

RAIDER | REVIEW

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

FALL 2016 ■ VOL. 2 NO. 4

GOING THE DISTANCE

Hannah Maina is the latest Kenyan runner to break records at Middle Tennessee

Taryn Durham Walker

Put women's golf on the map

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**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**
STATE UNIVERSITY

ON THE COVER



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Chris Massaro

From the Desk of the **A.D.**

As we prepare for the upcoming 2016–17 seasons, I think it is important to reflect on our tremendous success from last year.

We are thrilled by the performance of our student-athletes during the 2015–16 academic year. It was truly one of the finest performances ever recorded in our sports history. In fact, we finished 87th in the Learfield Cup, which measures the success of our all-around program. It was our third-highest mark ever.

- Nationally, we were paced by our men’s track team finishing 18th in the country, highlighted by John Ampomah’s third place in the javelin and Sampson Laari and Eliud Rutto finishing fifth and seventh nationally in the 800 meters, respectively.
- We were one of only 10 schools nationally to go to a bowl game, the NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament, and the NCAA Women’s Basketball Tournament in the same year. We are in truly very select company with that accomplishment.
- Our women’s golf team won Conference USA for the second year in a row. They showed their champions’ hearts by crushing the field down the stretch, playing the last four holes at 8 under par.
- What most will remember about this school year was the monumental upset of Michigan State in the NCAA Tournament. In the summer 2016 *MTSU Magazine*, there were some numbers that try to capture the enormous publicity our

University received as a result of its incredible performance in the NCAA Tournament. The publicity has continued with the team’s ESPY win (nomination) in the Biggest Upset category. This is for ALL sports across the country on the most prestigious sports award show on television.

The 2015–16 academic year was truly one of the finest performances ever recorded in our sports history

- The future looks extremely bright as we had three freshman All-Americans, three Conference USA Freshmen of the Year, and 27 other underclassmen who earned all-conference recognition. The publicity continued with the team’s ESPY nomination in the BIGGEST UPSET category.

Not to be overlooked are the academic accomplishments of the year as well.

- We graduated a total of 69 student-athletes this past academic year, posted a 982 departmental APR, and equaled our school record with a graduation success rate of 87 percent.
- For the 2016 spring semester, 57 percent of our student-athletes had a 3.0 GPA or higher, while 90 student-athletes turned in a 3.5 or better and 30 managed a perfect 4.0.
- Individually speaking, soccer goalie Kelsey Brouwer was nominated for NCAA Woman of the Year, buoyed by her winning Conference USA Defensive Player of the Year while graduating with a 3.9 GPA in Business Management.
- We also had two athletes make the Summer Olympics in Rio with John Ampomah and Janet Amponsah.

We have closed the books on the 2015–16 season, and I hope you will join me in always cherishing the memories and looking forward to even greater results in 2016–17. Through your generous contributions and game attendance, we are creating everlasting memories and accomplishments for our institution. We do all of this while changing the lives of our student-athletes for the better.

I am reminded of what Darnell Harris told me with a huge smile on his face at his graduation reception—“Thank you, I truly had the time of my life!” **RR**

Chris Massaro
Director of Athletics



GOING THE DISTANCE

by Josh Vardaman

Hannah Maina is the latest in a long line of Kenyan runners to become a decorated Blue Raider student-athlete on the women's cross country and track and field teams.

The 5-foot-5 distance runner from Kaheo, Kenya, set a school record (9 minutes, 36.82 seconds) in the indoor 3,000 meters in 2015 at the Vanderbilt Invitational. But that is arguably not her most impressive accomplishment. Maina helped lead the women's cross country team to its best season in school history in 2015, a year in which the Blue Raiders won their first conference championship.

Maina was also named to the All-Conference USA first team, finishing second overall at the conference championship. Her eighth-place finish at the NCAA East Regional also qualified her for the NCAA Cross Country Championships, making her just the second female Blue Raider to advance to the national meet.

From Corn-Fed to Cornbread

Maina's collegiate career actually started in Iowa, where she attended Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge and won an individual National Junior College Athletic Association Division I championship in cross country. Her team also took the title in the same year.

Her journey from Kenya to Iowa was the result of a long-held dream.

"When I was growing up, I wanted to come to this country," Maina said. "For me, to move from Kenya to Iowa, I can say it was something that I used to have in my mind."

While she had a goal of running for a college in the U.S., she had to get over a few hurdles before she could accomplish her dream.

"My parents didn't want me to run—they wanted me to concentrate on education," Maina said. "It was kind of a challenge to convince my mom to be happy to let me come over here."

"At the time, I didn't know the difference between junior college and universities . . . and it was a challenge because I didn't know about the weather [in Iowa]."

She said the biggest challenge, at least at first, was getting used to the winter weather in Iowa, which is like a whole different world compared to her Kenyan roots.

"I didn't want to step on the snow at first!" she said.

Becoming True Blue

When Maina finished her two years at Iowa Central, she started looking for the next place to continue her running career. She connected with MTSU cross country and track and field associate head coach Keith Vroman and head coach Dean Hayes. They quickly built a bond.

"The reason I came to MTSU is that I met Coach Vroman . . . and I like the athletic facilities they have here," Maina said. "I feel that I find myself improving every day through my education and my running. I have faced a lot of challenges, but Coach Vroman never gave up on me and was there for me. He's helped build me to who I am now."

Maina is by no means the first Kenyan that Vroman has connected with since joining Middle Tennessee's track and field program 11 years ago. Currently, there are six women and six men on the track and field teams from the African nation.

"I [met] all of these guys from different people that I've known through coaching other athletes, and they tell me about this guy or that guy," Vroman said. "The environment that we live in here, especially for the Kenyan kids, is probably different than most situations for them."

Having fellow Kenyans on the team helped Maina more quickly acclimate at Middle Tennessee. The superior athletics facilities that drew her to Middle Tennessee have also produced noticeable results.

"The transition has been pretty good for her," Vroman said. "We have more people for her to train with here, and she's gotten faster since being here. Obviously, the Division I level is a lot better competition and you have to work at a different level to compete at this level."

