Blue Raiders welcome UALR Thursday for ESPN3 contest

Tipoff slated for 7 p.m. CT in Murphy Center

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

The Blue Raider men's basketball team will play three of its next four games in Murphy Center, beginning with UALR on Thursday. Tipoff is slated for 7 p.m. CT and the game will air on ESPN3 with Chip Walters and Kyle Turnham on the call.

Tickets are now available for the Sun Belt Championship in Hot Springs, Ark. All-session booklets are \$83 and fans can purchase by calling 1-888-YES-MTSU or clicking here.

GAME INFORMATION

Matchup: UALR Trojans (11-8,

5-3 SBC) at Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders (14-4, 6-1 SBC)

Date: Thursday, Jan. 17

Time: 7 p.m. CT

Location: Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Facility: Murphy Center

Tickets: Available here or by calling 1-888-YES-MTSU

MEDIA INFORMATION

Live Video: ESPN3

Play-by-Play: Chip Walters Analysis: Kyle Turnham

Radio: WNSR (560 AM)/WGNS (1450 AM, 101.9 FM, 100.5 FM)/WMOT (89.5)

Live Audio - Live Stats

Twitter: <a>@MTAthletics, <a>@MT_MBB



SERIES INFORMATION

- Overall: UALR leads, 13-9 // As Sun Belt foes: UALR leads, 12-7
- At MT: MT leads, 6-4
- Under Davis: UALR leads, 10-5
- First meeting: MT 85, UALR 54 (12/1/76 in Murfreesboro)
- Last meeting: MT 68, UALR 60 (2/11/12 in Murfreesboro)
- Last UALR road win: UALR 68, MT 66 (1/14/06)
- · Current Streak: MT, 1 game
- Longest MT streak: 3 games (2/18/06 2/7/08) // Longest UALR streak: 5 games (2/9/02 2/21/04)
- Noteworthy: This marks the first time UALR has traveled to Murfreesboro in back-to-back seasons since 2005 and 2006.
- Noteworthy: MT has won two of the last three home meetings against UALR.

BLUE RAIDER FASTBREAK POINTS

- Kermit Davis moved into third on the list of the Sun Belt's all-time winningest coaches with his 104th win on Saturday. As the winningest active coach, Davis needs just nine wins to become the conference's all-time winningest coach, surpassing Ronnie Arrow with 112.
- MT is undefeated at 9-0 in home games this season, including one at Bridgestone Arena, and holds a 23-2 record at Murphy Center over the past two seasons. The Blue Raiders have won 21 straight regular-season games at Murphy Center.
- · MT has won seven of its last eight games.
- MT has now reached the 10-win mark before the new year for two straight seasons.
- MT is one of 20 teams in the country 9-0 or better at home this year.
- MT currently ranks 16th nationally in 3-point field goal percentage defense (.283).
- 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.
- The Knight brothers combined for 35 points at Arkansas State and both Tweety and Marcos had career-highs in scoring. Marcos tallied 23 points and Tweety added 12.
- 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 UALR

- The Trojans are coming off an 88-76 win over FIU on Saturday
- UALR is led by Will Neighbour with 11.4 points and 6.9 rebounds per game
- John Gillon is also averaging double-figure scoring with 10.8 points per game
- The Trojans have yet to win a road this year at 0-6
- UALR returns five letterwinners, including two starters, from a team that won the Sun Belt West Division and finished 15-16 last season, including 12-4 league record

LAST TIME OUT

Middle Tennessee earned its seventh win in the last eight games, grinding out a 66-57 victory over the ULM Warhawks on Saturday evening at Fant-Ewing Coliseum. Marcos Knight paced the Blue Raiders with 17 points and nine rebounds, while Bruce Massey added 12 points, including an 8-for-8 performance at the line. Knight also dished out five assists and had three steals, with Massey chipping in three assists. The Blue Raiders never trailed in the contest, but did not pull away until late in the first half. Leading 16-12 with 9:47 to go in the early stanza, Walker knocked down a pair of free throws to spark a 14-2 run over the next six minutes.

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 is one of only four league coaches to crack the century mark and currently sits third with 104 league wins, behind Arrow (112) and Gene Bartow (111).

