

RAIDER REVIEW

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

WINTER 2016 ■ VOL. 2 NO. 5

Ready for **TAKEOFF**

Megan Chocallo
launches her senior
softball season with
an eye toward flying
the friendly skies



JaQawn Raymond

puts pro basketball on
the back burner Page 8



MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY



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RAIDER REVIEW

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**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**
STATE UNIVERSITY

ON THE COVER



Megan Chocallo launches her senior softball season with an eye toward flying the friendly skies

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Chris Massaro

From the Desk of the AD

As we reflect on this past calendar year, we can brag about many accomplishments. We will never forget the day in Birmingham when our men's and women's basketball teams each won a conference title and advanced to the NCAA Tournament. And certainly no one will ever forget the monumental March victory our men's team captured against No. 2-seeded Michigan State in St. Louis.

In addition to that, our men's outdoor track team finished 18th nationally, women's golf won a second C-USA Championship, and we were one of only 10 schools to go to a bowl game, the NCAA men's basketball tournament, and the NCAA women's basketball tournament in the 2015–2016 academic year. Our 2016 football team became the talk of the town for its success on the field, including a huge win on the road against SEC foe Missouri (not to mention records being shattered by quarterback Brent Stockstill, running back I'Tavius Mathers, and receiver Richie James). Both cross country teams had strong seasons, with Jacob Choge winning the C-USA individual title, and men's golf showed tremendous improvement and put itself in position to make another trip to the NCAA Regionals. Academically, we again equaled our school record with an 87 percent Graduation Success Rate, while football student-athlete Steven Rhodes was crowned the FWAA Armed Forces Merit Award winner.

We truly have had a lot to brag about, but none of this would be possible without the support of our donors. We are very humbled by what you do for us. Your support, both financially and in spirit, allows us to help the young men and women who wear our University's uniforms to accomplish their academic and athletic dreams. You have truly made a difference in their lives.

**None of this
would be
possible without
the support of
our donors.**

From time to time, those of us working in athletic administration can become frustrated because we want more people to support us in the manner that you do. **We need more people to buy tickets and attend our games!** And we are a great entertainment value! We also need more people to join the BRAA and provide financial support for what we are trying to accomplish with our student-athletes both academically and athletically. We are very proud of the support we have, but the question remains: How can we generate more?

The answer to that, I believe, requires a little more help from you. **Do you ever wonder what can you do to help spread the Blue Raider message?**

Talk about us on social media. Post your pictures having fun attending our events. Post Blue Raider game results—particularly if they are positive outcomes! Talk about an upcoming game or event that you are looking forward to attending. There is nothing better than personal endorsements.

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Follow and interact with our local media, particularly with viewing online articles. Each media outlet, including *The DNJ*, *The Tennessean*, and our local TV channels, rely heavily on the number of views their content receives. They use this information to allocate future media coverage. It is extremely important for our fans to engage online with these outlets.

Attend as many games as possible. Lead by example. You make a difference for our players and to our atmosphere. Games are a lot more fun when the crowds are bigger!

Wear our merchandise and colors. Go to the grocery store wearing Middle Tennessee apparel. You are a walking advertisement for our beloved University! Let other people visibly see our colors and logos every day from our fans. It will catch on and make a difference.

Finally, talk about us all the time. If you are too bashful to ask for a donation or a ticket sale, let us know. We will gladly call the person to help our programs grow.

These are just a few suggestions that will be a tremendous help without costing any additional money. Thank you again for all that you do. We could not have had such a great 2016 without you. Here is to an even bigger and better 2017! **RR**

**Chris Massaro
Athletic Director**



Ready for **TAKEOFF**

by Josh Vardaman

Megan Chocallo

launches her senior softball season with an eye toward flying the friendly skies



Middle Tennessee softball pitcher Megan Chocallo doesn't study in a typical classroom setting. The senior Aerospace major doesn't hone her craft at a desk or in a lab. Instead, she does her hands-on learning in the clouds.

Chocallo, now in her final year of the Aerospace program at Middle Tennessee State University, intends to become a commercial pilot. She currently has her private pilot's license and is working toward her commercial license. She plans to complete the proper certification to transition into multi-engine planes this coming spring. That will be followed by simulation trainings in the University's world-class facilities that will enable her one day to fly CRJ aircraft.

Between the demands of softball, flying, other courses, and trying to enjoy a normal college life, Chocallo understandably has a busy schedule to juggle.

"I'm still really trying to figure it out, and I'm in my senior year!" she said jokingly. "It's all very time-consuming. I just have to balance everything. I write things down and make sure I have things planned out. Coach [Jeff Breeden] is really good about understanding if from time to time I need to be late because a flight doesn't get in on time or something like that. He always tells me to put my academics first."

For Chocallo, flying is a family affair. Both of her parents, her younger brother, her grandfather, and an uncle either are or were pilots. Her father is currently a captain for Delta, while her brother is in flight school, and her uncle is a Navy commander. Her mom is a retired pilot, and her grandpa is retired from Delta.

Chocallo didn't initially plan to follow in her family's aerial footsteps. She originally attended Towson University, where she played her freshman season on the softball team.