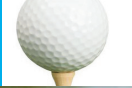
Since Maina used up much of her college eligibility in Iowa, her running career is coming to a close too quickly for Blue Raider fans. However, Maina said she is far from done in Murfreesboro. Maina will graduate next spring with a bachelor's degree in Public Health, then plans to start a master's degree.

"I will continue my education at MTSU, because I like the program," she said. "After that, I will probably go see my family!"

When she does, Maina can no doubt tell others in Kenya running circles about the love and care she received in the 'Boro from the athletic program and faculty and staff alike at MTSU. After all, it's what led this Blue Raider to achieve her big dreams. **RR**

**"I feel that I
find myself
improving every
day through my
education and my
running."**





Taryn Durham Walker
is credited with putting
MTSU's women's
golf program on
the map

A CUT ABOVE

by Keith Ryan Cartwright

Taryn Durham Walker was 10 years old the first time her father handed her a golf club. Within months of her first swing, the Kentucky native was playing as a member of the Glasgow High School varsity team . . . as a fifth-grader.

"In Kentucky, you don't have to be in high school to be on the varsity team," said Walker, who emphasized the "blood, sweat and tears" her father, Terry Durham, invested in her early golf efforts as a key ingredient to her eventual success.



The elder Durham knew the local high school coach, Mike Harris, and also knew the team was in need of girls, so he got his daughter interested in the game of golf. "I played in my first big tournament at 10 years old with juniors and seniors," Walker said. "I hadn't been playing very long and probably hadn't played nine or 18 holes in my life before that. . . . It grew from there, and that's how it kind of all got started."

According to Walker, those first couple of years of competitive golf were intimidating times to say the least. "I wasn't very good," she flatly stated. But, by the time she was actually attending Glasgow High School, those early experiences started paying off. Glasgow won the state title four straight years in a row 1997–2000, and Walker was named first-team all-state 2000–03. In 2003 alone, she won the Kentucky Independent Insurance Championship and the Tri-State Challenge Cup, plus qualified for the U.S. Girls Junior.

By the time her high school graduation rolled around in the fall of 2004, Walker was an eight-year letter-winner. She chose to attend and play college golf at Middle Tennessee (2004–08), she said, in large part because it was a relatively new program at the time.

"One of the reasons I went there was for the opportunity to help the program grow," Walker said. "It was something new, and it was in the building stage. I thought it was a good opportunity for me, and it was definitely a perfect fit."

Carving Out a Legacy

Walker is arguably the greatest women's golfer in MTSU history.

When she graduated from Middle Tennessee, Walker owned the school record for best round, best two-round tournament total, best three-round tournament total, and low medalist in six tournaments. She was named first-team All-Sun Belt all four years at Middle Tennessee and Sun Belt Conference Golfer of the Year in 2006,

while leading the team to four tournament titles during her tenure. Walker still holds the school record with six tournament victories.

"We had a good group of girls and set a lot of records, and I'm sure they'll be broken," the too-humble Walker responded when presented with the above list of accolades.

Her greatest career achievement, though, came during the summer between her junior and senior seasons when Walker became the first Blue Raider to reach the U.S. Women's Open during a qualifying event at Village Links of Glen Ellyn in Illinois. A 21-year-old amateur at the time, she not surprisingly chose the same person who had first placed a golf

club in her hand to caddy for her at the U.S. Women's Open held at the Pine Needles Lodge and Golf Club in Southern Pines, North Carolina.

"My dad and I are super close, and he's the one who got me into the game, so there was no question who would be on the bag that week," Walker said.

"It was the highlight of my career to be on the biggest stage in golf. To get there is one thing, but to be inside the ropes is kind of like you're dreaming. It's something everybody dreams about, but hardly anyone gets to accomplish. So, for me, it was one of the best experiences to have my dad caddy for me. That will always be the best memory for me."

Given Walker's accomplishments in the game of golf, and even her appearance on the hit Golf Channel television reality show *Big Break*, one might think Walker had long ago settled in to a career in the sport. But Walker explained she had no interest in becoming a golf pro at a local course or to work in the industry. She chose instead a more traditional professional pursuit—she represents the entire state of Kentucky as a sales manager for Gateway One Lending & Finance. Walker, who will turn 31 in

Walker is arguably the greatest women's golfer in MTSU history.

Something in the Water?

Taryn Durham Walker's claim to fame is her status as the first Blue Raider to qualify for the United States Women's Open back in 2007.

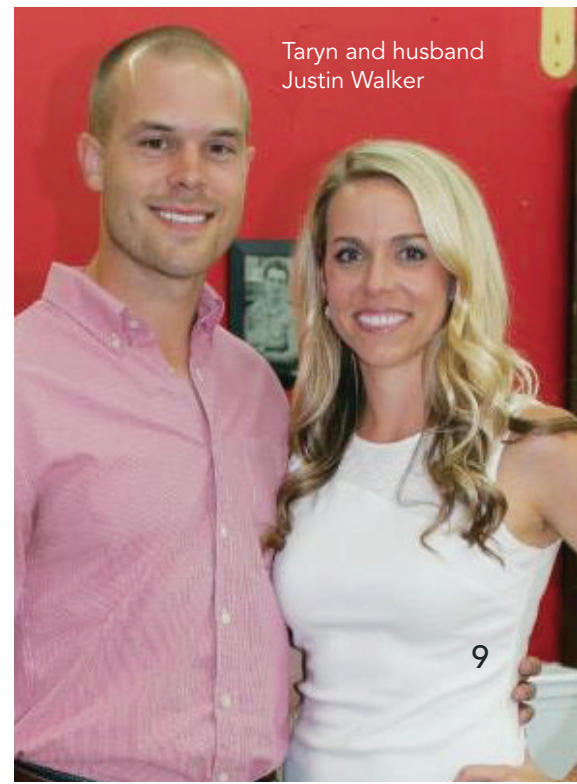
Coincidentally, former men's golfer Kent Bulle recently became the second men's golfer in school history to qualify for the U.S. Open. Like Walker, Bulle is a Glasgow, Kentucky, native.

