Blue Raiders back in action Saturday against FIU

MT hosts Panthers at 5 p.m. in Murphy Center

December 28, 2012 · @MTAthletics

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - After a seven-day break from game action, the Blue Raider men's basketball team returns to the hardwood Saturday to host the FIU Panthers in Sun Belt play at Murphy Center for a 5 p.m. CT tipoff.

GAME INFORMATION
Matchup: FIU Panther (4-6, 1-2 SBC) vs. Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders (9-3, 1-0 SBC)
Date: Saturday, Dec. 29
Time: 5 p.m. CT
Location: Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Facility: Murphy Center

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

Live Video - Live Audio - Live Stats

Twitter: @MTAthletics, @MT_MBB

SERIES INFORMATION

- Overall: MT leads, 21-6 // As Sun Belt foes: MT leads, 19-6
- In Murfreesboro: MT leads, 10-3
- Under coach Davis: MT leads, 18-3
- First meeting: MT 86, FIU 72 (1/7/91 in Murfreesboro)
- First Sun Belt meeting: FIU 61, MT 59 (1/11/01 in Murfreesboro)
- Last meeting: MT 70, FIU 59 (1/12/11 in Miami)
- Last year at MT: MT 71, FIU 66 (12/29/11)
- Current Streak: MT, 6 games (Dating back to 2/25/10)
- Longest MT streak: 10 games (2002-06)// Longest FIU streak: 3 games (2001-02)

- Noteworthy: MT has won six in a row and eight of the last nine against the Panthers.
- Noteworthy: Against FIU in Murfreesboro last year, MT head coach Kermit Davis became the Blue Raiders' all-time winningest coach with his 165th win, surpassing Jimmy Earle's mark of 164.

BLUE RAIDER FASTBREAK POINTS

- MT is undefeated at 6-0 in home games this season, including one at Bridgestone Arena, and holds a 20-2 record at Murphy Center over the past two seasons. The Blue Raiders have won 18 straight regular-season games at Murphy Center.
- MT has won four of the last six meetings against SEC opponents.
- MT has beaten two SEC opponent in back-to-back seasons for the first time in program history.
- MT currently ranks 17th nationally in 3-point field goal percentage defense (.277).
- Marcos Knight has scored double figures in nine of the last 11 games and all but three games this season.
- After starting last season 4-0 and with the 5-1 start this season, MT got 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.
- Raymond Cintron scored a career-high 22 points at Akron on Dec. 2 and Marcos Knight matched his career-high with 21 points in the contest. Knight also scored 21 at Savannah State on Nov. 13.
- 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 FIU

- The Panthers are under the direction of first-year head coach Richard Pitino
- FIU is coming off a 76-63 loss to WKU on Thursday
- Malik Smith leads a trio of Panthers averaging double-figure scoring with 14.9 ppg
- Tymell Murphy (13.0 ppg) and Jerome Frink (10.7 ppg) are also averaging double figures
- Murphy and Frink also lead FIU in rebounding, averaging 6.5 boards a game each
- The Panthers will play their sixth consecutive road game on Saturday and are currently 3-4 in away games
- The Panthers return six letterwinners and no starters from last year's team that finished 8-21 overall and 5-11 in the Sun Belt

LAST TIME OUT

Middle Tennessee rallied back from a nine-point second-half deficit, ending the game on a 16-3 run to defeat the Vanderbilt Commodores 56-52 at Bridgestone Arena on Dec. 21. The win was the Blue Raiders' fourth in their last six games against SEC programs and the first against Vanderbilt since Feb.1, 1995. MT jumped out to an early seven-point lead in the first half, but needed two Bruce

Massey baskets to force a 31-31 halftime tie. Vanderbilt started the second half on an 11-4 run to take a 42-35 lead with 16:11 to play. The Commodores led 49-40 with 9:57 to play when the Blue Raider defense took over. MT held Vanderbilt to 1-of-9 shooting from the field for the rest of the game, as the Blue Raiders went on an 11-1 run capped off by a Raymond Cintron layup to take a 51-50 lead with 3:32 to play. It marked MT's first lead since the 1:36 mark of the first half. The Commodores took back the lead on a Kedren Johnson jumper with 1:55 remaining, but that would be Vanderbilt's last basket of the night. Layups by Tweety Knight and Kerry Hammonds in the final minute secured the Blue Raiders' win.

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 6-0 in home games, including a win at Bridgestone Arena, 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 18 straight regular-season victories in Murphy Center for the Blue Raiders. MT is now 20-2 over the last two seasons in Murphy Center.

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 has outscored its opponent in every game this season, currently owning a 382-149 advantage.

TAKING ON THE SEC

With the win over Vanderbilt on Dec. 21, MT has now beaten two SEC opponents in back-to-back seasons for the first time in program history. MT also beat Ole Miss on Dec. 8. The Blue Raiders defeated both Tennessee and Ole Miss last season.

The win over Ole Miss this year also marked the first win over an SEC opponent in Murphy Center since a 93-90 overtime victory against Vanderbilt on Feb. 1, 1995. MT is now 2-1 against the SEC this year (Lost to No. 10 Florida on Nov. 18) and has won four of the last six meetings against SEC opponents.

SUN BELT'S WINNINGEST COACH

With South Alabama's Ronnie Arrow retiring earlier this season, Kermit Davis is now the Sun Belt's winningest active coach. He currently ranks fourth all-time with 99 league wins, behind Arrow (112), Gene Bartow (111), and Dickey Nutt (103).

OUT-REBOUNDING OPPONENTS

The Blue Raiders have out-rebounded their opponent in nine contests this season. MT currently owns a 437-382 rebounding advantage, an average of 36.4 compared to 31.8.

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. 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. For the week, Jones averaged 19.5 points and 12.5 rebounds while shooting 66.7 percent from the field.

SWITCHING IT UP

Head coach Kermit Davis has used seven different starting lineups this year. Through the first five games, Davis used five different lineups. In all, 11 different Blue Raiders have started at least one game this year.

DEEP BENCH

All 10 Blue Raiders that saw action at Louisiana on Nov. 29 also scored in the contest. Through 12 games, seven different Blue Raiders have been the leading scorer and nine Blue Raiders have combined for 31 double-figure scoring performances.

MORE ON THE DEPTH

MT currently has 10 players averaging more than 12 minutes per game. Half of those are averaging more than 18 minutes.

RPI OUTLOOK

MT is currently ranked 33rd in the Sagarin Ratings and 40th according to the Pomeroy College Basketball Ratings. The Blue Raiders are the highest ranked Sun Belt team in both ratings.

TEAM OF THE WEEK

Middle Tennessee was named the Mid-Major Team of the Week by ESPN.com's Myron Medcalf on Dec. 13. The Blue Raiders earned the nod after knocking off Ole Miss, 65-62.

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. The San Juan, Puerto Rico, native currently ranks seventh in the Sun Belt with 2.1 treys per game and leads the team with 25 3-pointers this year. Against Akron on Dec. 2, Cintron sank four 3-pointers en route to a career-high 22 points. He tied his career-high of five 3-pointers against Tennessee State on Dec. 18.

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 15.6 points and 6.1 boards per game.

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