

# Blue Raiders meet with local media to discuss upcoming Sun Belt tournament

## MT will play Saturday at 6:30 p.m.

March 5, 2013 · @MTAthletics

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee men's basketball team is poised for the Sun Belt Championship beginning this weekend. Head coach Kermit Davis and senior guards Bruce Massey and Marcos Knight met with members of the media today to discuss MT's success and the upcoming tournament.



The Blue Raiders enter the tournament with a 27-4 overall and 19-1 league record and will face either North Texas or Louisiana in the quarterfinals on Saturday. The contest will air at 6:30 p.m. CT on CSS from Summit Arena in Hot Springs, Ark.

### MEN'S BASKETBALL HEAD COACH KERMIT DAVIS

#### Opening Statement:

"I think that when you play more conference games than anyone else in college basketball, it's a true test of a champion. When you can play a true round-robin schedule and come out with a 19-1 record and out-score your opponents by an average of 17 points, that's a good thing. We took off Sunday and Monday, and I think those were good days for our team to get rested and ready for the conference tournament."

#### On the mindset heading into the tournament:

"I think that our mindset is that these guys have done a lot of firsts. They've probably broken every record in the history of the school. But there's still one thing they haven't done, and that's win a conference tournament championship. We have to be focused on our team winning, and that's the complete mindset."

#### On what the team has to do to win the title:

"We have to rebound well. That means have a lot of energy. If we rebound well, our offense plays well, our bench plays well, that's what makes us good. So we need a big rebounding effort this week."

#### On using not getting in last year with an at-large bid as motivation this year:

"The message to our team is control your own destiny. Don't let the selection committee control that."

The only thing we want them to control is seeding. I think our team has played with a little chip on their shoulder because of the tournament game last year. We are a much better team this year because these guys are older. We lost two good players, but we have a lot of experience on our team that has improved."

On if he feels they have done enough right now for an at-large bid:

"I think we absolutely have. You start looking at the facts at what we have done. We have the second most wins in college basketball and the second-longest winning streak in college basketball. Our non-conference strength of schedule is ninth. Our RPI is 25. These guys have won by an average of 17 every night. Our losses are at Belmont, at Akron, Florida, and an overtime loss. I think we have done exactly what we need to do."

#### SENIOR GUARD BRUCE MASSEY

On the loss in last year's quarterfinal being on his mind:

"We were the number one seed last year and got to the tournament, and Arkansas State beat us by out-playing us. We forgot what really got us to the No. 1 seed, and that was toughness and rebounding. We didn't re-create our identity in the game and down the stretch. Going into this tournament, every team will play us hard because we are the one seed, so we have to take on that challenge every night."

On using not getting in last year with an at-large bid as motivation this year:

"Last year, most of us were one-year players similar to freshmen. We really didn't know what it took to win a conference tournament. We thought we did enough to get to the NCAA tournament, and we found out the hard way we didn't. We don't want the same thing to happen this year. We know if we can win the next three games, we should have a good seed in the NCAA tournament."

#### SENIOR GUARD MARCOS KNIGHT

On whether this team is better equipped than a year ago to avoid an upset:

"I think this year's team is a little tougher than last year's team as far as rebounding. We have six seniors this year and something we always talk about is not losing in the first round or second round. We want to go to the championship and win because it's something we haven't done. That's something we will remember in practice every day."

On using not getting in last year with an at-large bid as motivation this year:

"Last year, we thought we would go in and win the conference tournament. We have to control our own destiny and not let the committee control our destiny for us. We need to win these next three games, but we will take it one game at a time and continue to get better in practice every day."

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*Printed on July 23, 2014*

*Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/66305>*