

Blue Raiders discuss upcoming Sun Belt Tournament

Coach Insell and Kortni Jones comment on upcoming

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

The Middle Tennessee men's and women's basketball teams held a press conference on Tuesday afternoon to discuss the success of both programs and the upcoming Sun Belt Championships.

The tournament will be held in Hot Springs, Ark., March 8-11. The women's team will play on Saturday March, 9 at noon, followed by the men's team at 6:30 p.m. For more information on the tournament click [here](#).

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL HEAD COACH RICK INSELL



On the season so far:"This 20 game schedule has been a grind. I am really proud of our ladies for going 17-3. We were in many, many close games on the road and at home. They prevailed and in the end kind of ran away with it. I think UALR was the closest with six losses. The three losses that we had were against Troy. At that time, that hadn't won a game in the conference. We just didn't play well that day and they came out and played hard. We lost to FIU and later on the road to Little Rock. I am really proud of our team. I think going into the tournament that we're ready. We've got to be tough minded. I know this bunch is tough minded. I was looking at stats this morning and Ebony has lost just four games in the Sun Belt in her career. I think that's phenomenal. Kortni's situation is the same way. When you look at athletes that have played in this conference for three four years and have only lost that amount of games, it tells you about the program you've got and the tough-minded athletes that we've got playing here."

On what it will take to win the conference tournament: "The conference is pretty tough. We've got eight or nine teams that have shown they can play with anybody, not only in our conference but around the country. We've got some big wins as far as our conference is concerned. We're going to have to come ready to play from the get-go. There is no gimme."

On whether or not the team is ready for the tournament: "I think you've got to look at the history. I think Middle Tennessee women's basketball basketball has always been a tournament team. Back before I came on board, Stephanie Smith won the conference tournament two years in a row. Back to even when Larry Joe (Inman) was in the OVC or when Lewis (Bivens) came along. They always had their teams ready when the tournament came. I think that's just something that goes along with tradition. We had that at Shelbyville and I see that same thing here at Middle Tennessee. There have been times that we haven't been playing so well, but when it came to the tournament, we were tough to handle. What we've gone through this year - our conference schedule, our non-conference schedule - not many teams had to go into Tennessee, or go to Iowa, or visit South Dakota State. That's pretty tough goings right there."

On what was learned from losses this season: "What I took out of it? The hurt. Those were tough rides back to the house and I think the girls will tell you that. As far as I'm concerned, that's going to be something that motivates me. You're a championship team and you've to go finish those things off. That's something that motivates me and our staff and that's something that should motivate them as players."

JUNIOR FORWARD EBONY ROWE

On whether or not teams fear playing Middle Tennessee: "I wouldn't say fear. I would say it's respect. I know that teams come and play their best game when they play Middle Tennessee. We're expecting that and we're ready to take on that challenge."

SENIOR GUARD KORTNI JONES

On whether or not teams fear playing Middle Tennessee: "Depending on who you're playing, some teams are absolutely intimidated by us and some really come in and think they're capable of beating us. We've always had an "X" on our backs and it's been that way since I was a freshman. I feel like every team that comes to play us thinks they can win."

On the outlook of the tournament: "I feel like a lot of teams in our conference are really good and I have a lot of respect for a lot of teams in our conference. I think that anybody is capable of winning it. Like Coach (Insell) said, Troy came in here and played really hard. If they go to Hot Springs and play just as hard as they played here then they can win it."

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