While at Towson, Chocallo realized she indeed did want to become a pilot and chose to transfer to MTSU due to the Aerospace program's outstanding national reputation.

"It was always kind of there, but I never knew if I really wanted to do it or not," she said. "It just hit me one day, and it happened, and now I'm here. We're one of the top programs in the nation. We have a very good base here and good national recognition."

Luckily for Chocallo, she was not only able to start on her new career path after transferring to MTSU, but she also was able to keep playing the sport she loves. In her two seasons as a Blue Raider, she has appeared in 53 games—boasting 24 starts—and owns a 4.70 ERA.

As she readies for her senior season, Chocallo is cherishing the time she has left on the diamond. That's because, according to Chocallo, it almost didn't come to fruition at all. After her freshman year in high school, she was diagnosed with celiac disease, a digestive disorder caused by a reaction to gluten, and lost over 40 pounds in just a month and a half. At that time, she was starting to enter the softball recruiting process, but had to shift her focus away from softball.

"After I got it under control, it was just a problem with recruiting," she said. "When I was getting recruited is when I got sick and I got really small. The biggest battle was putting weight back on."

Now with her last softball season approaching, she's ready to have a terrific spring with her teammates, even though she knows the season will at some point become emotional for her.

"It's weird. I've been playing since I was 4 years old, and it's going to end in seven or eight months," Chocallo said. "It hasn't hit me emotionally yet, but I think it will more in the spring."

"We have such a good team this year. Our chemistry is through the roof, and I'm looking forward to sharing that with everybody. Everyone is pumped."

Once her softball career does come to a close, Chocallo will finish flight school and possibly enter the Air Force Reserves while working to become a commercial pilot.

"I've been trying to get in the Air Force Reserves—I really want to fly C-17s—but that's like a year and a half off," she said. "I'd like to do Reserves so I can fly the bigger aircraft and do transport stuff."

When she is done at MTSU, she will join a very small group of student-athletes who have competed in a sport for all four years and finished the Aerospace program.

"I've gone through the whole program, which doesn't usually happen," Chocallo said.

As spring approaches, and the green grass starts to pop up on the softball field, Chocallo will no doubt take the mound inspired by her final chances to play the game she loves. But if she looks up in to the blue sky above, she can no doubt believe that with her MTSU degree and training under her belt, she'll soon be launching the next exciting passage of her life. **RR**

"I've been trying to get in the Air Force Reserves—I really want to fly C-17s—but that's like a year and a half off."



BIDING HIS time

by Eric Beovich

Achieving a second academic degree puts pro basketball on the back burner for **JaQawn Raymond**

For most college athletes, the dream and opportunity to play the sport they love for a living never arrives.

For those fortunate enough to get a chance to showcase their skills at the "next level," it's almost unthinkable to pass up the prospect of being a professional athlete.

It's even more rare if that opportunity is set aside for the purpose of gaining more education.

For former Blue Raider point guard JaQawn Raymond, the decision to forgo the chance to play professional basketball—at least for now—was a no-brainer, even though he already had a Liberal Studies undergraduate degree in hand.

That's because Raymond is determined to also graduate with an undergraduate degree in Computer Engineering.

"Our academic counselor, Mrs. [Wynnifred] Counts, told me I needed a lot more credit hours to graduate in Computer Engineering," Raymond said. "I decided to ask Coach [Kermit] Davis for another year, and he let me do it and was very supportive of the decision."

With no remaining eligibility to play, Raymond is focused exclusively on completing his academic coursework.

"I just wanted to have a backup plan in case basketball doesn't work out, so that's why I decided it was best to come back for a year and finish my Computer Engineering degree."

The decision is one reason Coach Davis said Raymond epitomizes the culture of Blue Raider basketball.

"Obviously he had some opportunities to go play basketball professionally, but he's put that on hold and is taking a load of classes right now," Davis said. "He has battled like nobody I've ever seen, and he's determined to get it done."

"It's hard being around the guys and watching practice without playing, but I know in the long run it will pay off to finish my education."

After capturing a Conference USA tournament title, Raymond helped engineer the greatest upset in the history of the NCAA Tournament last March. He ran the Blue Raider offense to near perfection in Middle Tennessee's toppling of college basketball powerhouse Michigan State in the opening round of March Madness.

With such fond memories of his last few games as a Blue Raider, the decision to set the game of basketball

aside did not come easy for the native of Statesboro, Georgia.

"It's really hard," Raymond said. "I talk to my mom about it all the time, and she just tells me that I will play again. She says to just finish school and everything else will work itself out."

"It's hard being around the guys and watching practice without playing, but I know in the long run it will pay off to finish my education. Just in case I get hurt or something and basketball isn't an option anymore, I'll always have my degree."

And despite the desire many young kids have to be like future basketball hall of famers LeBron James or Stephen Curry, that's not the only interest Raymond has had from a young age. His interest in computers has been around since his middle school years.

"I went to a computer camp in middle school, I think in seventh grade," Raymond said. "We took apart a computer and put it back together, and I've been in technology classes ever since then."

For a student-athlete to make the sacrifice Raymond has made in favor of his education may not be a common occurrence, but it is one that he made on his own with great support from those closest to him.

