

MT opens NCAA Tournament vs. Louisville

ESPN2/ESPN3.com to televise game

March 23, 2013 · @MTAthletics

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Middle Tennessee makes its school record fifth consecutive appearance in the NCAA Tournament on Sunday when the 12th seeded Blue Raiders take on No. 5 Louisville at the KFC Yum! Center in Louisville, Ky., in a first round game. Tipoff is set for 1:30pm CT on ESPN2/ESPN3.com (subject to area).

GAME INFORMATION

Matchup: No. 12 Middle Tennessee (25-7) vs. No. 5 Louisville (24-8)

Date: Sunday, March 24, 2013

Time: 1:40 p.m. CT

Location: Louisville, Ky.

Arena: KFC Yum! Center (22,000)

Tickets: Call (502) 690-9000

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Appearance: 16th

Record: 5-15

Last Appearance/Result: 2012, L - 46-40 vs. Vanderbilt - Nashville, Tenn.

SERIES INFORMATION

Overall: Louisville leads series, 3-1

Under Rick Insell: 1-2

In NCAA Tournament: First meeting

Last Meeting: MT 74, ULM 53 - Feb. 23, 2013 - Murfreesboro, Tenn.

MEDIA INFORMATION



Television: ESPN2 (Entire game shown in Nashville/Murfreesboro)/ESPN3.com

Play-by-Play: Melissa Lee

Analyst: Brooke Weisbord

Radio: WMOT (89.5 FM)/WGNS 1450 AM, 100.5 FM, 101.9 FM

Play-by-Play: Dick Palmer

Color Analyst: Duane Hickey

[Live Video](#) - [Live Audio](#) - [Live Stats](#) - [Tournament Central](#)

Quick Hitters...

- For a school record fifth consecutive year, Middle Tennessee (25-7) will make an appearance in the NCAA Tournament. The Blue Raiders claimed the Sun Belt's automatic bid by winning the school's seventh SBC Tournament title with a 53-48 win over UALR on March 11 in Hot Springs, Ark.
- In total, MT has made 16 NCAA Tournament appearances with nine of those coming in the last 10 years. Rick Insell has led MT to a berth in the NCAA seven of his eight seasons at the helm.
- Insell, who is the school's all-time winningest WBB coach, is one win away from recording his 200th win at MT. His winning percentage of .765 is seventh all-time in the NCAA among active Division I coaches.
- MT and Louisville meet for the fifth time on Sunday with the Cardinals holding a 3-1 edge in the all-time series. The Blue Raiders defeated Louisville in the last meeting, 94-84, on Dec. 9, 2009 at Freedom Hall. The Raiders have never met Liberty or Purdue on the hardwood.
- Junior forward Ebony Rowe was named to the WBCA All-Region 4 team released on March 19. The Top 30 Naismith Award candidate set the school record for career rebounds in the win over UALR. Rowe is the only Blue Raider in program history to have scored 1,000 points and grab 1,000 rebounds.
- For the second consecutive year, Icelyn Elie, Kortni Jones and Ebony Rowe were selected to the All-Sun Belt team. Jones and Rowe garnered first team honors, while Elie was selected as a second team recipient. In post season play, Jones was named the SBC Tournament MVP and a spot on the All-Tournament team. Rowe also earned a nod on the SBC All-Tournament team.
- Rowe leads the Raiders with 19.9 points and 11.1 rebounds per game. Kortni Jones follows with 16.4 points and Icelyn Elie with 13.9 ppg in 32 contests.

Scouting No. 5 seed Louisville

- Louisville (24-8, 11-5 Big East) is coming off an 83-59 semifinal loss to Notre Dame in the Big East Championship in Hartford, Connecticut.
- UofL is making its 16th NCAA Tournament appearance and seventh appearance in the last eight years. The Cardinals enter the tournament ranked 16th in the nation after finishing tied for third in the BIG EAST conference and advancing to the BIG EAST Tournament semifinals. The Cardinals have reached the NCAA Sweet 16 in three of the past five seasons. U of L made its first NCAA Final Four appearance in 2009, falling to UConn 76-54 in the title game.
- 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. Junior guard Antonita Slaughter, an All-BIG EAST performer, ranks third on the team in scoring with 9.8 points per game and second in rebounding with 4.9 boards per game.