Incredibly, Walker and Bulle are not the only two golfers from the town of just over 14,000 people to qualify for a U.S. Open. Walker's high school teammate, Whitney Wade, also played in the Open three times.

"I don't know," Walker said when asked to explain the quality versus quantity of golfers to come out of Glasgow. "We dominated and won every year by 20, 30 shots. I don't know the reason. . . . It was small, but it was like that for many years."

October, also married Justin Walker, whom she met at the wedding of former Blue Raider teammate and roommate Mallory Smith.

Walker joked that she's settling into adulthood "a little later" than her friends, but enjoys it. "I wanted to get away from (golf) and not have to do it every day," said Walker, who plays the game a couple times a week. "I still go out and enjoy it." **RR**



Taryn and husband
Justin Walker



Painting Between the Lines

by Matt Posey

Whether on the tennis courts, on canvas, or preparing for life in the board room, freshman **Costanza Magazzini** is intent on making her mark at Middle Tennessee

Middle Tennessee freshman **Costanza Magazzini** said her mother and father share the credit for inspiring the two great loves of her life—art and tennis.

A native of Pistoia, Italy, Magazzini is a key member of the Middle Tennessee women's tennis team. She is also a well-rounded student-athlete, as evidenced by her strong academic credentials and her love for fine art and painting.

Magazzini developed that love of art from her father, Salvatore. It did not, she emphasized, happen overnight.

"My father was a painter since he was 14 years old," Magazzini said. "I grew up surrounded by colors and brushes. When I was little, I didn't appreciate the trips to the museum as much, but now I appreciate them a lot. My father makes me think, 'What is the artist trying to say through this work?'"

As the two have traveled all over the world, Magazzini says she has learned to appreciate different worlds.

"I'm open-minded to other cultures," she said. "Everything is different from Italy to America—starting with the food that I miss very much!"

Magazzini's mother, Milena, gets the credit for opening her daughter's eyes to the competitive world of tennis.

"Usually kids start to play because someone in the family is playing, but none of my parents were playing or knew anything about tennis. After having stopped dancing and after having tried fencing, one day my mom randomly took me to the tennis club just to try," Magazzini recalled.

The youngster met a coach at the club and began to learn and appreciate the game.

"This man had something special," Magazzini said of her former coach, Leo Bargellini. "The day after my first meeting with him, I started to play and fell in love with the sport. He was very strict on the court, but also like a grandfather off the court."

Sadly, Bargellini died two years ago. Magazzini said he'll always be remembered as a caring person that played a big role in the development of her game.

That development was on prominent display under intense conditions at the recent Conference USA Women's Tennis Championships hosted by Middle Tennessee last spring. In a first-round match against rival Western Kentucky, Middle Tennessee was trailing three matches to none and faced elimination if WKU secured one more match.

Middle Tennessee proceeded to win three straight matches to get the contest tied 3-3. Magazzini's match, it turned out, would decide who advanced to the quarterfinals and which team's season was over.

"Costanza looked at me at the changeover after Alory (Pereira) finished her match and said, 'I'm so nervous. It's getting worse,'" MT assistant coach David Henry said. But Magazzini endured the pressure, ultimately winning her match in straight sets, ending WKU's season, and enabling the Blue Raiders to advance to the quarterfinals against Florida International.

"She understood it was a big conference match, and she knew she was the better player. It was a great memory for the end of the season for her," Henry said.

"I was feeling the support of everyone there. It was great," Magazzini said of the match. "I was so nervous because the result was on me. But when we won, it was a wonderful sensation."

Head coach Charlie Ramsay, who was participating in his first conference tournament as well, also recognized the importance of the moment for Magazzini.

"I was trying to stay as far away from the court as possible because I knew David had been over there the whole match," Ramsay said. "What a great experience for her to have that win under her belt as a freshman."

Magazzini has also produced some remarkable achievements in the classroom. Though she loves art and painting, she is actually majoring in Economics and earned a 4.0 GPA after one semester in the Jennings A. Jones College of Business.

"My roommate, Darya, is also a business major, so we speak a lot about our future jobs like being a financial advisor or manager of a company," Magazzini said. "I love traveling, so I would like to travel for a company and deal with foreign countries."

Clearly, both on the court and in the classroom, the multi-cultural Magazzini is finding Middle Tennessee to be a perfect fit.

"Coming to MTSU has been probably the most beautiful experience of my life, because I'm far away from home and I'm improving as a tennis player and as a person," Magazzini said. "I'm learning a new language. I'm living alone for the first time with other people. This experience has been wonderful for me." **RR**





Worthy of Salute

by Josh Vardaman

Student-athlete-veteran **Steven Rhodes'** remarkable journey to MTSU (and beyond) continues to inspire

Athletes, especially at a bigger Division I university like Middle Tennessee, come from many different places and walks of life. It would be difficult to find a story more unique than that of senior Steven Rhodes, though.

The 6-foot-3, 244-pound defensive end from Antioch isn't your normal collegiate athlete. Before becoming a Blue Raider, the now 27-year-old was a member of a few different families prior to the one he found on the football field in Murfreesboro. Rhodes served five years in the Marines and, with his wife, Adrienne, became the parent of two sons.

The Marine sergeant and former high school football player had all but given up on his dream to play football at the college level. That is until a friend in the military convinced him to get back into football shape.

"One of my friends at the time, Sgt. Anthony Matthews, kept begging me



to play ball," Rhodes said. "It was the best decision I could have made."

After playing in a military football league—a decision that would eventually cause highly publicized NCAA rules issues before his freshman season at MTSU (see sidebar)—Rhodes found a new passion and love for the sport. His dream of playing collegiately was reignited, and he started sending videotapes of himself in action to different universities around the country including Middle Tennessee, San Diego State, Vanderbilt, and others.

"We didn't recruit him—he didn't play his senior year of high school football and he wasn't, to be honest, a recruitable guy coming out of high school," MTSU head coach Rick Stockstill said. "He contacted us and sent us some film from when he was in Marine ball . . . and he was a tight end then."

Once MTSU showed interest in Rhodes, the decision to attend college so close to home became an easy one to make, especially considering he had a family to think about.

