Blue Raiders take 11-game winning streak to UALR Saturday

Tipoff slated for 7 p.m. in Little Rock

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Blue Raider men's basketball team takes its 11-game winning streak on the road this weekend to face UALR. The two teams will square off at the Jack Stephens Center in Little Rock, Ark., at 7 p.m. CT on Saturday.

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 (22-4, 14-1 SBC) at UALR Trojans (15-11, 9-6 SBC)
Date: Saturday, Feb. 16
Time: 7 p.m. CT
Location: Little Rock, Ark.
Facility: Jack Stephens Center

MEDIA INFORMATION
Radio: WNSR (560 AM)/ WMOT (89.5)
Play-by-Play: Chip Walters
Analysis: Kyle Turnham

Live Video - Live Audio - Live Stats

Twitter: @MTAthletics, @MT_MBB

SERIES INFORMATION

- Overall: UALR leads, 13-10 // As Sun Belt foes: UALR leads, 12-8

- In Little Rock: UALR leads, 7-4
- Under Davis: UALR leads, 10-6
- First meeting: MT 85, UALR 54 (12/1/76 in Murfreesboro)
- Last meeting: MT 82, UALR 50 (1/17/13 in Murfreesboro)
- Last meeting in Little Rock: UALR 62, MT 58 (2/19/11)
- Last MT road win: MT 66, UALR 52 (1/9/10)
- Current Streak: MT, 2 games
- Longest MT streak: 3 games (2/18/06 - 2/7/08) // Longest UALR streak: 5 games (2/9/02 - 2/21/04)
- Noteworthy: The home team has won the last three meetings.

BLUE RAIDER FASTBREAK POINTS

- Kermit Davis is tied with Ronnie Arrow as the Sun Belt's all-time winningest coach with 112 league victories.
- MT is undefeated at 14-0 in home games this season, including one at Bridgestone Arena, and holds a 28-2 record at Murphy Center over the past two seasons. The Blue Raiders have won 26 straight regular-season home games, which is fourth-longest in the country.
- MT has won 11 in a row, tied for the sixth-longest streak nationally, and 15 of the last 16 games.
- MT's 14 Sun Belt wins match the school record, set last season.
- MT is one of six teams in the country 14-0 or better at home this year.
- MT is seventh nationally with an .817 winning percentage over the past two seasons and is tied for seventh nationally with 49 combined wins in the last two years.
- MT currently ranks 19th nationally in scoring defense (57.9) and 12th in 3-point field goal percentage defense (.293).
- MT is tied for the second-most wins in the country, behind only Gonzaga with 24. Indiana and Louisiana Tech also have 22 wins.
- MT ranks 19th nationally in defensive efficiency with a rating of 88.1 according to Pomeroy. The Blue Raiders have held six of their last eight opponents to 60 points or less and 13 of their last 16.
- MT has back-to-back 20-win seasons for the first time since the 1987-88 and 1988-89 seasons.
- The four opponents MT has lost to have a combined winning percentage of .776 (76-22).
- MT is out-scoring Sun Belt opponents by 15.4 points per game.
- 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.

SCOUTING UALR

- The Trojans are coming off an 86-62 loss at Arkansas State on Thursday
- Prior to the loss to Arkansas State, the Trojans had won four of their last five
- Will Neighbour leads UALR in points (11.1) and rebounds (6.9) per game. In their previous meeting, though, MT limited Neighbour to just six points in the contest.
- The Trojans are 11-2 at home this season, including a 6-1 mark in league play. Their only home losses came against Louisiana Tech on Dec. 17 and South Alabama on Feb. 2 by a combined six points

PREVIOUS MEETING

Five Blue Raiders scored double figures as the Middle Tennessee men's basketball team dominated UALR in an 82-50 win on Jan. 17. Neiko Hunter finished the game with a career-high 15 points to lead the Blue Raiders and the squad hit 56 percent from the field, including 64.3 percent from long range. Eleven different Blue Raiders scored in the contest.

Shawn Jones added 12 points and Marcos Knight had 11, while Tweety Knight and Raymond Cintron each tallied 10 points. Tweety Knight also grabbed a team-high six boards, matching his career-high, and dished out six assists to go along with three steals. Bruce Massey matched Tweety Knight with a season-best six assists.

After trading baskets in the opening five minutes, MT put together a 24-6 run that lasted 8:47 to pull ahead, 29-14. From there, the Blue Raiders used strong defense and a potent shooting performance to put the game away early. MT held the Trojans to just one field goal during the final 9:35 of the first half.

LAST TIME OUT

Raymond Cintron knocked down a career-high six 3-pointers and five Blue Raiders hit double-figures to knock off Troy, 93-41, at the Murphy Center on Saturday night. Cintron led the Blue Raiders with 20 points off the bench, two shy of his career-high, including a 6-for-8 shooting performance from beyond the arc. It marked a season-high 55 bench points. Marcos Knight followed up his double-double performance in Thursday's game with 10 points and seven rebounds. JT Sulton scored 11 points, while Shawn Jones and James Gallman each added 10. After shooting an impressive 56.5 percent in the first half, MT erupted in the second, hitting 72.7 percent of their shots and 55.6 from beyond the arc. They finished the game with a season-high 64.4 shooting percentage.

ALL THEY DO IS WIN

With 22 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 has also cracked double-figure wins for six straight seasons. The Blue Raiders have won double-digit games at home in each of the past six years and nine of 11 seasons under Davis. 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

Kermit Davis is on the verge of becoming the Sun Belt's all-time winningest coach. He is currently tied with former South Alabama head coach Ronnie Arrow with 112 league victories as the all-time winningest coaches.

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 .776 (76-22) combined winning percentage. Florida currently ranks No. 6 in both the coaches poll and No. 7 in the AP poll, while Belmont and Akron are each receiving votes in both polls.

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: 29
ESPN Daily RPI: 29
ESPN BPI: 44
Pomeroy: 28
Sagarin: 52
ESPN Mid-Major Poll: 3
Bleacher Report Mid-Major: 3

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 14-0 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 26 straight regular-season home victories for the Blue Raiders. MT is 28-2 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 72 double-figure scoring performances.

BENCH PRODUCTION

The Blue Raider bench has outscored its opponent in all but one game this season, currently owning a 777-364 advantage, or an average of 29.9 to 14.0 points per game. MT's bench scored a season-high 55 points against Troy on Feb. 9.

MAINTAINING THE LEAD

MT has not trailed in the past three games or four of the last five and after halftime in 10 of the last 11 games. The Blue Raiders are 18-0 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 16th in 3-point defense at 29.2 percent and 21st nationally in defensive efficiency with a rating of 88.4. 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.

INTIMIDATION FACTOR

Opponents haven't had much luck at the line against MT. The opposition is shooting 62.8 percent from the stripe, second-lowest in the country.

OUT-REBOUNDING OPPONENTS

The Blue Raiders have out-rebounded their opponent in 19 contests this season. MT currently owns a 956-793 rebounding advantage, or 36.8 compared to 30.5 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 52-point victory over Troy on Feb. 9 was the largest margin of victory in a Sun Belt game in program history. 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 third in the Sun Belt with a 43.5 3-point field goal percentage and leads the team with 57 3-pointers this year. Against Akron on Dec. 2, Cintron sank four 3-pointers en route to a career-high 22 points. He hit a career-high six treys

against Troy on Feb. 9.

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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