Blue Raiders heading to the Big Dance! MT to face Saint Mary's Tuesday

Middle Tennessee will play in Dayton at 8:10 p.m. CT

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- **Middle Tennessee's NCAA Tournament Central**

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Blue Raider men's basketball team is headed to the big dance for the first time in 24 years. Middle Tennessee earned a No. 11 seed for the 2013 NCAA Championship and will face fellow No. 11 seed Saint Mary's in the First Four on Tuesday in Dayton, Ohio, at 8:10 p.m. CT.

MT is making its first NCAA tournament appearance since 1989 and seventh in program history. The Blue Raiders are 2-6 all-time in the tournament, with the last win coming in the 1989 Southeast Regional appearance.

With the No. 11 seed, it matches the best seed in program history. MT was also the No. 11 seed in the 1982 Mideast Regional, the same year the Blue Raiders won their first NCAA tournament game against No. 6 seed Kentucky. The Blue Raiders captured a 50-44 win over the No. 6 Wildcats in Nashville, Tenn., before falling to third-seeded Louisville in the second round, 81-56.

MT has recorded one other win in the tournament. No. 13 MT knocked off fourth-seeded Florida State, 97-83, in the first round of the 1989 tournament thanks to a 17-point comeback in the final 16 minutes. The Blue Raiders then fell to Virginia, 104-88, in the second round in Nashville, Tenn.

Kermit Davis is making his third trip to the dance as a head coach. In 1989 and 1990, Davis took the Idaho Vandals to the tournament after winning the Big Sky regular season and tournament championships both years. Ironically, Saint Mary's head coach Randy Bennett also has Idaho ties, as he was a graduate assistant when Davis was an assistant coach on the 1986-87 staff.

The Blue Raiders earned a bid after boasting a 28-5 record and 19-1 Sun Belt record. MT reeled off a school-record 17 straight wins during the season, led by Marcos Knight with 12.5 points per game.

Saint Mary's boasts a 27-6 record out of the West Coast Conference. The Gaels finished 14-2 in

conference play, with both losses coming to Gonzaga. Saint Mary's also fell to the Bulldogs in the WCC tournament championship. The Gaels are led by Matthew Dellavedova with 15.8 points per game.

HEAD COACH KERMIT DAVIS

On waiting to hear Middle Tennessee's name called...
"I had a quiet confidence, but as always, a little anxiety when you're waiting this long for that particular moment, and it kind of popped out of nowhere. I'm just so happy for our players, so happy for our fans and it's just great publicity for Middle Tennessee. I'm playing one of my really good friends, who used to be an assistant with me at Idaho - Randy Bennett - who's at Saint Mary's. We're going to play a really good basketball team."

On the quick turnaround...
"It's going to be hectic, and we're fixing to go to work. We're going to talk to our team here in a little bit, and we may bring them back around 9 or 9:30 tonight to talk to them about Saint Mary's. We'll get on a flight early in the morning, practice, and it'll be a quick turnaround, but it'll be a quick turnaround for Saint Mary's, too."

On scouting Saint Mary's...
"They've got one of the best point guards in basketball in (Matthew) Dellavedova. They're big, they're physical, and they've won a bunch of games over the years. They're in a league with Gonzaga and they couldn't beat Gonzaga, but who could this year in basketball."

On making the tourney for the first time since 1989...
"It just feels so good. It feels good for our fan base. It's been a long time coming. To put us in postseason three of the last four years and taking the steps up - to now having that much respect to get an eleven seed at-large, it kind of shows where our program has gotten to."

JUNIOR GUARD KERRY HAMMONDS

On his father being on the last tournament team...
"It means a lot. My dad has always told me about how fun it was and how he was on the last team to get to the tournament. He always thought that we would get there, but it feels great to finally be in it."

On what his mood and the team's mood coming into today were...
"There was a lot of anxiety not knowing if we were going to play in the NCAA or the NIT. There is a lot of relief finally knowing we are going to the NCAA Tournament."

On whether he is more excited to go as a junior or send the seniors out with a bid...
"It is a total team effort. This is what we have worked for from the beginning of the season."

SENIOR GUARD BRUCE MASSEY

On the history aspect of reaching the tournament...
"It feels good to know all of your hard work from the summer time to now is paying off. Just to be in there, knowing Coach Davis is making it to the tournament at Middle Tennessee, knowing our six seniors are finally getting to play in the tournament, it's a good feeling."

On his emotions over the whole thing...
"Coming in to it, we have all been stressed. There hasn't been much sleep in the last couple of days because we weren't sure if we were in or out. To see our name called early in the first bracket was a sigh of relief."

On waiting for MTSU to be called...
"It was the longest 5-10 minutes of my life just getting the show started. We thought we would be in the last bracket so hearing our name in the first bracket was good."

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