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Turnbow named head men's golf coach

Former player, assistant sixth coach in program history

MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The national search for Middle Tennessee's next head men's golf coach ended in its backyard.

Director of Athletics Chris Massaro has named Middle Tennessee alum Whit Turnbow the sixth head men's golf coach in program history, electing to promote from within and elevate Turnbow from assistant to head coach after five years in the previous capacity.

"Whit has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills and proven to be a great recruiter as evidenced by the current group of Blue Raider golfers that he was responsible for recruiting and signing," Massaro said. "We had a dynamic pool of candidates for this position and (Turnbow) was part of what we believed was a very strong mix. I was quite pleased, and I believe Blue Raider fans are going to be pleased with the manner in which Whit leads this program.

"He has had the opportunity to play for and coach with a great mentor in (former Middle Tennessee coach) Johnny Moore," Massaro added. "Coach Moore allowed Whit to handle more and more of the day-to-day responsibilities of running a program through the years which has helped prepare him for this job."

Turnbow graduated from Middle Tennessee in 2000 after a four-year playing career that culminated with the Blue Raiders playing in the NCAA National Championships for the first time as a Division I member. He was part of two Ohio Valley Conference championships during his playing career.

A native of nearby Shelbyville, Tenn., Turnbow spent the previous five seasons serving as assistant golf coach at Middle Tennessee.

"When I received the call and was offered the job, I have to say it was one of the best calls of my life," Turnbow said. "It's quite an honor to be selected to lead a program with such a great tradition. I appreciate the confidence Chris Massaro and the selection committee have shown in me, and I look forward to giving as many years as I can as long as I can. There is no place I would rather be than here. This is definitely a dream job for me.

"When you are an alumnus and you put blood, sweat, and tears into a place, it is home. I've put 10 years of my heart and soul into this place, and I told the committee there was no one they could interview that would have more passion and love for this university, city, and (Rutherford) County, than I do, so yes, this is very special."

Turnbow said former coach Johnny Moore was directly responsible for much of his development as a coach, as well as his preparation to lead a program.

"I've learned so much from Coach Moore and I respect him greatly," Turnbow said. "I've had a great coach and a great teacher, and he's an even better friend. Playing for him was such a great experience and we accomplished a lot. Then I had a chance to come back and coach with him and that was incredible. He prepared me for this day by allowing me so many responsibilities on a daily basis. He allowed me to make mistakes along the way and learn from them, and I did. I already feel like I have some head coaching experience because Coach Moore gave me the opportunity to do some things on my own right off the bat and it proved to be invaluable."

Turnbow recruited and signed four of the Top 100 prospects in the nation according to the Junior Golf Scoreboard between 2005- and-2007 when he landed: Rick Cochran, [Craig Smith](#) (2005), Kent Bulle (2006), and [Jason Millard](#) (2007). The signing of a quartet of Top 100-rated players was a first for Middle Tennessee's golf program. He also signed two first-team junior college All-Americans in Patrick McLennan (2004), and Bart Barnes (2005).

Several of these players have made an immediate impact in the program, including Smith, a redshirt freshman who earned Sun Belt Conference medalist, First-Team All-Conference, and Freshman of the Year honors in 2007. Sophomore [Chas Narramore](#) became the first Blue Raider to earn an invitation into the NCAA National Championships as an individual in 2007, after earning first-team All-Sun Belt. Cochran, Smith, Bulle, and Narramore represented four of the five players in the line-up at the 2007 Sun Belt Championships, where the Blue Raiders lost the title in a sudden-death playoff.

Turnbow said his existing relationship with the players will be an asset from the beginning.



Whit Turnbow, who played four years at Middle Tennessee and served the last five as assistant, has been hired to lead the Blue Raider men's golf program. (MT)

"There will be no transition period and that is a great advantage," Turnbow said. "I know this program inside and out, and I know these players inside and out because I recruited all of them. This is a great situation for our program. These players already know what I expect, and I've had the opportunity to coach these guys on and off the course."

Turnbow is married to the former Lori Kelley, a 2000 graduate of Middle Tennessee and currently teaching physical education at Bellwood Discovery School. During his collegiate playing career, Turnbow played in 31 tournaments with three Top 10 finishes. He maintained a 76.4 scoring average throughout his four years. He debuted with two Top 10 finishes as a Blue Raider - finishing tied for ninth at the USF/Ron Smith Invitational and a sixth-place finish at the Southern Junior/Senior.

He competed in all 11 tournaments as a sophomore and shot a career-low round of 69 at the USF/Ron Smith Invitational, good enough to place him eighth in the tournament. He managed to own the lowest scoring average on the team (75) despite being one of the youngest players on the squad. His success continued into his junior year, when he again fired a career-low 69 at the Matlock Invitational.

He also had a round of 70 at the Fall Beach Classic, where he finished 20th. He competed in eight tournaments during his senior year, including the team's victory at the OVC Championships and the NCAA East Regional.

Following his collegiate playing days, Turnbow spent three years (2000-02) competing professionally. He participated in the Hooters, Hurricane, and Developmental Players tours. Turnbow was named the TrueTemper/TPGA Assistant Professional Player of the Year in 2001. He was the low professional at the Tennessee Open (2002, 2007) and placed fifth at the Harold Eller Pro-Am, the Coca-Cola Open, and the Wilson Ez-Go Open. He was also low pro at the 2006 Honors/Council Fire Pro-Am. During his professional time, Turnbow worked at Lakewood Golf and Country Club in Tullahoma, Tenn., as an assistant to Chuck Lynch. He was the Junior Golf Director at Lakewood and started the first Junior Program at the Fayetteville Country Club.

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