SUSTAINED LEADERSHIP

On Jan. 5, MT women's basketball head coach Rick Insell earned his 183rd win to become the program's all-time winningest coach. Insell joined MT men's basketball head coach Kermit Davis, who set the school record on Dec. 29, 2011, as an all-time wins leader. MT is just one of four schools (Gonzaga, Sacred Heart and UALR) to have both their current men's and women's basketball coaches as all-time wins leaders.

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 9-0 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 21 straight regular-season victories in Murphy Center for the Blue Raiders. MT is now 23-2 over the last two seasons in Murphy Center.

RANKINGS

MT is currently ranked 46th in the NCAA RPI, 50th in the Sagarin Ratings and 53rd according to the Pomeroy College Basketball Ratings. The Blue Raiders are the highest ranked Sun Belt team in all ratings. The Blue Raiders are also ranked No. 4 in the Bleacher Report's Mid-Major Top 25 and 13th in CBS' Power Pyramid.

EXPERIENCED SQUAD

According to Ken Pomeroy, MT is tied as the second-most experienced team in the country with an average of 2.53 years, behind only Valparaiso (2.69) and matching Savannah State. The roster features a combined 13 juniors and seniors compared to four freshmen and sophomores.

DEEP BENCH

The Blue Raider bench accounts for 42.9 percent of the minutes, which ranks 12th nationally according Pomeroy. MT currently has nine players averaging more than 12 minutes per game. Seven of those are averaging more than 18 minutes. Seven different Blue Raiders have been the leading scorer and nine Blue Raiders have combined for 45 double-figure scoring performances.

BENCH PRODUCTION

The Blue Raider bench has outscored its opponent in all but one game this season, currently owning a 516-236 advantage, or an average of 28.7 to 13.1 per game.

SWITCHING IT UP

Head coach Kermit Davis has used 10 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.

DOMINATING DEFENSE

Pomeroy ranks the Blue Raiders 34th nationally in defensive efficiency with a rating of 89.4. MT held North Texas to 18.5 percent shooting in the first half of the Dec. 31 contest. That is the best field goal percentage defense for the Blue Raiders since Feb. 1, 2007 when MT held Denver to 18.2 percent (4-for-22) in the second half. MT also held North Texas to five field goals in the first half, a season-low for an opponent. It was the fewest field goals for an opponent in a half since Arkansas State had five on Jan. 19, 2012 in the second half.

OUT-REBOUNDING OPPONENTS

The Blue Raiders have out-rebounded their opponent in 13 contests this season. MT currently owns a 673-571 rebounding advantage, an average of 37.4 compared to 31.7.

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.

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.

He earned his second TSWA weekly honor on Jan. 3 after averaging 11.3 points and 7.5 rebounds in leading the Blue Raiders to a 4-0 record over a two-week period. He posted a pair of double-figure scoring performances, including his third double-double of the season with 15 points and 13 rebounds against FIU. The Hialeah, Fla., native scored 13 points versus Tennessee State and registered eight points and nine boards in a victory over Vanderbilt at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville.

ESPN2 RETURNS

The Blue Raiders Jan. 26 home game against WKU has been selected by ESPN2 as the Sun Belt's Wildcard Game. Last year, the Blue Raiders played twice on ESPN2 in Murphy Center, earning a 68-60 win over UALR on Feb. 11 before falling to Minnesota, 78-72, in the quarterfinals of the National Invitation Tournament (NIT). The last time MT and WKU met on ESPN2 was Jan. 23, 2010, when former Blue Raider Desmond "Boogie" Yates scored 28 points and became the school's all-

time leading scorer in an 84-74 MT victory in Bowling Green, Ky.

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 fifth in the Sun Belt with a 42.7 3-point field goal percentage and leads the team with 33 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.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

Kermit Davis, a former assistant coach at Idaho, is one of four current head coaches that comprised the 1986-87 Idaho staff.

Tim Floyd - Head Coach (now HC at UTEP)

Larry Eustachy - Assistant Coach (now HC at Colorado State)

Kermit Davis - Assistant Coach (now HC at Middle Tennessee State)

Randy Bennett - Graduate Assistant (now HC at Saint Mary's)

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