Blue Raiders and Gaels meet in First Four of NCAA Championship

Tipoff slated for 8:10 p.m. CT on TruTV

March 18, 2013 · @MTAthletics

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Blue Raider men's basketball returns to the NCAA tournament for the first time in 24 years, earning a No. 11 seed for Tuesday's game against fellow No. 11 seed Saint Mary's. The two teams will square off at 8:10 p.m. CT as part of the First Four and the game will air on TruTV with Marv Albert, Steve Kerr and Craig Sager on the call.

GAME INFORMATION
Matchup: Saint Mary's Gaels (27-6, 14-2 WCC) vs. Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders (28-5, 19-1 SBC)
Date: Tuesday, March 19
Time: 8:10 p.m. CT
Location: Dayton, Ohio
Facility: UD Arena

MEDIA INFORMATION
TV: TruTV
Play-by-play: Marv Albert
Analysis: Steve Kerr
Courtside: Craig Sager

Radio: WNSR (560 AM)/WGNS (1450 AM, 101.9 FM, 100.5 FM)/WMOT (89.5)
Play-by-Play: Chip Walters
Analysis: Kyle Turnham

Tournament Central

Twitter: @MTAthletics, @MT_MBB

NCAA TOURNAMENT INFORMATION (SEE PAGE 2 FOR MORE INFO)

- MT is making its seventh appearance in the NCAA tournament.
- It is the first appearance in 24 years for MT (1989).
- The Blue Raiders are 2-6 all-time in the tournament.
- The last NCAA tournament win for MT came in 1989 vs. Florida State.
- MT is a No. 11 seed for the second time in program history, which is also the highest seed in MT history.

SERIES INFORMATION

- Overall: First meeting
- Noteworthy: MT head coach Kermit Davis and Saint Mary's head coach Randy Bennett were on the same staff at Idaho in 1986-87. Davis was an assistant and Bennett was a graduate assistant under Tim Floyd.

BLUE RAIDER FASTBREAK POINTS

- MT has the most wins in program history (28) and is tied with the sixth-most wins in the country.
- Kermit Davis was named the Sun Belt's Coach of the Year for the second straight season and third time in his career (2003, 2012, 2013). Bruce Massey is the Defensive Player of the Year and also earned third-team all-conference honors. Marcos Knight was named to the first team and Raymond Cintron to the third team.
- Kermit Davis is the Sun Belt's all-time winningest coach with 117 league wins. He broke the record at UALR in MT's 66-61 win on Feb. 16, surpassing Ronnie Arrow's (South Alabama) mark of 112.
- MT set the school record for wins this year and is one win shy of matching the Sun Belt record for overall victories, set by WKU with 29 in 1986-87 and again in 2007-08.
- MT has also won 21 of the last 23 games, which included a streak of 17 straight.
- MT's 19 league wins are a school record and league record, breaking New Orleans' mark of 18 set in 1992-93.
- MT's 11 road wins are third-most in the country.
- MT is fifth nationally with an .821 winning percentage over the past two seasons and tied for 11th with 55 combined wins in the last two years.
- MT currently ranks 11th nationally in scoring margin (13.5), 15th nationally in scoring defense (57.8) and 19th in 3-point field goal percentage defense (.296).

MORE MT QUICK HITTERS

- MT finished a perfect 16-0 at home this season, including one at Bridgestone Arena. MT holds a 30-2 record at Murphy Center over the past two seasons. The Blue Raiders have won 28 straight regular-season home games, which is second-longest streak in the country.
- MT is one of three teams in the country to finish 16-0 or better at home this year. Only Michigan has a better record at 17-0. It is the best home record in school history.
- MT out-scored Sun Belt opponents by 16.5 points per game.
- JT Sulton became the 30th Blue Raider of the 1,000-point club with 17 points against WKU. He currently has 1,015 career points, which ranks 29th all time.
- MT has back-to-back 20-win seasons for the first time since the 1987-88 and 1988-89 seasons.

- With the 35-point win over South Alabama and 41-point win over ULM, MT registered its largest back-to-back victories since 1977-78 when the Blue Raiders beat Culver-Stockton 81-34 (47) and Urbana College 84-48 (36).
- Kerry Hammonds II joins his father playing in the NCAA tournament for MT. Kerry, Sr. played in MT's last NCAA tournament in 1989, and also played in the 1985 and 1987 appearances. Kerry, Sr. ranks third in all-time scoring for MT.