"MTSU just reached out to me and showed me the most love, and they made it an easy process for me to get here and play," Rhodes said. "It was a blessing to be able to come back home and play in front of friends and family and just kind of be a hometown hero. It was special."

Stockstill and the MTSU coaching staff pitched the idea of Rhodes changing positions from tight end on offense to defensive end.

"Really, my heart was set on being a wide receiver and tight end," Rhodes said. "Coach Stock came to me and just wanted me to explore and see what positions I was good at, and I just wanted to do whatever I could do to play and help the team."

While Rhodes had all of the physical traits to be a high-caliber defensive end for the Blue Raiders, his knowledge of the position had to be cultivated. With his on-field energy and willingness to learn, he quickly increased his understanding of the position and the defensive game overall.

"The only thing he didn't have was a [defensive] football IQ," said defensive line coach Tommy West, who joined the MTSU coaching staff when Rhodes was a sophomore. "But he's really worked to study the game and now he knows what's going on when things happen on the field."

With three years with the program under his belt, Rhodes now has a complete grasp of the Blue Raider defense. It shows in his on-field production, which has improved each year, evidenced by the fact that he started all 13 games for MTSU in 2015. What does Rhodes say has been the key to his progress each season? He credits the work ethic he learned in the Marines.

"The thing that really prepared me from a military standpoint was the discipline," he said. "Mental toughness

is the biggest thing I got from boot camp and being a Marine, period. That work ethic and desire to be the best at whatever I do really prepared me and propelled me throughout my career."

Not only has Rhodes become a factor on the field, but he has started to impact his fellow military personnel off of it, giving advice of how to make those dreams a reality.

"I've had several people reach out to me who are in the military," Rhodes said. "I had a gunnery sergeant tell me I could maybe be an athletic trainer or something else, basically saying 'you can't do that—you can't be successful at a college or NFL level.'"

"Whatever someone wants to do, whatever they set their mind to, don't let anything stop you. The only person who can stop you is you."

For most people, the athletic and personal achievements Rhodes boasts would more than suffice in terms of carving out a sports legacy. But that's not the case for Rhodes. He said he won't be finished playing football after his upcoming senior season if he can help it.

"I came to MTSU with one purpose, and that was to get to the NFL," Rhodes said. "I wholeheartedly invested into this. I'm going to the NFL, and I'm going to make a team somewhere. That's my biggest goal."

Based on the track record to date for this decorated student-athlete-veteran, there's no question Rhodes will do everything in his power to reach his ultimate goal. **RR**

Playing in a military football league would eventually cause highly publicized NCAA rules issues

An Active Duty

As first reported by the *Daily News Journal* in Murfreesboro, MTSU student-athlete-veteran Steven Rhodes was a 24-year-old freshman who had finished his five years of active service in the Marine Corps before enrolling at MTSU and joining the football team. He soon ended up in a public relations battle with the NCAA—the governing body for college athletics—that placed MTSU on the front pages of newspapers and news websites around the world. That's because the NCAA originally ruled that Rhodes's participation in a military-only recreational football league before his 2013 enrollment at MTSU limited his eligibility to play Division I football. Pressure from President Sidney A. McPhee, who was previously a member of the NCAA executive committee, as well as media outlets around the world, hastened a new ruling by the NCAA reinstating Rhodes' eligibility, allowing him to play immediately and to maintain all four years of his eligibility. **RR**





SANDERSON

In Charge

by Tony Stinnett

Zackie Sanderson plays a pivotal role when it comes to the business of MT Athletics

By their very nature, “people behind the scenes” are not generally recognized for the value they contribute to an overall operation, and the general public is seldom aware of their contributions or responsibilities.

Zackie Sanderson, Middle Tennessee’s associate athletics director for business operations, fits that description to a T. Except for the fact that Chris Massaro, Blue Raider director of athletics, often goes out of his way to make clear the significance of Sanderson’s role in the department.

“This department could not function without people like Zackie Sanderson,” Massaro said. “When you think about Zackie, the first thing you think about is integrity. People trust her, and that’s really important with all of the fiduciary responsibilities she has.

“When I say people trust her, that’s both inside our athletic department and across campus. Every coach and every administrator has a high level of trust in her. She is able to work with Alan Thomas (vice president for University business and finance) and before him, John Cothorn. They have a high trust factor in her. To have a person like Zackie in place here is extremely valuable.”

Sanderson’s role as chief financial officer for the Middle Tennessee Athletic Department dates back 17 years. Previously, she spent two years working in the University’s budget office as a financial management analyst, where she assisted with preparation of the University budget. Her duties and responsibilities for MT Athletics include overseeing all financial reporting and budgeting, as well as oversight of the Blue Raider ticket office operation.

Sanderson has seen the athletic department’s annual budget more than double since taking the position in 1999. Big changes that have occurred under her watchful eye have included the football program transitioning to the Football Bowl Subdivision level, the program’s move from the Ohio Valley Conference into the Sun Belt Conference, and, most recently, Middle Tennessee’s migration from the Sun Belt Conference into Conference USA.

“We are always trying to find innovative ways to continue raising money,” Sanderson said in providing perspective on all the changes. “Our budget has more than doubled since I have been here, and that brings a lot of challenges.”

In addition to bearing responsibility for the financial affairs of the athletic department, helping to develop and implement high-level strategies is another big reason

Sanderson is invaluable in her role as CFO.

“Zackie is not only our CFO, but she’s also one of our main advisors when it comes to strategic direction, particularly as we try to develop revenue streams and then also curtail expenses,” Massaro said. “Her experiences are so valuable.”

Sanderson also works closely with the Blue Raider Athletic Association (BRAA) since the ticket office processes all donations.

“I am very involved in that process and monitoring the day-to-day operations of fundraising,” Sanderson said. “There is a lot that goes into the Blue Raider Athletic Association. It is so important, because if we don’t have money for scholarships, we can’t run this program.”



Zackie Sanderson with her family

Telling coaches “no” on expenditure requests sometimes is arguably the most difficult part of Sanderson’s job.

However, the veteran administrator has good working relationships with

each one of them in the department.