Series Information

- MT and Louisville meet for the fifth time on Sunday in the first round of the 2013 NCAA Tournament. The Cardinals hold a 3-1 lead in the series that began Dec. 12, 1992.
- The last meeting between these two teams saw the Blue Raiders earn their first victory in the series with a 94-84 win in Louisville on Dec. 9, 2009.
- Sunday's meeting is the first postseason meeting for the two programs.
- MT has never met Liberty or Purdue on the hardwood.

Statistically Streaking

- Middle Tennessee ranked in 10 top 3 Sun Belt Conference statistical categories. The Raiders were the league pacesetters in scoring margin (+10.9) and offensive rebounds (15.3).
- The Blue Raiders are an impressive 18-0 this season when MT shoots more free throws than its opponents.
- The senior class of Elie, Jones and Raynor have seen the Blue Raiders collect 99 victories and four NCAA Tournament appearances.

Let's Go Dancing!

- Middle Tennessee has etched its name among the elite programs over the past decade. The Blue Raiders have appeared in 9 out of the last 10 NCAA Tournaments.

Playing in the Bluegrass State

- Middle Tennessee women's basketball makes its third postseason appearance in the state of Kentucky. Two of the three postseason appearances are in the NCAA Tournament. MT dropped a 90-83 decision to rival Western Kentucky in the first round of the 1985 tournament. Most recently, MT fell 68-66 to Kentucky in overtime during the second round of the WNIT in 2008.

True Blue Madness

- For only the second time in school history and the first time in 28 years, both Middle Tennessee's men's and women's basketball programs are in the NCAA Tournament. The Blue Raider men opened up tournament play in the First Four game against St. Mary's on Tuesday. The only other time both teams were in the NCAA Tournament was in 1985.

ESPN Broadcast Coverage

- Coverage of all 63 games of the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championship Presented by Capital One - across ESPN, ESPN2, ESPNU, ESPN3, WatchESPN and ESPN FULL COURT - begins Saturday, March 23.
- Most of the first and second round games will be televised on ESPN2 within 12 telecast windows in a whip-around format with home market protection. ESPN3 and ESPN FULL COURT, the pay-per-view package, will offer complete games.
- Sunday's and Tuesday's broadcast will be described by Melissa Lee and Brooke Weisbrod. The full game is set to air in the Murfreesboro/Nashville area.

Setting a Record

- MT made its' five consecutive berth to the NCAA Tournament, which set a new school record. MT has reached the tournament five years in a row (2009-13), which broke the previous record of four set 1983 to 1986.

PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES - MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Rick Insell - Middle Tennessee Head Coach

(Opening Statement) "It's nice to be here. We're excited about tomorrow. It's just a fantastic facility and I promise you it'll be a fantastic day tomorrow. I'm going to leave it at that."

(On Kortni Jones and her leadership since an upset loss to Troy) "That upset, and it was an upset, kind of got our attention. We went back in the gym and we became more focused, not only on the playing court, but also outside of the dressing room. Kortni kind of got everybody together and said, 'look this is not the way it's supposed to be.' You looked at the three leaders (Kortni Jones, Ebony Rowe, Icelyn Ellie) of our basketball team right there, those three young ladies. The rest of the team follows them and when they pulled everybody together, I won't say it was exciting for us, but it made life a lot easier for the coaching staff. And we've been focused. I mentioned this going to Troy the last week of the season. The big win we got there, I think we hit 17 threes that night. Then we came back in a 24-hour period and we had to go to Western Kentucky and play an 11 o'clock in the morning game - not much turnaround, long trip, not a whole lot of practice time. They really bought in to what we were trying to do on the trip in that short time frame. And then we went in with a good Western Kentucky team and more or less dominated them. I felt real good then going into the conference tournament, but then again we didn't have much turnaround time going into the conference tournament either. These kids have been pretty well focused for the last two or three weeks. And they're not kids, they're young ladies."

(On Louisville's guard play) "I'm getting tired of guards. Now we've got to guard Schimmel. They're pretty good. They're pretty good in what they do. They've got great vision, they're great passers, if you're not up on them and in them they can knock down threes, and they can slash with the basketball. They do what you want guards to do. They play in a conference that forces them to go out and recruit those types of young ladies and they're very successful. Jeff (Walz) has done a great job at that. Sometimes a great guard, much like Kortni Jones, will play out of control a little bit, but you've got to allow that to take place because you've got that type of player."