"This wasn't me or anyone else trying to convince JaQawn to take this route; it was all JaQawn Raymond," Davis said. "A lot of guys would have just given up on Computer Engineering, but he was grinding through some courses and stayed right with it, and Mrs. Counts was great with him."

"I told him that this was a great, lifetime decision, and with his personality and the people that he's met along the way, he is going to have some great opportunities in the future."

Raymond said he is at peace with his decision.

"Everyone I've told has been very supportive and said that it was my decision to make," Raymond said. "At the end of the day, my mom always reminds me that my degree isn't going to go anywhere. I'll always have that paper in my hand." [RR](#)



TAKING THE World BY Storm

by Josh Vardaman

Lady Raider legend
Alysha Clark is a true
basketball globetrotter

Few basketball players have experienced an athletic career quite like Middle Tennessee State University alum Alysha Clark.

The Mt. Juliet High School graduate spent two seasons at Belmont University, where she scored 1,109 points in just two seasons (18.5 per game) and led the Lady Bruins to their first NCAA Tournament appearance in 2007.

Following that tournament run, Clark transferred to MTSU. She had to sit out a season, but when she was finally able to get on the court for the Lady Raiders, she showed an even greater ability to score.

Clark led the nation in scoring in both her redshirt junior and senior seasons (27.5 points per game in 2008–09 and 28.3 per game in 2009–10), finishing sixth in the country in field goal percentage (61.4) and fifth in rebounds per game (11.6)

in her final year. She was awarded Sun Belt Conference Player of the Year honors in both seasons.

When her career came to a close, Clark ranked ninth all-time in scoring at MT with 1,756 points, despite playing for the Blue Raiders for just two years. She also is ranked third all-time in school history in rebounds per game (10.7). When combined with her Belmont totals, she currently sits at 17th all-time in the NCAA with 2,865 career points.

According to Clark, her success derived from a work ethic and focus on fundamentals she gained while at Mt. Juliet High School. MT head coach Rick Insell and the Blue Raider program had a hand in her progression as well.

“Coach Insell helped me understand how important mental toughness is, to not let anyone take me out of my game,” she said. “Being at Middle Tennessee and playing the best teams in the country really helped instill that ‘fight’ mentality in all of us, because we weren’t scared to face anyone.”

After 2010, in which Clark led the Blue Raiders to their second Sun Belt championship and second NCAA appearance in her two seasons with the team, she was selected 17th overall in the WNBA draft by the San Antonio Silver Stars.

Her career didn't blossom with the Silver Stars, and after just one season, Clark was released. She spent a season away from the WNBA and in 2012 was picked up by the Seattle Storm.

Through five seasons with the Storm, her production has increased every year. In 2016, Clark started 32 of 34 games and averaged a career-best nine points per game.

The resurgence in her career has come from a mutual bond she shares with the Storm.

"I think it's been the confidence to allow me to grow," Clark said. "My role has grown a little bit each year. When you have that support as a player from your coach and organization, it gives you the confidence as a player to perform without any hindrances."



"I never want to get complacent as a person or player, so I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and challenge myself."

To go along with more success on the WNBA circuit, Clark also is picking up her game at the international level. For the previous five years, she also played in the Israeli League. This season, however, she switched to the highly competitive Turkish Women's Basketball Super League, where she plays for Adana ASKI.

"I never want to get complacent as a person or player, so I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and challenge myself," she said. "Turkey is known for

being a very competitive league. It's still early and I'm still trying to adjust, but preseason has started with five stitches in my chin.

"Should be an exciting year; I'm excited to see all the great things Turkey has to offer off the court. I've heard great things."

Even with all of her professional duties, Clark still finds time to keep track of her beloved Lady Raiders. She talks with assistant coach Kim Brewton and senior guard Ty Petty often.

"I'll check the website during the season to see how the team is doing," she added.

Clark even found time during the WNBA offseason in 2013-14 to come back to MTSU and help Insell as an assistant coach, a position she said she would be willing to do again if the opportunity arose.

"That would be up to the coaching staff and the athletic department," Clark said. "I would love to instruct and mentor in some sort of capacity, because that's where my passion lies." **RR**



MEN'S AND WOMEN'S HOME CONFERENCE BASKETBALL SCHEDULES

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Jan. 1 vs. UAB
Jan. 12 vs. Marshall
Jan. 14 vs. Western Kentucky
Jan. 26 vs. Southern Miss
Jan. 28 vs. Louisiana Tech
Feb. 9 vs. Old Dominion
Feb. 11 vs. Charlotte
March 2 vs. Florida International
March 4 vs. Florida Atlantic

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Jan. 5 vs. Rice
Jan. 7 vs. North Texas
Jan. 19 vs. Florida International
Jan. 21 vs. Florida Atlantic
Feb. 2 vs. UTSA
Feb. 4 vs. UTEP
Feb. 16 vs. Western Kentucky
Feb. 18 vs. Marshall
Feb. 25 vs. UAB



Meet the Ace

by Matt Posey

Training with one of the top tennis players in the world developed **Gonzalo Morell Raschiatore** into a young captain at Middle Tennessee

To be a captain on the Middle Tennessee men's tennis team, one has to be a strong leader in every aspect. He must be a vocal leader as well as a leader by his actions. He must excel in the classroom and in practice. He must do the little things that set him apart. He must work hard.