“Saying ‘no’ is always tough, regardless of your situation,” Sanderson said. “There is a fine line between want and need, and you have to find that balance.”

By contrast, one area of Sanderson’s job that she enjoys the most is assisting with travel for postseason tournaments and bowl games.

“I enjoy planning and logistics for postseason travel,” Sanderson said. “It can be hectic because of the quick turnarounds, but it is also special to see the enjoyment the student-athletes get out of these trips.”

Though she exists largely behind the scenes, Sanderson is clearly front and center when it comes to the business of MT Athletics. [RR](#)

“It’s not Business... >>> It’s Personal”



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VIEW
FROM
THE

PRESSBOX



Chip Walters

The Voice of the Blue Raiders

YOU'RE NEVER OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE BLUE RAIDERS

This technology craze might just catch on. The one thing it does for sure is keep you just a click away from the latest news, scores, audio, or video regarding the Blue Raiders. You can also buy tickets or make a Blue Raider Athletic Association donation . . . and never leave your desk or easy chair.

I don't consider myself a technological genius, so if I can keep up with everything, so can you.

What Channel is the Game On?

Conference USA's television package will change somewhat this year. Gone is Fox Sports 1, and we say hello to beIN Sports. The deck chairs may have been re-arranged, but the number of events on television continues to be considerable. Before the season gets here, take 5 minutes and get yourself familiar

with the locations the games will be on this year.

ESPN returns as a television partner. The WatchESPN site and app will carry a ton of programming. Learn how to use it! CBS Sports Network

The major outlets for Blue Raider football and basketball will remain consistent again this season

will also continue to carry a variety of C-USA events throughout the year. American Sports Network cut its teeth a couple of years ago and

will carry double-digit football and basketball games again this year along with championship games of several Olympic sports. Their programming is in virtually every market in the Southeast and 75 total markets across the country. The beIN Sports Network is new to the game this year. This beIN Sports network made its mark internationally with soccer and tennis. Now, they want to be a player in the U.S. No better way to get a sports fan's attention than with some excellent college football.

The bottom line is that Conference USA is no different than most of its colleagues in that there will always be a mix of channels in the league television package. As a fan, you just need to do a little homework and you'll be just fine.

Blue Raider Network Remains Solid

Being the radio broadcaster, I can tell you that I'm happy that listening to games over the air is still a big deal at Middle Tennessee. The major outlets

for Blue Raider football and basketball will remain consistent again this season. ESPN Nashville 97.5/102.5 The Game, 1450/100.5/101.9 WGNS, and 89.5 WMOT will continue to carry the games on terrestrial radio to an approximate 100-mile radius. Audio streaming on GoBlueRaiders.com and on the Blue Raider Gameday app have made our broadcasts available worldwide.

It will be nice to have Wes Counts in the analyst seat full-time this year. Former quarterbacks just seem to have a knack for being able to see the whole field. It will be my privilege to tell you what happens, while Wes tells you why it happened.

GoBlueRaiders.com is the MT Athletic News Hub

All news, streaming broadcasts, video features, and other information generated from MT Athletics begins at GoBlueRaiders.com. Make it your go-to first stop for official information, streaming broadcasts, video features and other information. Every year we are finding that a larger percentage of fans are getting their content over a “device” instead of a desktop or laptop computer. The Blue Raider Gameday App is your conduit for that information on your iPhone or Android device or tablet. It has the same content as the website . . . and all in the palm of your hand. If you haven’t downloaded it to your phone yet, you really don’t know what you’re missing. In the Apple store or Google Play, just search “Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders” and download the app. You’ll thank me later.

Now that you have all the schedules, rosters, news, broadcasts, and ability to purchase tickets at your fingertips, I’ll see you at the game!



Daryl Simpson,
Assistant AD/Compliance

COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS AND OTHER IMPERMISSIBLE EXTRA BENEFITS FOR PROSPECTS, STUDENT-ATHLETES

As a new academic year approaches and we look forward to the upcoming athletics seasons, the Office of Athletics Compliance would like to take an opportunity to remind our Blue Raider Athletic Association (BRAA) members of their adherence to NCAA rules and regulations as they relate to complimentary tickets and other impermissible extra benefits. It is our duty as a compliance department to ensure that our boosters are aware of what they can and cannot do for, or provide to, prospective and enrolled MT student-athletes.

In accordance with the applicable rules, BRAA members may not entertain any coach from a junior or senior high school or junior college or provide them with MT athletics tickets or any other type of benefit. Additionally, BRAA members may not provide free or reduced-cost tickets to college or professional sporting events for a prospect or the prospect’s relatives (or guardians) to attend athletics events. The NCAA views free or reduced-cost tickets as an impermissible extra benefit.

Other examples of impermissible extra benefits include:

- A special discount, payment arrangement, or credit on a purchase or service, not otherwise available to the general public
- Cash, loan, or signing or co-signing of a loan
- Transportation, payment of expense, or loan of any automobile
- Benefits or gifts based upon the student-athlete’s athletic performance
- Free or reduced rent or housing

As an individual who is considered a representative of MT’s athletic interests, your actions may directly affect our student-athletes’ eligibility for athletic performance during their time at MTSU. With that, it is imperative that you adhere to all applicable NCAA rules and regulations as we strive to maintain and enhance our prominence as a Division I program.

Thank you for your tremendous support of our entire athletics program. Our student-athletes, athletics staff, and administration are extremely appreciative of your affinity to MTSU. Remember, always ASK BEFORE YOU ACT! And, GO BLUE RAIDERS!!



Blue Raider Athletic Association



Keith McCluney
Associate Athletic
Director/Development

CHAMPIONSHIP RETURN ON INVESTMENT: BLUE RAIDER STOCK AT AN ALL TIME HIGH



March 2016 will be forever remembered by Blue Raider fans everywhere. March 2016 brought the highest of highs for fans of the men's and women's Middle Tennessee State University basketball supporters and fans.

