Blue Raiders look to carry momentum to Florida Atlantic Saturday

MT has won eight in a row

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

After a thrilling comeback on Thursday at FIU, the Middle Tennessee men's basketball team will make the short trip to Boca Raton, Fla., for a Saturday contest at Florida Atlantic. The Blue Raiders will look for their ninth-straight win when they tip off against the Owls at 7 p.m. ET at FAU Arena.

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: Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders (19-4, 11-1 SBC) at Florida Atlantic Owls (11-12, 6-6

SBC)

Date: Saturday, Feb. 2

Time: 7 p.m. ET

Location: Boca Raton, Fla.

Facility: FAU Arena

MEDIA INFORMATION

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

Play-by-Play: Chip Walters

<u>Live Audio</u> - <u>Live Stats</u>

Twitter: @MTAthletics, @MT_MBB

SERIES INFORMATION

- Overall: MT leads, 10-4 // As Sun Belt foes: MT leads, 9-4
- In Boca Raton: MT leads, 3-2Under Davis: MT leads, 10-4
- First meeting: MT 90, FAU 76 (12/21/05 in Louisville, Ky.)
- First Sun Belt meeting: MT 72, FAU 68 (1/10/07 in Boca Raton)
- Last meeting: MT 62, FAU 52 (1/10/13 in Murfreesboro)
- Last year in Boca Raton: MT 67, FAU 54 (1/14/12)
- · Current Streak: MT, 3 games
- Longest MT streak: 4 games (2005-08) // Longest FAU streak: 2 games (1/13/11-1/27/11)

BLUE RAIDER FASTBREAK POINTS

- Kermit Davis ranks third on the list of the Sun Belt's all-time winningest coaches with 109
 wins. As the winningest active coach, Davis needs just four wins to become the conference's
 all-time winningest coach, surpassing Ronnie Arrow's 112.
- MT is undefeated at 12-0 in home games this season, including one at Bridgestone Arena, and holds a 26-2 record at Murphy Center over the past two seasons. The Blue Raiders have won 24 straight regular-season games at Murphy Center, which is tied for the fourth-longest streak in the country.
- MT has won eight in a row and 12 of the last 13 games.
- MT is one of 11 teams in the country 12-0 or better at home this year.
- MT is tied for 12th nationally with an .807 winning percentange over the past two seasons.
- MT currently ranks 18th nationally in 3-point field goal percentage defense (.290).
- MT is one of six teams in the country with 19 or more wins. Only Michigan and Gonzaga have more with 20. MT is tied with Indiana, Kansas and Wichita State.
- MT ranks 26th nationally in defensive efficiency with a rating of 89.0 according to Pomeroy.
 The Blue Raiders have held six of their last eight opponents to 60 points or less and 10 of their last 13.
- MT has now reached the 10-win mark before the new year for two straight seasons.
- With the 18-4 start this year and the 20-2 start last year, MT is off to its best back-to-back starts in 26 years. Prior to the past two seasons, MT's best starts included an 18-5 in 1985-86 record and 19-3 in 1986-87.
- 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.

SCOUTING FAU

- Florida Atlantic is coming off a 76-71 win over ULM on Thursday
- The Owls are 7-3 at home and have won four of their last five at FAU Arena
- Greg Gantt leads FAU with 21.5 points per game, which ranks seventh nationally
- Stefan Moody is also averaging double figures with 14.3 ppg
- Jordan McCoy leads FAU on the boards with 5.6 rpg

LAST TIME OUT

Shawn Jones' leaner as time expired capped a 20-point comeback for MT in a 66-64 victory over FIU on Thursday night at U.S. Century Bank Arena. With 26 seconds remaining and the game tied at 64 after FIU's Tymell Murphy hit a free throw, MT drove to the opposite end and missed a pair of

shots before the ball rolled out of bounds off the Panthers. MT would get the ball back under the basket with 0.9 seconds remaining. That's when Bruce Massey's in-bounds lob found Jones streaking into the paint, and Jones delivered the leaning jumper as time expired.

ALL THEY DO IS WIN

With 19 wins, the Blue Raiders have already clinched a winning season. This is the ninth winning season under Davis and fifth in the last six years for MT. A win against Florida Atlantic would give MT back-to-back 20-win seasons for the first time since the 1987-88 and 1988-89 seasons. Ironically, in 1987-88, MT finished 23-11, went to the NIT and won two games, including one over Tennessee. The Blue Raiders followed that up with a 23-8 record and NCAA tournament berth where they beat Florida State before falling to Virginia.

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 109 league wins, behind Arrow (112) and Gene Bartow (111).

HEADED TO C-USA

MT will join Conference USA for the 2013-14 season. Next year will feature a 16-game schedule for with each school playing every team in the league once and a geographic opponent twice (no divisions). Middle Tennessee's home and away opponent will be UAB. The 2014 C-USA men's and women's basketball tournaments will take place at UTEP.

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.

RANKINGS

MT ranks the highest in the Sun Belt in all of the following:

NCAA RPI: 36 ESPN Daily RPI: 30 ESPN BPI: 50

Pomeroy: 49 Sagarin: 57

ESPN Mid-Major Poll: 6 Bleacher Report Mid-Major: 5

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 12-0 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 24 straight regular-season home victories for the Blue Raiders. MT is 26-2 over the last two seasons in Murphy Center.

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 42.8 percent of the minutes, which ranks 10th nationally according Pomeroy. MT currently has nine players averaging more than 12 minutes per game. Seven of those are averaging more than 18 minutes. Nine different Blue Raiders have been the leading scorer and ten Blue Raiders have combined for 61 double-figure scoring performances.

BENCH PRODUCTION

The Blue Raider bench has outscored its opponent in all but one game this season, currently owning a 663-312 advantage, or an average of 28.8 to 13.6 points per game.

MAINTAINING THE LEAD

MT has not trailed after halftime in seven of its last eight games. The Blue Raiders are 15-0 this season when leading at halftime.

SWITCHING IT UP

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

DOMINATING DEFENSE

Pomeroy ranks the Blue Raiders 18th in 3-point defense at 28.9 percent and 26th nationally in defensive efficiency with a rating of 89.0. 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.

INTIMIDATION FACTOR

Opponents haven't had much luck at the line against MT. The opposition is shooting 62.6 percent from the stripe, second-lowest in the country.

OUT-REBOUNDING OPPONENTS

The Blue Raiders have out-rebounded their opponent in 17 contests this season. MT currently owns a 854-718 rebounding advantage, an average of 37.1 compared to 31.2.

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.

WINNING BIG

MT's 82-50 win over UALR and 82-60 win over Louisiana marked the first time in 15 years the Blue Raiders beat consecutive conference opponents by at least 20 points. On Jan. 13, 1998, MT beat OVC foe Tennessee Tech, 80-60, then on Jan. 15 beat Austin Peay, 63-38.

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. The San Juan, Puerto Rico, native currently ranks fifth in the Sun Belt with a 41.0 3-point field goal percentage and leads the team with 41 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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