MT seeks 10th-straight win Thursday when Arkansas State visits

Tipoff slated for 7 p.m. CT on ESPN3

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee will look to make it 10 straight wins when the Blue Raiders host Arkansas State on Thursday. Tipoff is slated for 7 p.m. CT at Murphy Center with Chip Walters and Kyle Turnham on the call for ESPN3.

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: Arkansas State Red Wolves (14-8, 8-5 SBC) at Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders (20-4, 12-1 SBC)
Date: Thursday, Feb. 7
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

Live Audio - Live Stats

Twitter: @MTAthletics, @MT_MBB

SERIES INFORMATION

- Overall: MT leads, 14-12 // As Sun Belt foes: MT leads, 12-7 (records do not include two ASU wins vacated by NCAA in 2006 and 2007)
- In Murfreesboro: MT leads, 8-3
- Under coach Davis: MT leads, 11-6
- First meeting: ASU 48, MT 33 (1947-48)
- First Sun Belt meeting: ASU 73, MT 61 (1/14/01 in Murfreesboro)
- Last meeting: ASU 66, MT 60 (OT) (1/3/13 in Jonesboro)
- Current Streak: ASU, 2 games
- Longest MT streak: 7 games (1/9/03-1/12/06)// Longest ASU streak: 5 games (12/21/89-2/10/01)

BLUE RAIDER FASTBREAK POINTS

- Kermit Davis ranks third on the list of the Sun Belt's all-time winningest coaches with 110 wins. As the winningest active coach, Davis needs just three 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 home games, which is the fourth-longest streak in the country.
- MT has won nine in a row and 13 of the last 14 games.
- MT is one of nine teams in the country 12-0 or better at home this year.
- MT is tied for 12th nationally with an .810 winning percentange over the past two seasons and is tied for seventh nationally with 47 combined wins in the last two years.
- MT currently ranks 28th nationally in 3-point field goal percentage defense (.296).
- MT is one of five teams in the country with 20 or more wins. Only Gonzaga has more with 21. MT is tied with Creighton, Indiana and Michigan.
- MT ranks 27th nationally in defensive efficiency with a rating of 89.2 according to Pomeroy. The Blue Raiders have held four of their last six opponents to 60 points or less and 11 of their last 14.
- MT has back-to-back 20-win seasons for the first time since the 1987-88 and 1988-89 seasons.
- With the 20-4 start this year and the 20-2 start last year, MT is off to its best back-to-back starts in 26 years.

SCOUTING ARKANSAS STATE

- The Red Wolves are coming off a 75-66 OT win against North Texas last Saturday
- ASU has won four of their last five but has lost two straight road games
- ASU is 3-6 on the road this year, including 1-4 in Sun Belt play
- Ed Townsel leads the Red Wolves with 14.6 points per game, while Brandon Peterson is second with 10.6 points per game
- Peterson also leads the team in rebounding with 9.6 boards per game

LAST TIME OUT

Four Blue Raiders scored in double figures, led by Raymond Cintron with 16, as Middle Tennessee earned its ninth-straight victory with a 73-56 win over Florida Atlantic on Saturday night. Marcos Knight scored 13, while Kerry Hammonds and JT Sulton added 12 apiece. Shawn Jones nearly

cracked the double-digit mark with nine points. The Blue Raiders were also balanced on the boards, as Knight and Hammonds each had six, while Sulton grabbed five. MT started the contest 5-for-5 from the field and went on to hit 55.3 percent from the field, the second-best performance of the season.

ALL THEY DO IS WIN

With 20 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. MT now has 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 110 league wins, behind Arrow (112) and Gene Bartow (111).

STIFF COMPETITION

MT's four losses this season have come against some tough competition. The four teams that have beaten the Blue Raiders have a .791 (68-18) combined winning percentage. Florida currently ranks No. 2 in both the AP and USA Today Coaches' Poll, while Belmont and Akron are each receiving votes in both polls. Additionally, Arkansas State sits atop the Sun Belt West Division.

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: 32
ESPN Daily RPI: 35
ESPN BPI: 49
Pomeroy: 47
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 42.5 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 65 double-figure scoring performances.

BENCH PRODUCTION

The Blue Raider bench has outscored its opponent in all but one game this season, currently owning a 688-326 advantage, or an average of 28.7 to 13.6 points per game.

IT'S A TOUGH ROAD

While MT has been dominant at home this year, the Blue Raiders have also battled to earn road wins. Check out the comparison between MT's home vs. road scoring:

MAINTAINING THE LEAD

MT has not trailed after halftime ineight of its last nine games. The Blue Raiders are 16-0 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 25th in 3-point defense at 29.5 percent and 27th nationally in defensive efficiency with a rating of 89.2. 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 882-746 rebounding advantage, or 36.8 compared to 31.1 rpg.

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

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

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