Sophomore Gonzalo Morell Raschiatore epitomizes hard work, a trait that was ingrained in him by his parents, Gonzalo Morell and Stefania Raschiatore, as well as his former coaches and good friends. It's no wonder, then, that Morell's friends and family were not shocked at all to find their prodigy had earned the title of youngest captain in Middle Tennessee men's tennis program history.

Growing up in Spain, Morell watched his uncle, Javier Morell, play on clay courts. When he was 6 years old, Gonzalo got a tennis racket of his own and began to learn the game.

"My uncle was one of the best tennis players in Spain, and he's a big reason why I started playing tennis," Morell said.



As Morell's game began to develop even more, he started to learn under longtime family friend Javier Ferrer and his brother, David Ferrer, who owns a top 15 ranking in the world on the professional tour.

"When they play together, it's like Gonzalo's playing with his big brother. He has a great opportunity that a lot of other young tennis players don't have," Morell's father said.

"He's grown up around some great coaches and some great individual role models, with Coach Ferrer and his brother David," MT head coach Jimmy Borendame said. "David is an outstanding representative of the game of tennis with what he does for his community, and Gonzalo is no different. David is an ultimate role model, and they've gotten to be good friends. Gonzalo has some great people around him, and they've molded him into being the great person that he is."

While Morell faced the best competition in his age group in Spain, he also played under the Australian flag, and in June he was named the fifth-best Aussie in collegiate tennis, according to Universal Tennis. He was joined by Southern Cal's Jack Jaede as the only two freshmen on that list. Before enrolling at MTSU, he had already earned an ITF ranking of 191 in Australia.

The list of accomplishments from his playing days in Spain include a third-place finish in the European

Championships in 2007, the singles championship of the Nike Juniors Tour in Spain in 2008, and leading Spain to a team championship in the 2008 U-12 European national tournament, as well as being a five-time national champion.

When Borendame notched a top-25 recruiting class in 2015 according to the Tennis Recruiting Network, the MT program's first such class, Morell was one of the biggest names on that list

"Five years ago, I didn't think I'd be in America playing the game I love."

"Five years ago, I didn't think I'd be in America playing the game I love," Morell said. "I began to think about it a couple years ago when I started talking to some coaches, and I really liked Jimmy the best, so I decided to come to MTSU. I love the University, the coaching staff, and my teammates. I saw that I would fit in well here with my major. I was able to speak with my teammates from the previous year, and they told me how great Murfreesboro was and how well Jimmy's program was run."

Once in Murfreesboro, Morell got off to a quick start in his first spring as a Blue Raider, earning 17 wins, tying Miguel Negre Fernandez for second

on the team. Morell anchored the top part of Borendame's lineup, posting a 9-2 record at No. 2 and an 8-4 mark at the top spot in the lineup. The honor of All-Conference USA First Team Singles greeted Morell at the end of the season, showing proof of his hard work.

In doubles, Morell and his partner earned an Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) ranking of No. 51 on March 8. The duo finished the season on the All-Conference USA First Team Doubles list with a record of 14-7, with all but one of those wins coming at the No. 1 doubles spot.

"It was neat to see his game grow last season," Borendame said of Morell. "When he first came to us, he liked his backhand, but now his forehand has become his dominant stroke. He wasn't really comfortable coming up to the net, but we've developed those skills as well. It takes a while to adjust after growing up playing a certain style your whole life, then coming to college and learning how to be aggressive and using those assets on hardcourt. I'm really excited to see his game this upcoming spring."

In the classroom, Morell is a Business Administration major with a GPA of 3.8. He was honored for his success in the classroom with a spot on the C-USA Commissioner's Honor Roll and a C-USA Academic Medal.

Men's tennis won the Raiders Choice Award for Best Team GPA in Spring 2016, led by Morell. The Blue Raiders earned the C-USA Sport Academic Award for posting a 3.385 team GPA for the academic year.

Without a doubt, Morell is looking forward to the spring 2017 season and a shot at winning the C-USA Championship at the Adams Tennis Complex, the Blue Raiders' home court. However, his lessons with the Ferrer brothers have continued beyond the tennis court.

"David and Javier still support Gogo 100 percent," said Morell's mother, Stefania. "Almost every month David calls Gonzalo to see how his studies are going. I'm happy Gonzalo decided to continue studying while also continuing to play tennis. Gonzalo loves Murfreesboro, and he's just like any other American guy." **RR**



(Left) Morell with David Ferrer (center) and family. (Right) Morell holds the flag of Spain at the 2006 Davis Cup.



RISING STAR

by Tony Stinnett

Associate AD Kortne Gosha proves age is no barrier to achievement in the collegiate athletics sphere

Suggesting Kortne Gosha is mature beyond his years would be a huge understatement. At 28 years old, Gosha has quickly ascended in the ranks of collegiate athletic administration.

He serves as associate athletic director and chief operating officer in the Middle Tennessee Athletics Department, a highly responsible role he assumed at the young age of 25.

“When you sit down with Kortne in an interview situation or in a formal meeting situation, you can see the passion and drive in the guy and it’s beyond his age,” said Chris Massaro, director of athletics. “He’s one of the smartest people I have been around. He knows the business, and he fits that role perfectly. We couldn’t be happier with his job performance.”