Birmingham was turned into #BLUEmingham and order was established in Conference USA as both of our basketball programs took their rightful places atop the ladder as champions and cut down the nets at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Center. During my time as an administrator, I have never experienced a month like March 2016. As I reflect on how our young men and women displayed class and sportsmanship in Birmingham, St. Louis, and College Station, it makes our staff proud to work hard on a daily basis to provide them and all of our programs the support they need to be successful. I'm sure as donors you were also proud of how our young men and women represented themselves and the programs. March was an amazing time to be a Blue Raider; however, the month of April would not be outdone as our women's golf team won their second consecutive Conference USA Championship and again represented our University in the NCAA Regionals. All of these accomplishments

speak volumes about the level of commitment that our coaches and student-athletes have to their programs and to this University. The successes of our student-athletes are a direct reflection of the level of commitment that our BRAA members have made and continue to make to our programs on an annual basis.

**We haven't
gotten to where
we are
without you.**

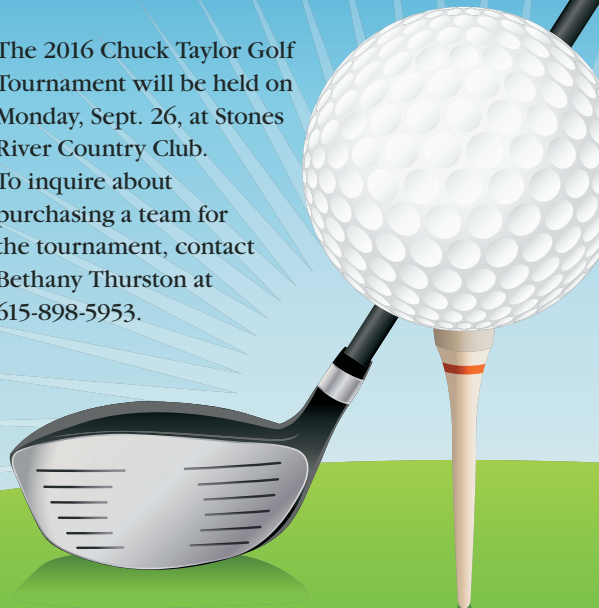
With all of the success that we have experienced in the spring of 2016, we CANNOT relent in our pursuit of excellence. Although we've experienced a level of success never seen by our men's basketball program, there are loftier heights that we can reach in the very near future with your help. We must continue to invest in our champions and know that although we arrived on the scene and became the center of the basketball world during the Big Dance, we are not where we need to be in order to maintain a level of excellence that not only makes us a household name but keeps us as one. WE CAN get there,

but we must continue to raise our level of commitment to the young men and women that represent us and make us proud. With your help we can help our coaches, who are committed to recruiting the best and the brightest student-athletes to this University, have the resources they need to be successful.

Our BRAA staff is extremely appreciative of the time and energy that you donors invest in our student-athletes and our mission as a department. We thank you and we acknowledge that we haven't gotten to where we are without you and we KNOW that we can't go to the NEXT LEVEL without your continued commitment to helping us close the competitive resources gap that exists! We must face that challenge and tackle it as a team! Our Blue Raider donors have always responded to the call. Now is the time to run away from the complacency that could so easily cause us to think that we have arrived at our destination. We must make sure that we continue our relentless pursuit of excellence on a daily basis and continue to provide our student-athletes with the best possible intercollegiate athletic experience! THANK YOU for your commitment to the Blue Raider Athletic Association, and thank you for your commitment to Middle Tennessee State University. Let's continue to **MAKE MIDDLE BETTER! RR**

CHUCK TAYLOR GOLF TOURNAMENT

The 2016 Chuck Taylor Golf Tournament will be held on Monday, Sept. 26, at Stones River Country Club. To inquire about purchasing a team for the tournament, contact Bethany Thurston at 615-898-5953.



BRAA MEMBERSHIP CARDS

The 2016-17 Blue Raider Athletic Association membership cards should have arrived in your mailbox. You may use your membership card throughout the year to access various Blue Raider Athletic Association dinners and events, and to receive discounts at Lightning's Locker Room. If you have not received your membership card, please contact Justin Morrison at 615-898-5206.



2016 - 2017
Membership Card
Expires June 30, 2017

Jim Smith
True Blue
10th Consecutive Year

Keep up with the Blue Raider Athletic Association and connect with other members on Facebook and Twitter!



Facebook.com/BRAA



@MT_BRAA



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- Travel and Leisure Golf - "One of America's 100 Best Golf Courses for \$100.00 or Less."
- Golf For Women's "50 Best Courses for Women"

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110% DONORS

The following donors all contributed 110% or more to the Blue Raider Athletic Association in 2016-17. We thank each and every person on this list for their generous contributions! We appreciate their willingness to go above and beyond to support the Blue Raiders this year! Names listed made their BRAA donation by August 15.

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FOOTBALL SEASON WILL BE HERE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT!

BLUE-RAIDER 2016 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

| | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| September 3 | ALABAMA A&M | Murfreesboro, Tenn. |
| September 10 | AT VANDERBILT | Nashville, Tenn. |
| September 17 | AT BOWLING GREEN | Bowling Green, Ohio |
| September 24 | LOUISIANA TECH | Murfreesboro, Tenn. |
| October 1 | AT NORTH TEXAS | Denton, Texas |
| October 15 | WESTERN KENTUCKY | Murfreesboro, Tenn. |
| October 22 | AT MISSOURI | Columbia, Mo. |
| October 29 | AT FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL | Miami, Fla. |
| November 5 | TEXAS SAN ANTONIO | Murfreesboro, Tenn. |
| November 12 | AT MARSHALL | Huntington, W.V. |
| November 19 | AT CHARLOTTE | Charlotte, N.C. |
| November 26 | FLORIDA ATLANTIC | Murfreesboro, Tenn. |

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Blue Raider Athletic Association

Blue Raider Athletic Association Appreciation Dinner

CBS Sports anchor Greg Gumbel was the special guest at the annual Blue Raider Athletic Association Appreciation Dinner at the Embassy Suites in Murfreesboro on Friday, Aug. 12. All active BRAA members at the Lightning level and higher were invited to attend this special evening to celebrate the success of the past year and the contributions of our BRAA members.