(On Shoni Schimmel) "If you hadn't got her in the corner of your eye you're going to get beat. You better know where she is at. If she's got the basketball you better know where everybody else is at because she knows where they are at and she's going to pick them up. Like I said, she's got great court vision and when her players cut to the basket she's getting them the basketball. Off the ball defense is going to be very important tomorrow."

(On the difference between this year's team and previous MTSU tournament teams) "I sensed it when we left Vanderbilt last year. Really. I think this team was very upset because we felt like we let one slip through our fingers and we're a lot better basketball program than that. From the get go it has kind of been our rallying cry. Not only do we have to get back to the NCAA Tournament, but to be a program that we want to be, we have to win some games. Not just a game, but games. They've been talking about that all year. So, when she (Jones) said that has kind of been part of their goals, it has been. They are very focused right now. Of all the teams that I have brought to the tournament,

and I've brought some good teams here, they pretty much have been on business more than any team that I've had coming into the NCAA Tournament."

(On Monique Reid's impact on the game)"That just gives them another post. That gives them a post that has got a lot of tournament experience. (She is) very heady, not great size, but very cagey, much like Ebony Rowe. When you get her the basketball she's a great passer. She's also got good vision with her back to the basket. If you double on her, she's talented enough to get the ball to the other post player or inside-out to the shooter. That's what she brings to them a little bit more than some of the kids that they've got who are starting. If you remember, she's one of the players that played in the Final Four. So, she knows what it takes to win tournament games like this. That was a big loss for them. She's playing I think 15 or 16 minutes a night, maybe. But, I'm sure Jeff would like to have her playing 32 or 34 minutes a night."

(On if people from Kentucky don't remember Ebony Rowe from high school, what can they expect to see from her)

"She is an amazing young lady. Excels at about everything she does and is very goal oriented. She knows exactly what she wants to do with her life, and knows exactly what she wants to do on the basketball court. I made mention to a couple friends on the bus ride in from practice about how focused she was. That could be very dangerous because she caught the ball, finished, and did everything we have asked her to do as good as I have ever seen her. That play excited me."

(On if you could choose one coach to win one on one out of the women's tournament, who would it be)"No I have never scouted other coaches, but I surely wouldn't take me because of my size. I don't know that I could answer that question for you. I would be looking for someone who wins on the basketball court, they are probably going to win one-on-one. Look at the coaches and look at how much success they have had, and at that point is when I would probably choose. Right off the bat I would probably choose Geno (Auriemma). I would say Coach (Pat) Summit but she is not around anymore.

Icelyn Elie

(On learning from previous NCAA Tournament experience and how it can help them get past the first round)"We've been through a lot the past four years and a lot of things have changed since then, but I think just going in with a different mindset and us having that goal from the beginning of the year making it past the first round is, I think, what's going to get us past it this year."

Kortni Jones

(On dealing with a big Louisville crowd)"I think we'll be better prepared for it. We went into other places. We were in Tennessee and there's a lot of orange in Tennessee. We're going to take it as it comes. Our fans will be there and we know we'll have a corner of blue and that's really all we feel like we need."

(On playing in front of a big crowd, in general)"I like it, personally, but I feel like we have a big crowd out at Middle Tennessee. So, like I said earlier, it's something that we're used to. I think it will only help us, if anything. It keeps us excited and keeps us on our toes."

Ebony Rowe

(On Louisville's Sara Hammond and playing with her in AAU)"I just remember her being really aggressive. She has a really good frame and a really strong body. She posts really strong and attacks the basket really well. She's a really good player, so I think it's going to be a really good matchup and I'm just excited to go against her."

(On Louisville's Sheronne Vails and dealing with her size)"They do have a size advantage but it's nothing that we haven't seen before. We're used to being an undersized post and we've been working around it for the last four years. It's nothing that we're worried about. Our post [players] are confident in our abilities and what we can do and we're just going to take it a play at a time."

(On returning to play in her home state)"It's always fun. I enjoy playing, coming home to Kentucky and all my family - a lot of them are going to come or be able to watch it and I know a lot of our fans are going to be here, so it's always exciting to come back to your home state and put on a show and I'm hoping to get a big win here tomorrow."

(On how much of her family will travel from Lexington to the game)"I honestly have no idea. I know my immediate family is going to be here and a couple of my friends but I guess we're just going to have to see tomorrow. I know there's going to be some blue out there though."

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