnover margin (+3.7), 74th in scoring offense (68.5 ppg) and 93rd in scoring margin (+7.6).
• Middle Tennessee has four players in the top 100. Rowe ranks 23rd with 19.8 points per game, 24th with 10.8 rebounds a contest and ninth with 6 double-doubles. Shanice Cason is 46th in steals per game (3.0), while Icelyn Elie is 67th in field goal percentage (50.8). Kortni Jones ranks 79th with 4.5 assists per game and is 82nd with 2.3 triples a contest.

Rowe Reaches New Heights

• Ebony Rowe broke the school record for offensive rebounds with her three grabs at South Dakota State. She now has 388 offensive boards in two-plus seasons.
• Rowe moved into fifth all-time at MT, passing former Raiders Holly Hoover and Patrice Holmes with her 10 rebounds at Kentucky. She is 16 away from reaching fourth all-time.

Prestigious Company

• The Blue Raider's men's and women's basketball programs have combined for 32 consecutive wins at home, which ranks sixth in the NCAA. Stanford leads the way with 85 games, followed by Kansas at 47 and Baylor with 36. MT's men have notched 18 straight home wins at Murphy Center, while the Raiders have collected 14 straight.

Nice Ice

• Senior Icelyn Elie posted her 13th career double-double and her first this season with 15 points and 13 rebounds in the loss at No. 7/6 Kentucky.
• The Lebanon product ranks 23rd with 530 rebounds and 15 away from tying Calita Elder (555) for 22nd.

Doubling History

• With 19 points and 10 rebounds at No. 7/6 Kentucky, Ebony Rowe moved into a tie for the all-time career record of 38 with former Raider great Priscilla Robinson. The junior is the quickest to each reach the double-double plateau in school history.
• Rowe has 38 double-figure rebounding games and has totaled 71 double-figure scoring contests during her career.

Returning to Sun Belt Play

• Coach Rick Insell is a remarkable 107-12 against Sun Belt competition in the regular season.
• His win total ranks fifth in SBC history and his winning percentage (.899) is second all-time behind Louisiana Tech's Leon Barmore.
• The Blue Raiders are in the midst of a 17 game winning streak in regular season conference action.

• MT holds the conference record with 20 consecutive regular season games won set during the 2006-07 seasons.

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