Jeff Hendrix Business Person of the Year Award Winner: Brad & Elizabeth Allen (Keith McCluney, Elizabeth Allen, Brad Allen, Abbey Sissom)



Roxy McHenry Loyalty Award Winners: Ron & Linda Cooper (Keith McCluney, Linda Cooper, Abbey Sissom, Ron Cooper)



Liz Rhea Member of the Year Award Winner: Danny Farrer (Keith McCluney, Precious Birdsong, Danny Farrer)



Featured Guest Speaker Greg Gumbel

Bill & Theresa Ketron Lifetime Leadership Award Winner: Kenneth "Coon" Victory (Keith McCluney, Bill Ketron, Kenneth "Coon" Victory)

Inaugural Barbell Bash Presented by Nutrishop

Saturday, June 11 was the inaugural MT Barbell Bash presented by Nutrishop fundraiser benefiting the Blue Raider Athletic Association. There were over 60 teams in the Murphy Center competing in this all-day Crossfit competition. Winners from each of the four divisions were:



Men's RX



Women's RX

Men's RX

- 1st - Barbell VooDoo: Hal Fisher, Jamie Free
- 2nd - Team NutriShop: Chandler Jordan, Trevor Haggard
- 3rd - Balistic Ink: Phil Calcese, Matt Buehrle

Women's RX

- 1st - The Original Gangsters-Team Drycon: Alex Bergin, Molly Jackel
- 2nd - Carissa Boone, Rebecca Brown
- 3rd - Slightly Jacked & Somewhat Tan: Samantha Chapman, Rachael Harrison

Men's Scaled

- 1st - In WOD We Thrust: Nickolas Ehrhardt, Jeffrey Novenario
- 2nd - Biggie Smalls: Earl Lambert, Joey Mastrocola
- 3rd - Pants Less Knee Knockers: Cody Griffith, Trent Riley

Women's Scaled

- 1st - Team Youngblood: Linsey Youngblood, Skyler Youngblood
- 2nd - Snatch Made in Heaven: Jordan Ramsey, Tiffany Travis
- 3rd - Fusion-Straight Outta Macros: Marlo Wright, Kelsey Eldridge



Men's Scaled



Women's Scaled

Donor SPOTLIGHT

Tim and Laci Crabtree

- MTSU Alumni
- Consecutive Years Giving to the BRAA: 11
- Currently Resides: Murfreesboro



Q: What caused you to become a fan of MTSU?

A: The late Jon Scarlett, who was a great friend and longtime professor at MTSU, talked us in to going to a couple of football and basketball games and next thing we knew we had season tickets to both. We were hooked.

Q: When did you attend your first Blue Raider game?

A: Hard to remember exactly when the first one was, but for Tim somewhere in the early '90s and for Laci around 12 years ago.

Q: Your favorite MTSU sports are:

A: Hands down, women's basketball is first, then football and men's basketball.

Q: What is your best memory of MTSU athletics?

A: Three-way tie: Winning both the men's and women's basketball tournament championships this year; beating Vanderbilt on a blocked field goal as time expired; and winning a women's basketball conference championship, with Alysha Clark, in 3 OTs in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Q: What is the farthest distance you have traveled to see the Blue Raiders play?

A: El Paso, Texas

Q: How did you first get involved with the Blue Raider Athletic Association?

A: Again, I would say our friend Jon Scarlett, who was such an ambassador for the University, introduced us to the BRAA.

Q: Your favorite place to eat is:

A: Chop House

Q: Your favorite hobby is:

A: We love fishing and being out on the boat at the lake.

Q: Your favorite TV show is:

A: Big Bang Theory

Q: Tell us about your most memorable trip:

A: We went to a football game several years ago when MTSU played at Alabama. It was really neat to see all the tailgating and festivities around campus before the game, and then experiencing the atmosphere during the game was electric.

Q: Why do you encourage others to join the BRAA?

A: Because it is the best way to support the student-athletes that we love to watch play. The games bring us so much enjoyment and great memories that it is nice to feel like we are able to give back and help the Blue Raider tradition grow.

I AM *true*
BLUE

RAIDERS IN



Photo by
St. Louis Rams

Football

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----|--------------------|
| Kevin Byard (2012-15) | NFL | Tennessee Titans |
| Benny Cunningham (2009-12) | NFL | St. Louis Rams |
| Rod Issac (2007-10) | AFL | Orlando Predators |
| Jeremy Kellem (2007-10) | AFL | Arizona Rattlers |
| Logan Kilgore (2010-2013) | CFL | Toronto Argonauts |
| Jamari Lattimore (2008-10) | NFL | Buffalo Bills |
| Keon Raymond (2004-05) | CFL | Toronto Argonauts |
| Sammy Seamster (2009-13) | NFL | Buffalo Bills |
| Jimmy Staten (2010-13) | NFL | Kansas City Chiefs |
| Erik Walden (2004-07) | NFL | Indianapolis Colts |
| Josh Walker (2010-13) | NFL | Green Bay Packers |



Photo by Indianapolis Colts



Photo by MLB

Baseball

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Hunter Adkins (2010-2012) | Independent | Lake Erie |
| Bryce Brentz (2008-2010) | MLB | Boston Red Sox |
| Zac Curtis (2013-2014) | MLB | Arizona Diamondbacks |
| Nathan Foriest (2012-2015) | A- | San Diego Padres |
| Jonathan Frebis (2012-2015) | A | Chicago White Sox |
| Andy Haines | MLB | Chicago Cubs |
| | | Minor League Hitting Instructor |
| Ronnie Jebavy (2015) | A+ | San Francisco Giants |
| Michael McKenry (2004-2006) | MLB | St. Louis Cardinals |
| Heath Slatton (2013-2015) | A- | San Francisco Giants |
| Ryan Stephens (2011-14) | A- | Colorado Rockies |

Women's Soccer

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Shan Jones (2008-11) | Long Island Rough Riders |
| Vanessa Mueggler (2007-10) | Ottawa Fury |
| Lisa Marie Woods (2004) | Adelaide (Australia) |



