Men win Sun Belt Title

Hayes wins 15th Sun Belt title

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JONESBORO, Ark. -The Middle Tennessee men's track team won the Sun Belt Conference Indoor Championships Sunday, with the women taking second.

The last three out of four years, the Blue Raider men have edged out the competition in the final event of the weekend to win the championship, the 4x400 meter relay.

"We had won because of the mile relay two years in a row and then Western got us last year, but this year we squeezed it out," head coach Dean Hayes said.

In addition to the team finishes, Sarah Nambawa was selected as the Most Outstanding Female Field Athlete. On the men's side, the Blue Raiders claimed four of the five awards - led by Coach of the Year Dean Hayes. Festus Chemaoi was the top meet scorer to go with his Most Outstanding Male Track Athlete honor, while Carl Morgan was recognized as the Most Outstanding Male Field Athlete.

Led by senior Morgan and sophomore Chemaoi, the two combined for four of the five first place finishes for the men. Morgan won both the long and triple jumps with leaps of 24-10.00 and 50-07.25, respectively. Chemaoi won the 800 meters and the mile with times of 1:55.76 and 4:11.18, respectively. Chemaoi also took second in the 3000 meters and fourth in the 5000 meters.

Freshman Roscoe Payne got his first victory for the Blue Raiders winning the 55-meter hurdles with a time of 7.50.

Other notable men's performances included Greg Franklin who took third in the 55 meters and the 200 meters. Distance runner William Songock finished second in both the 3000 and 5000 meters and fourth in the mile.

Junior DeRay Sloss was injured in 55 meter hurdle finals and had to be taken to the hospital. All tests came back negative.

Hayes said, "Festus did great for us coming back and running fourth in the 5000. He really was the star of the day. Carl helped in winning the long and triple jumps. And our sprinters Curtis King and Greg Franklin earned us some big points."

This is the 15th Sun Belt title for Hayes since joining the Sun Belt Conference in 2001.

The women's second place effort was highlighted by the performances of Nambawa, Zamzam Sangau and Brittany Cox. Nambawa won the triple jump with a leap of 42-11.75 and took second in the long jump with a jump of 19-06.75. She remains undefeated in her primary event. Sangau finished second in both the 800 meters and the mile with times of 2:12.36 and 4:57.28, respectively. Cox placed second in the shot put and third in the weight throw with tosses of 48-10.25 and 56-07.25, respectively.

TraMayne Gillyard, Ashley Comstock, Nyeisha Wright and MeLyn Thompson also all had crucial roles in the team's success. Gillyard took fourth in the 400 meters, Comstock was fifth in the mile and 3000 meters, Wright finished third in the 200 meters and Thompson placed third in the shot put.

"Ashley Comstock really made a big difference for us. It was really great to see her do well as a senior. Sarah and Zamzam were our biggest contributors, but I was really proud of all of our athletes."

This marks the end of the indoor season for the Blue Raiders. A handful of athletes will travel to Ames, Iowa, for the NCAA Last Chance meet next weekend with hopes of qualifying for the NCAA Indoor Championships in College Station, Texas, March 13-14. The teams will resume full competition with the opening of the outdoor track season March 21 at Rhodes College in Memphis for the Rhodes Open Meet. All results will be available on goblueraiders.com.

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