Gosha began his Middle Tennessee career in 2012 as head equipment manager for the Blue Raider football team. Even in that role, well before Gosha was elevated to his current role as associate athletics director, he was making waves.

While serving as head equipment manager, Gosha successfully negotiated a first-ever Nike contract for the entire athletic department.

"One of my first projects here was our Nike contract," Gosha said. "That agreement exists today because of my contacts within the equipment industry. That was kind of my baby. I believe my association with that project opened the eyes of some of the administrators." The cutting-edge and stylish uniforms seen on all Blue Raider teams are attributed to the implementation of the Nike deal.

When he was promoted to associate AD and COO of MT Athletics at age 25, Gosha was no doubt one of the youngest such officers in the country at that time. But his appointment to such a significant role within MTSU's athletics department also represented a historical first at MTSU. Gosha was the first African-American senior administrator in athletics at Middle Tennessee.

"That shows the culture of diversity and inclusion here at MTSU," Gosha said. "It speaks volumes to the mission of the University and leadership President Dr. Sidney A. McPhee has put in place."

Massaro is quick to point out that Gosha is a tireless worker involved in myriad roles within the department.

"Kortne is not afraid of hard work," Massaro said. "We keep loading him up with duties, and we haven't found that breaking point yet where we have to back off, because the guy can just about absorb anything."

"That's his real value. He's good whether it's internal pieces or external pieces. And he is a very good communicator."

Since becoming associate AD, Gosha has been involved with several major projects in a relatively short period

of time, including: field turf replacement for the football stadium; the Boots Donnelly, Reese Smith Jr., and John Stanford statue projects; construction of the Adams Tennis Complex; and renovations to the football locker room, the strength and conditioning facilities, and Murphy Center. He also oversaw renegotiating the Learfield multimedia rights agreement, implementing new game-day atmosphere incentives, and developing the Murphy Madness event.

"There is no task too great or too small for me to do," Gosha said. "It is gratifying to be part of the foundation of the department and leading initiatives on your campus."

Gosha has a quote that he wrote on the wall in his office on the first day of the job. It simply states: "Earn your leadership every day."

"One of the more rewarding projects was the renovation of the athletic weight room because that had an effect on every student-athlete in the department," he added.

"I love to see student-athletes grow and develop as young men and women. I am a true example that their dreams can come true here at MTSU just as they have for me."

Gosha exemplifies what it means to be True Blue as he demonstrates his service beyond athletics. He is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Omicron Sigma Lambda Alumni chapter in Murfreesboro, and

oversees the MTSU undergraduate Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity chapter. In that role, Gosha is very involved with community services and several MT Athletics collaborations with Fraternity and Sorority Life.

For all he's accomplished in such a short period of time, Gosha isn't one for the spotlight. He's much more comfortable operating behind the scenes without a need for attention. However, given his track record, it is difficult not to notice Gosha's impact. With his star rising in athletics administrative circles, Gosha will no doubt need to get more comfortable with the spotlight given his bright future. [RR](#)

"That's his real value. He's good whether it's internal pieces or external pieces. And he is a very good communicator."



**VIEW
FROM
THE**

PRESSBOX



Chip Walters

The Voice of the Blue Raiders



In a collegiate setting, it can be very easy to complicate the mission with flowery words and notions.

Thank goodness for faculty representative Dr. Terry Whiteside and his ability to simplify the goal of what we hope to see every student-athlete at Middle Tennessee achieve: “A championship ring on one hand and a diploma in the other.”

How simple, but how true. It's easy to remember, it's catchy, and it states the academic and athletic goals we want every member of every team to achieve.

There's a reason our student-athletes are called “student-athletes” and there's a reason that the word student comes before athlete. It means that there is a dual path for these young men and women. First and foremost, they are college students pursuing degrees. Secondly, they are gifted athletes.

Take pride that the goal of our student-athletes [is] leaving . . . with a championship ring on one hand and a diploma in the other is being achieved.

Each of MTSU's 17 intercollegiate sports is judged on its academic success by the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate, or APR. The line of demarcation in the complicated formula is a score of 930 out of a perfect 1,000.

For the seventh consecutive year, all of Middle Tennessee's athletic teams earned a multi-year Academic Progress Rate (APR) of over 930 when the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) released its annual report.

The most recent APR scores are based on a multi-year rate that averages scores from the 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15 academic years. The Blue Raiders had 11 of 15 sports (indoor and outdoor track counted as one team) with a 970 or better, while men's and women's golf both touted a perfect score of 1000.

Football had an impressive multi-year score of 974, which equaled the second-best score in Conference USA. Its 2014-15 score of 979 ranked fourth in C-USA.

The Blue Raiders also had four teams record perfect scores of 1000 for the 2014-15 academic year: men's golf, women's golf, men's tennis, and women's tennis.

Two teams earned NCAA Public Recognition Awards, based on their most recent multi-year APR. These awards are given each year to teams with APRs in the top 10 percent in each sport. Men's golf was honored for the sixth straight year, while women's golf was recognized for the third consecutive year.

