

# Home opener awaits Blue Raiders

## Will host Troy in three-game series

March 4, 2013 · @MTAthletics

### This weekend's action

Middle Tennessee opens Sun Belt Conference play this week in a three-game series with Troy. Additionally, the double-header on Tuesday will serve as MT's 2013 home opener, where there will be \$1 hot dogs and \$1 soft drinks for fans, along with a post game autograph session with MT softball seniors.

### Last time out

The Blue Raiders fell to 0-13 on the season after dropping all three at the War Eagle Classic in Auburn, Ala. Middle Tennessee was scheduled to play five games in three days, but cold temperatures forced the cancellation of matchups with Gardner-Webb and Southern on Saturday, March 2.

### Series' history

Middle Tennessee trails Troy, 31-19, in the series and has won just three of the past 14 meetings. Troy defeated MT three time last season in an away series.

### Looking at the opponent

Troy is off to a 9-9 start on its season, and has just four players batting above .300. That said, the Trojans upset No. 25 Florida State last weekend. Caitlin Ortiz leads Troy on offensive, with 14 hits in 35 at-bats, five of which were doubles. Chandler Griffin and Hannah Renn each have five doubles as well, with Renn adding five long balls of her own. In the circle, Rachel Rigney has 30 strikeouts and allowed 42 runs (34 earned) in 56.2 innings.

### Campbell's heating up

Though just a freshman, first baseman Niki Campbell hit .500 (4-for-8) last weekend, and notched her first career double against Auburn. Campbell also led the team in putouts (15) and worked a walk while racking up a perfect 1.000 fielding percentage.

### Walk this way



Laura Dukes has drawn 10 walks in 13 games this year, more than double any other teammates walk total. Perhaps driving her free trips are Dukes' power numbers, as she is slugging .846 with four home runs and a double in 26 at-bats. Dukes is leading the team in batting average (.346) as well.

### **Senior Star**

For Kristi Marquez, home runs weren't a part of her offensive resume until this year. She has belted two round-trippers in the past five games, and has brought her batting average up to .343 (12-for-35). Marquez leads the team in hits, doubles (four) and RBIs (seven).

### **In a pinch**

Chrissy Polka and Ashley Stassin each saw just one official at-bat last weekend, but managed to execute when it counted. Stassin hit a double and Polka singled as each drove in runs in extra innings against Charlotte. Stassin also drew a walk in the contest.

### **Picking it up**

Though she started the season with four home runs in 21 at-bats, sophomore Laura Dukes wasn't hitting for average in the opening two weeks. That changed in Auburn, however, as Dukes hit a whopping .571 (4-for-7) with a double and four walks.

### **Searching for the right fit**

In 13 games played, MT has used 11 different starting lineups (not including pitching). Kayla Toney and Kristi Marquez have split time in the lead-off position, with Toney seeing seven games and Marquez, eight. Additionally, just four Blue Raiders have started all 13 games: Nina Dever, Marquez, LaRi Mitchell, Samantha Nieves and Toney,

### **Getting better every day**

With the arrival of head coach Jeff Breeden, an intense focus has been made on improving fielding. Though the squad struggled over the first two weekends, with just a .935 fielding percentage and 18 total errors, they improved drastically at Auburn. MT had a .965 fielding percentage, and made just three errors at the War Eagle Classic.

### **Coming alive**

For a squad that managed just 37 hits and 20 runs in the first 10 games of the season, MT bounced back with 21 hits and nine runs in three games last weekend. Laura Dukes, Nike Campbell and Kristi Marquez each had four hits in the weekend, while Nina Dever and Kayla Toney had two.

### **Career records watch**

Several Middle Tennessee softball players are within reach of attaining spots on the top 10 of career records, they are:

- Nina Davenport, who hit six triples last year, is currently tied with Allison Cheatham (1995-98) atop the career triples list with nine. Davenport's speed has also put her in the running for stolen base records. Though she currently is not in the top 10 of successful or attempted stolen bases, all are within reach. Davenport is 21 of 28 in stolen bases, and No. 10 in each category is 33 and 40, respectively.
- Kayla Toney has three doubles this season and 22 in her career. With two seasons of eligibility remaining, Toney needs just five two-baggers to reach No. 10 on the list. Toney is also listed in the top 10 of several other career records, including slugging percentage

(seventh). She is also tied for No. 11 with 10 home runs for her career.

- With 10 home runs on her resume, Nina Dever needs just one to reach the top 10 career home run list. If Dever matches last year's season total (seven), she will move into a tie for fifth-place on the list. Dever is fifth in career stolen base percentage (.882), as well.
- Kristi Marquez has been an anchor at third base over the past three seasons, and ranks fifth in career assists (348). Marquez had 121 assists last season and 26 so far this year. The overall leader in career assists, Brittney Banania (2008-11), has 494.
- Though she has battled injuries her first two seasons in the circle, Jordyn Fisherback has tallied 126 strikeouts, and is just seven behind No. 10 in career strikeouts, Caty Jutson (2009-12). Jutson had 133 in her career. Ninth on the list is Courtney Wallace (1998-2002), with 182 strikeouts.

### **MT on TV**

Middle Tennessee's student television station, MT10, will broadcast eight Blue Raider softball games. MT10 is Channel 10 locally for Comcast customers. Broadcast games are:

March 5 vs. Troy (Noon and 2 p.m.)

March 6 vs. Troy (1 p.m.)

April 3 vs. WKU (5 p.m.)

April 17 vs. Kentucky (5 p.m.)

April 24 vs. Lipscomb (4 and 6 p.m.)

April 25 vs. Jacksonville State (5 p.m.)

### **Keeping up-to-date**

For complete up-to-the-minute scoring and game information throughout the season, follow [@MT\\_Softball](#) on Twitter or on Facebook at MTSU Softball.

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