

MT makes 16th NCAA appearance in Louisville

12th seeded Raiders play No. 5 seed Cardinals on Sunday

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MURFREESBORO - For a school record fifth consecutive year, Middle Tennessee learned its destination for the NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament on Monday inside a packed Jeff Hendrix Stadium Club. The Blue Raiders will be the 12 seed in the Oklahoma City Regional and take on No. 5 Louisville at the KFC Yum! Center in Louisville, Ky. on Sunday, March 24 with a scheduled 1:30 p.m. Central tipoff.



Middle Tennessee (25-7) completed a strong season that saw the Raiders win their fifth consecutive Sun Belt regular season title. In the Sun Belt Tournament, MT won three games and picked up a 53-48 victory over UALR to claim their seventh Sun Belt Tournament title.

The Raiders have made the NCAA Tournament in nine out of 10 years and is led by three 1,000 point scorers in Icelyn Elie, Ebony Rowe and Kortni Jones. In his eight seasons, head coach Rick Insell has led the Raiders to the big dance seven times.

Rowe, an All-America candidate ([RaidersRowe.com](#)), leads the Blue Raiders with 19.9 points and 11.1 rebounds per game. Rowe has registered 20 double-doubles this season and 52 in her career. Jones is also in double digits with 16.4 points per game, followed by fellow senior Elie with 13.9 points.

Louisville (24-8) is making its 16th NCAA Tournament appearance and seventh appearance in the last eight years. Junior point guard Shoni Schimmel leads the team in scoring and assists with 13.8 points and assists with 3.7 per game. Sophomore Sara Hammond is second on the team in scoring with 10.7 points per game while leading the team in rebounding with 6.6 boards per game.

The Blue Raiders and Cardinals are meeting for the first time in the NCAA Tournament and the fifth time in program history. The two teams last met on Dec. 9, 2009 when the Raiders defeated UofL 94-84 in Louisville. MT is 5-15 all-time in the NCAA Tournament.

Prior to the MT/Louisville matchup, No. 4 Purdue will play No. 13 Liberty in an 11 a.m. CT contest. Both games will air live on ESPN2 with ESPN's whip-around coverage. The entire broadcast will be

on in its entirety in the Nashville market and through ESPN3. Full TV details will be released later this week. The second round matchup is set for Tuesday at 6 p.m. CT.

Tickets are \$18 dollars and may be purchased through the Blue Raider Ticket Office beginning at 7 a.m. on Tuesday. To purchase, call the ticket office a 615-898-5261.

QUOTES

Head Coach Rick Insell

On getting an automatic big and being able to relax...

"The last seven days have felt good. It hasn't just been today, it's been seven days have felt good. You didn't have to worry about was winning and who was losing. All you had to be concerned about - you knew your name was going to be called, you knew you were there - you just had to be concerned where you were going to play. Louisville is a good matchup for us - it's good for our fans, it'll be good for our team. It will keep us in our routine for when we travel on the road, and a three hour drive isn't bad at all."

On first impressions of Louisville...

"I've seen them a lot of T.V. They've got a good team, they're big, they've got some good scorers, and they're well coached. Jeff Walz does a great job. It'll be a great game, much like we've gone through the past three games (at the Sun Belt Championships)."

On whether seniority of team benefits tournament play...

"I don't think there is any doubt about it. One of the things I like about this team is that we've had to play in so many tough places the last three or four years, the one thing we won't be is intimidated to go to Louisville. A lot of teams may be intimidated to go on the road, but it won't bother us. We've gone to the Tennessee's, the South Dakota State's, and the Kentucky's. We've gone there and we've competed and we'll know we'll go to Louisville and compete. And I think Louisville knows that also."

On what it would take for a deep tournament run...

"We're going to have to be tough-minded. We're going to have to continue to play tough defense and get on the boards like we did in the three games in the tournament. We won the boards in all three games, and those teams were a little bigger than us, but we did a good job of boxing out and using our heads. Finally, we're going to have to knock down shots. If we can knock down shots we can play with anybody."

On what it would mean to make a Sweet 16 or Elite Eight run...

"It'd be something that 50 years from now they'll still be talking about - this night here and the tournament."

On both teams in the NCAA Tournament...

"It's exciting. It's great to be a Blue Raider right now. If you can't get excited about being a Blue

Raider right now, you can't get excited."

Senior Guard Kortni Jones

On her emotions waiting to hear her name called...

"We were very anxious. We just kept waiting to hear our name called. I started sweating. I actually turned around and asked my teammates if I was the only one sweating. It's just an anxious feeling. It would have been great to be called first but I also liked the anticipation."

Her thoughts on the matchup with Louisville...

"I've watched Louisville play a few times this year. They are a good team and they usually are. I am very confident though we have played toe-to-toe with some of the better teams in the country so I am excited to see how we do."

Her thoughts on the crowd turnout...

"It's exciting but I am not surprised. Our fans love us and we love them. I am actually excited that we are going to Louisville because the ones that were here tonight will be with us in Louisville. It's a good feeling to know that you always have people behind you."

On making it to the NCAA tournament all four years...

"More than anything I feel blessed. A lot of my friends that went to other schools haven't even been to one. Being from a mid-major says a lot about how far this program has come and where it is going."

Senior Forward Icelyn Elie

On representing MTSU in the national spotlight...

"We are getting used to it. This is my fourth year being in the tournament which is a good thing. Being the 12th seed is a great thing. Just being in the tournament is a blessing also."

On playing a Louisville...

"We played a lot of larger schools to begin the season. We played Tennessee which is an awesome team. We played several other schools that got us prepared for the season. I think that's what got us into the tournament."

On her reaction to the large crowd in attendance at the selection show...

"The crowd was awesome. The support we have is amazing and we appreciate that a lot. That's what gets us pumped up for games is our fan base."

Junior Forward Ebony Rowe

On the matchup with Louisville...

"It's really exciting especially being from Kentucky. I'm from Lexington so all my family will be there."

I'm glad it's close so all of our fans will be able to be in attendance also."

On waiting until the last bracket to be called...

"It was so nerve racking. We had all our little fans sitting in our laps and they were getting anxious and wouldn't sit still. I think everyone was just thrilled and relieved when they finally showed our team."

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