So, the goal of getting a diploma is being achieved. The athletic achievements are found each day in the morning newspaper or on a myriad of websites, including our own GoBlueRaiders.com.

In 2015-16, men's and women's basketball received championship rings for capturing the Conference USA tournament championships, as did the women's golf team. Those three sports reached the postseason in NCAA tournament competition, plus football played in a bowl game.

Most of the other 13 sports were in the hunt to win the title and grab a ring in their sport. Interestingly, Conference USA does not award an All-Sports Championship like the Ohio Valley and Sun Belt Conferences did. The Blue Raiders dominated the Bubas Cup standings during our tenure in the SBC. Dean Hayes, veteran track and field coach, has applied the SBC formula to C-USA and assures us that if they gave a trophy, it would be residing in Murfreesboro much more often than not.

As a supporter of Blue Raider Athletics, you can take pride that the goal of our student-athletes leaving the University with a championship ring on one hand and a diploma in the other, while lofty, is being achieved.

And thanks to Terry Whiteside for giving us an easy way to remember our athletic and academic goals. **RR**



Daryl Simpson,
Assistant AD/Compliance

EXTRA BENEFITS: HOUSING

Boosters are often looking to assist and support institutional athletic programs in any way they can. However, this effort to provide assistance often leads to NCAA violations if student-athletes are directly involved. The interactions between boosters and student-athletes are heavily regulated by the NCAA and often overlooked by the general public.

For instance, Stanford University recently fell victim to this oversight when two boosters provided a football player with extra benefits valued around \$3,500. These benefits included a loan to purchase a bicycle, free use of a vehicle, meals, and use of a vacation home. The boosters thought they were assisting the player by participating in a program to provide short-term housing while the player sought out a more permanent living arrangement during the summer.

In reality, the boosters created more harm than help.

An extra benefit is any special arrangement by a representative of the institution's athletics interest (booster) to provide a student-athlete or the student-athlete's family or friends a benefit that is not expressly authorized by NCAA rules. Additionally, a student-athlete may receive such benefits if, and only if, the same benefit is generally provided to the general public and is not determined based on athletic ability.



Ask before you act! That is the mantra of Middle Tennessee State University's compliance office. We understand that boosters just want to help in any way they possibly can.

If you have an idea or questions about this article, please contact Daryl Simpson at daryl.simpson@mtsu.edu. **RR**

Ask before you act!



Blue Raider Athletic Association



Keith McCluney
Associate Athletic
Director/Development

WRITING THE VISION



The start of a new academic and athletic year brings excitement, anticipation, and the enthusiasm that all new beginnings bring. All of our teams are prepared or getting ready for their respective seasons and to compete for Conference USA titles in every sport. Dominance in all of our sports remains the goal, and excellence is and will remain the standard by which we operate.

All of these goals would not be possible without the help of those of you reading this article. You are (and will always be) the driving force behind the successes of our programs and our department. Last year we experienced a year like no other in the history of Middle Tennessee State University. The effort that our teams put forth, the way our young men and women carried themselves with class and represented the University with dignity, and the level at which they performed are things that we all can be proud of. Our student-athletes continued to excel in the classroom

and to serve the Murfreesboro area by logging countless hours of community service. We certainly have a lot to be proud of as our

**Make a
commitment
today to help us
continue to
grow the
Blue Raider
Athletic
Association.**

student-athletes represent all that is good about college athletes and intercollegiate athletics. Our pride

(your pride) continues to show in the way that we support these extremely talented young men and women through the Blue Raider Athletic Association. Our commitment to excellence is reflected in our commitment to first-class facilities and to providing our student-athletes with the best of the best. Our student-athletes deserve that support, and I know we can provide that for them.

Make a commitment today to help us continue to grow the Blue Raider Athletic Association. Our goal is 2,000 members, and with your help, we can achieve that goal. If each of you who are reading this article would commit to helping us attract one new member, we could move our efforts to the next level, elevate our support to the department, and continue to enhance the student-athlete experience. If we want to remain competitive and dominant, we must strengthen our commitment to making Middle Tennessee a priority and continue to do all that we can to **MAKE MIDDLE BETTER! GO BLUE! RR**

NEW BRAA MEMBERSHIP DEADLINE IS JUNE 15, 2017

The BRAA has moved up its annual giving deadline from June 30 to June 15, 2017. This is to ensure that all gifts are properly credited for the correct year. The University has a 2 p.m. deadline for gifts to be received by the end of the fiscal year. This will allow for more time to make sure all gifts are posted.

Please make sure your BRAA membership is received on or before June 15, 2017 to ensure all of your benefits are available for the 2017-18 athletic year. **RR**



JOHN PITTARD ELEMENTARY DONATIONS

Don't forget we are still collecting clothing items (sizes for grades K-3) for John Pittard Elementary. The school is in need of continuous help, and we appreciate everyone who has dropped off items so far! You can drop off your clothing items at the Blue Raider Athletic Association office in Murphy Center (across from the women's basketball office) 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday.

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



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2016 CHUCK TAYLOR BLUE RAIDER GOLF CLASSIC



The 2016 Chuck Taylor Golf Classic was held Sept. 26 at Stones River Country Club in Murfreesboro. Blue Raider supporters came out to play and compete for the grand prize—a trip to play and represent MTSU at Pinehurst!