Photo by Craig Mitchell/dyer/
Hillsboro Hops

IN THE PROS



Photo by Seattle Storm

Men's Basketball

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| K.C. Anuna (2008-11) | Nigeria |
| Tim Blue (2006-07) | France |
| Raymond Cintron (2012-13) | Puerto Rico |
| Michael Cuffee (2004-05) | Germany |
| LaRon Dendy (2012) | France |
| Darnell Harris (2014-16) | Belgium |
| Jani Hiltunen (2000-01) | Finland |
| Neiko Hunter (2012-14) | Italy |
| Jason Jones (2010-13) | Bolivia |
| Shawn Jones (2010-14) | Israel |
| Marcos Knight (2011-13) | Germany |
| Bruce Massey (2012-13) | NBA D-League |
| Steve Thomas (2005) | Venezuela |
| James Washington (2009-11) | Sweden |



Photo by Dave Eggen/
NBAE via Getty Images

Women's Basketball

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------|-------------------------|
| Alysha Clark (2009-10) | WNBA | Seattle Storm |
| Chrissy Givens (2004-07) | Euro | CS Municipal Targoviste |
| Cheyenne Parker (2014-15) | WNBA | Chicago Sky |

Men's Tennis

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| John Peers (2008-10) | ATP Doubles #7 |
| Andreas Siljeström (2004-07) | ATP Doubles #98 |

Track and Field

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Noah Akwu | Nigeria |
| Ann Dudley | US |
| Stanley Gbagbeke | Nigeria |
| Cordairo Golden | US |
| Emmanuel Tugumisirize | Uganda |



Photo by Getty Images



Photo by Bob Donnan, USA Today

Men's Golf

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Kent Bulle (2006-10) | Web.com Tour |
| Rick Cochran (2005-09) | Web.com Tour |
| Hunter Green (2009-12) | Swing Thought Tour |
| Jason Millard (2008-11) | Web.com Tour |
| Chase Narramore (2005-09) | Web.com Tour |

Women's Golf

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Allie Knight (2011-15) | Symetra Tour |
|------------------------|--------------|



UPCOMING EVENTS



SEPTEMBER 2016

- 1** Soccer at Lipscomb, Nashville
- 2** Volleyball vs. Nevada, Saint Mary's Tournament, Moraga, Calif.
- 3** Football vs. Alabama A&M, Murfreesboro
- 3** Volleyball vs. Saint Mary's, Saint Mary's Tournament, Moraga, Calif.
- 3** Volleyball vs. UC Riverside, Saint Mary's Tournament, Moraga, Calif.
- 4** Soccer vs. Belmont, Nashville
- 9** Soccer vs. Tennessee Tech, Murfreesboro
- 9** Volleyball vs. Illinois State, Blue Raider Bash, Murfreesboro
- 10** Football at Vanderbilt, Nashville
- 10** Volleyball vs. Seton Hall, Blue Raider Bash, Murfreesboro
- 10** Volleyball vs. Tennessee Tech, Blue Raider Bash, Murfreesboro
- 11** Soccer at Tennessee, Knoxville
- 12-13** Men's Golf at the Invitational at Kiawah, Kiawah Island, S.C.
- 14** Volleyball at Wake Forest, Winston-Salem, N.C.
- 16** Volleyball vs. Morgan State, VCU Invitational, Richmond, Va.
- 16** Volleyball vs. VCU, VCU Invitational, Richmond, Va.
- 17** Volleyball vs. Liberty, VCU Invitational, Richmond, Va.
- 17** Football at Bowling Green, Ohio
- 18** Soccer vs. UAB, Murfreesboro
- 18-20** Men's Golf at the Intercollegiate at the Grove, College Grove, Tenn.
- 23** Volleyball at UAB, Birmingham, Ala.
- 24** Football vs. Louisiana Tech, Murfreesboro
- 24** Soccer at UTSA, San Antonio
- 25** Volleyball at Marshall, Huntington, W. Va.
- 26-27** Men's Golf at Cincinnati Intercollegiate at Coldstream, Cincinnati
- 30** Volleyball vs. Rice, Murfreesboro
- 30** Soccer vs. Florida Atlantic, Murfreesboro

OCTOBER 2016

- 1** Football at North Texas, Denton, Texas
- 2** Volleyball vs. Western Kentucky, Murfreesboro
- 2** Soccer vs. Florida International, Murfreesboro
- 5** Volleyball at Tennessee State, Nashville
- 7** Soccer at Western Kentucky, Bowling Green, Ky.
- 7** Volleyball at Louisiana Tech, Ruston, La.
- 9** Soccer at Marshall, Huntington, W. Va.
- 9** Volleyball at Florida Atlantic, Boca Raton, Fla.
- 14** Soccer vs. Rice, Murfreesboro
- 14** Volleyball vs. UTSA, Murfreesboro
- 15** Football vs. Western Kentucky, Murfreesboro
- 16** Soccer vs. UTEP, Murfreesboro
- 16** Volleyball at Charlotte, Charlotte, N.C.
- 17-18** Men's Golf at Autotrader.com Collegiate Classic, Atlanta
- 19** Volleyball vs. Austin Peay, Murfreesboro
- 21** Soccer at Louisiana Tech, Ruston, La.
- 21** Volleyball vs. Southern Miss, Murfreesboro
- 22** Football at Missouri, Columbia, Mo.
- 23** Soccer at Southern Miss, Hattiesburg, Miss.
- 23** Volleyball vs. UAB, Murfreesboro
- 24-25** Men's Golf at Quail Valley Collegiate Invitational, Vero Beach, Fla.
- 29** Football at Florida International, Miami
- 30** Volleyball vs. UTEP, Murfreesboro

NOVEMBER 2016

- 2-6** C-USA Soccer Tournament, Charlotte, N.C.
- 5** Football vs. Texas-San Antonio, Murfreesboro
- 5** Volleyball at Western Kentucky, Bowling Green, Ky.
- 10** Volleyball at Florida International, Miami
- 12** Football at Marshall, Huntington, W. Va.
- 12** Volleyball vs. North Texas, Murfreesboro
- 17-20** C-USA Volleyball Tournament, Houston
- 19** Football at Charlotte, Charlotte, N.C.
- 26** Football vs. Florida Atlantic, Murfreesboro



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