DAVIS NAMED SBC COACH OF THE YEAR

Head coach Kermit Davis was named the 2013 Sun Belt Coach of the Year. It marks his third SBC coaching accolade, as he also won it in 2003 and 2012. He is one of just three coaches to earn the honor three times, along with Gene Bartow and Ronnie Arrow. Davis becomes the first SBC coach since Matt Kilcullen in 1994 and 1995 to earn back-to-back honors. Kilcullen, however, took home honors with two different teams - Jacksonville and WKU. The last time a coach took home two straight honors with the same school was J.D. Barnett (VCU) in 1983 and 1984.

ALL-CONFERENCE HONORS

Bruce Massey was named the Sun Belt Defensive Player of the Year. Senior guard Marcos Knight was named to the All-Sun Belt First Team, while Massey and senior guard Raymond Cintron each took home third-team honors. The Blue Raiders earned three all-conference nods for the second time since joining the Sun Belt in 2000-01, matching the three selections from last season. Prior to that, the last time at least three Blue Raiders were named to all-conference teams was in 1989 when MT had two on the All-OVC First Team and one on the second team.

CHAMPS AGAIN

With the 85-50 win over South Alabama on Feb. 21, MT clinched its second-straight Sun Belt regular-season title and third in the last four years. MT was the first team in the country to clinch its conference title.

RECEIVING VOTES

MT is receiving votes in the USA Today Coaches Polls. MT received votes in the coaches poll for the eighth straight week with five and until last week, received votes in the AP Poll for three straight weeks.

ALL THEY DO IS WIN

With 28 wins, this is the ninth winning season under Davis and fifth in the last six years for MT. MT broke the school record of 27 wins, set last season, and 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 became the Sun Belt's all-time winningest coach with MT's 66-61 victory at UALR on Feb. 16, 2013 with his 113th league win. Davis surpassed South Alabama's Ronnie Arrow who had 112 league wins. Davis currently has 117 league wins.

RANKINGS

MT ranks the highest in the Sun Belt in all of the following:
NCAA RPI: 29
Non-Conference SOS: 6
ESPN Daily RPI: 28
ESPN BPI: 45
Pomeroy: 32
Sagarin: 53
ESPN Mid-Major Poll: 2
USA Today Coaches Poll: RV (5)

HOME DOMINANCE
MT has made a habit of winning big at home in Sun Belt action. The Blue Raiders have won 11 straight conference home games by double figures, dating back to an eight-point victory over UALR on Feb. 11, 2012.

STIFF COMPETITION
MT's four regular-season losses this season came against some tough competition. Of the four teams that beat the Blue Raiders prior to postseason play, three won their respective conference regular season title - Florida (SEC), Akron (MAC) and Belmont (OVC). The only other loss came at the hands of the Sun Belt's West Division champion, Arkansas State, in overtime.

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). MT'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.

HOME SWEET HOME
MT continued to defend its home court this season after finishing 15-2 at home last year. The Blue Raiders are 16-0 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 28 straight regular-season home victories for the Blue Raiders. MT is 30-2 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 42.0 percent of the minutes, which ranks 12th nationally

according Pomeroy. MT currently has nine players averaging more than 12 minutes per game. Seven of those are averaging more than 18 minutes. Ten different Blue Raiders have been the leading scorer and 11 Blue Raiders have combined for 95 double-figure scoring performances.

BENCH PRODUCTION

The Blue Raider bench has outscored its opponent in all but two games this season, currently owning a 976-466 advantage, or an average of 39.6 to 14.1 points per game. MT's bench scored a season-high 55 points against Troy on Feb. 9.

MAINTAINING THE LEAD

MT did not trail for three straight games from Feb. 2-9 or five of the last 10. MT has not trailed after halftime in 16 of the last 18 games. The Blue Raiders are 24-0 this season when leading at halftime.

SWITCHING IT UP

Head coach Kermit Davis has used 12 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 14th in 3-point defense at 29.5 percent and 20th nationally in defensive efficiency with a rating of 89.0. 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 63.2 percent from the stripe, second-lowest in the country.

OUT-REBOUNDING OPPONENTS

The Blue Raiders have out-rebounded their opponent in 25 contests this season. MT currently owns a 1215-1016 rebounding advantage, or 36.8 compared to 30.8 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.

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 is currently tied for first in the Sun Belt with a 44.3 3-point field goal percentage and leads the team with 70 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.

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 (now HC at Middle Tennessee State)

Randy Bennett - Graduate Assistant (now HC at Saint Mary's)

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