Congratulations for the third consecutive year to our winning team of Ben Leyhew, Dan Ebbutt, Chris Taylor, and David Galland.



Alan Holt and his family tailgate before the Vanderbilt vs. MTSU game on Sept. 10, 2016.

BLUE RAIDER FAN PHOTO

Donor SPOTLIGHT

Alan and Donna Holt

- Consecutive Years Giving to the BRAA: 1
- Currently Reside: Arrington



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

A. As a result of inquiring about an open-air box at Floyd Stadium for the 2016 MTSU football season

Q. When did you attend your first Blue Raider game? Tell us about your experience.

A. Sept. 3, 2016, MTSU vs. Alabama A&M. We celebrated a 55-0 victory in our open-air box with family and friends, dancing the night away with the A&M band.

Q. What is your best memory of MTSU athletics?

A. The 2015-16 basketball team's March Madness upset victory over Michigan State in the NCAA Basketball Tournament

Q. Why is it important to you to support MTSU Athletics?

A. To help the student-athletes and their respective teams achieve their goals and consistently compete for championships

Q. What motivates you to stay involved?

A. Our special interest in the MTSU football program and for the Athletics Department to invest, grow, and succeed on the national stage

Q. If you could play any MTSU sport, what would it be and why?

A. Football—to perform on big stages in front of thousands of people and help inspire a more loyal following to fill Floyd Stadium on Saturdays

Q. As a non-Murfreesboro resident, how important is it for you to still support MTSU's community and back your team from out of town?

A. Once a Raider, always a Raider.

Q. Who is the MTSU coach that you admire the most, and why?

A. Head football coach Rick Stockstill, because of his high standards instilled at MTSU (academically and athletically) and his tireless, dedicated belief in a nationally prominent football program for Raider Nation

Q. What do you hope our organization will achieve in the near future? In the long term?

A. A perennial Top 25 football program, the 'Boro buzzing in the fall, and Floyd Stadium filled to capacity on Saturdays

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

A. To be part of building something special

Q. Do you have a message to share?

A. Believe in BlueDat Nation! **RR**





CATCHING UP WITH Pat Hicks

by Josh Vardaman

Pat Hicks was a key cog in igniting one of Middle Tennessee's best football offenses in the early 1990s.

His essential role on the offensive line enabled Kippy Bayless to rush for in excess of 1,200 yards during the 1993 season.

That year, Hicks was named a Kodak AFCA All-American, as well as an Associated Press All-American, an accolade he would also earn in 1994 when the Blue Raiders went 8-2-1 and 7-1 in the Ohio Valley Conference before falling in the NCAA I-AA playoffs.

In light of his major contributions, Hicks was recently inducted into the Blue Raider Hall of Fame.

Not long ago, *Raider Review* got a chance to talk briefly with Hicks about his current life and activities.

FOOTBALL

Q What is it like being a new member of the Blue Raider Hall of Fame?

A It was very special, even though I was hospitalized during that time. It really meant a lot to me to play at MTSU and to go into the Hall of Fame. It's amazing knowing all of the guys who went in before me: the Steve McAdoos, the Kelly Holcombs, the Kippy Baylesses, and then all of the other athletes from the other sports—they're all awesome. That's the best of the best, and to know that I'm a part of that is just really special.

Q What have you been up to lately?

A I work at Bridgestone Americas and really just focus on spending time with my family. I'm also trying to get healthy following a little bout with pneumonia.

Q You still live in the area; how cool has it been for you to see the city and the University grow so much?

A I haven't left Murfreesboro since I graduated. I live here still with my wife and my kids. It's amazing to see how big it has gotten. Now we have so many shops and stores here, and the school is among the largest undergraduate schools in the state. It's just amazing to see.

Q Do you still attend events and games at Middle Tennessee?

A I like to be at as many games as I can since I still live in town. I'm actually planning to attend the football game this weekend [against WKU on homecoming].

Q Where is your favorite place to sit at Floyd Stadium?

A When I get to go to a game, I prefer to sit in the north end zone, so I can be front and center when they go in to score!

Thanks, Pat. **RR**



Aloha



DJ SANDERS

DANIEL STEPHENS

BRENT STOCKSTILL

HC RICK STOCKSTILL

I'TAVIUS MATHERS

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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
Logan Kilgore (2010-2013)	CFL	Toronto Argonauts
Keon Raymond (2004-05)	CFL	Toronto Argonauts
Sammy Seamster (2009-13)	NFL	Dallas Cowboys
Jimmy Staten (2010-13)	NFL	Chicago Bears
Erik Walden (2004-07)	NFL	Indianapolis Colts



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	Seattle Mariners
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
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
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 Sports

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
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UPCOMING EVENTS



JANUARY 2017

- 1** Men's Basketball vs. UAB, Murfreesboro
- 1** Women's Basketball at UAB, Birmingham, Ala.
- 5** Women's Basketball vs. Rice, Murfreesboro
- 5** Men's Basketball at Rice, Houston
- 7** Women's Basketball vs. North Texas, Murfreesboro
- 7** Men's Basketball at North Texas, Denton, Texas
- 12** Men's Basketball vs. Marshall, Murfreesboro
- 12** Women's Basketball at Marshall, Huntington, W. Va.
- 14** Women's Basketball at Western Kentucky, Bowling Green, Ky.
- 14** Men's Basketball vs. Western Kentucky, Murfreesboro
- 15** Women's Tennis vs. Lipscomb and Belmont, Murfreesboro
- 16** Men's Tennis vs. Furman and UT-Chattanooga, Murfreesboro
- 19** Women's Basketball vs. FIU, Murfreesboro
- 19** Men's Basketball at FIU, Miami
- 20** Men's Tennis at Vanderbilt, Nashville
- 21** Women's Basketball vs. FAU, Murfreesboro
- 21** Men's Tennis vs. Penn, Murfreesboro
- 21** Women's Tennis at Tennessee, Knoxville
- 21** Men's Basketball at FAU, Boca Raton, Fla.
- 22** Women's Tennis vs. Wake Forest, Knoxville
- 26** Men's Basketball vs. Southern Miss, Murfreesboro
- 26** Women's Basketball at Southern Miss, Hattiesburg, Miss.
- 28** Men's Basketball vs. Louisiana Tech, Murfreesboro
- 28** Women's Basketball at Louisiana Tech, Ruston, La.
- 28** Men's Tennis vs. George Washington, Murfreesboro
- 28** Men's Tennis vs. Alabama A&M, Murfreesboro

FEBRUARY 2017

- 1** Women's Basketball vs. UTSA, Murfreesboro
- 2** Men's Basketball at UTSA, San Antonio
- 3** Men's Tennis at Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.
- 4** Women's Basketball vs. UTEP, Murfreesboro
- 4** Women's Tennis vs. Western Kentucky and UT-Martin, Murfreesboro
- 4** Men's Basketball at UTEP, El Paso, Texas
- 5** Men's Tennis vs. Western Michigan, Murfreesboro
- 9** Men's Basketball vs. Old Dominion, Murfreesboro
- 9** Women's Basketball at Old Dominion, Norfolk, Va.
- 10-12** Women's Golf at Florida State Match-Up, Tallahassee, Fla.
- 10** Women's Tennis at Illinois, Urbana, Ill.
- 11** Women's Basketball at Charlotte, Charlotte, N.C.
- 11** Men's Basketball vs. Charlotte, Murfreesboro
- 12** Men's Tennis vs. Drake and Omaha, Des Moines, Iowa
- 12** Women's Tennis vs. Sam Houston and Tulsa, Tulsa, Okla.
- 16** Women's Basketball vs. Western Kentucky, Murfreesboro
- 16** Men's Basketball at Western Kentucky, Bowling Green, Ky.
- 17** Women's Tennis at FAU, Boca Raton, Fla.
- 17** Men's Tennis at Minnesota, Minneapolis
- 18** Women's Basketball vs. Marshall, Murfreesboro
- 18** Men's Basketball at Marshall, Huntington, W. Va.
- 18** Women's Tennis at FIU, Miami
- 18** Men's Tennis vs. Oregon, Minneapolis
- 19-21** Men's Golf at Puerto Rico Classic, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 25** Women's Basketball vs. UAB, Murfreesboro
- 26** Men's Basketball at UAB, Birmingham, Ala.
- 26** Women's Tennis at UT-Chattanooga, Chattanooga
- 26** Men's Tennis at Georgia State, Atlanta
- 27-** Women's Golf at Hurricane Invitational, Coral Gables, Fla.
- 3/1**

MARCH 2017

- 2** Women's Basketball at FIU, Miami
- 2** Men's Basketball vs. FIU, Miami
- 4** Men's Basketball vs. FAU, Murfreesboro
- 4** Women's Basketball at FAU, Boca Raton, Fla.
- 5** Women's Tennis at San Francisco, San Francisco
- 6** Men's Tennis at Pacific, Stockton, Calif.
- 8-11** Women's Basketball at C-USA Tournament, Birmingham, Ala.
- 8-11** Men's Basketball at C-USA Tournament, Birmingham, Ala.
- 8** Men's Tennis at Cal Poly, Pomona, Calif.
- 8** Women's Tennis at Fresno State, Fresno, Calif.
- 9** Women's Tennis vs. BYU, Fresno, Calif.
- 10-11** Women's Golf at Mountain View Collegiate, Tucson, Ariz.
- 12** Men's Tennis at Tulane, New Orleans
- 13-14** Men's Golf at Lamkin Grips SD Classic, San Diego
- 19-21** Men's Golf at Linger Longer Invitational, Eatonton, Ga.
- 24** Women's Tennis, vs. VCU, Murfreesboro
- 24** Men's Tennis at Old Dominion, Norfolk, Va.
- 25** Men's Tennis vs. Charlotte, Norfolk, Va.
- 26** Men's Tennis vs. Florida Atlantic, Norfolk, Va.
- 26** Women's Tennis vs. Memphis, Murfreesboro
- 31** Women's Tennis vs. Tulane and New Orleans, New Orleans
- 31** Men's Tennis vs. South Alabama, Murfreesboro
- 31-** Men's Golf at Mason Rudolph Championship, Franklin
- 4/1**

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