

Hayes Named Coach of the Year as Lady Raiders Claim SBC Title

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Seniors Kishara George and Laetitia Florimond were the stars for the Middle Tennessee women's track team over the weekend in New Orleans, La., helping the Lady Raiders claim their second Sun Belt Outdoor Championship and first since 2000. Head coach Dean Hayes was voted Coach of the Year after claiming his 40th conference championship in 40 years at the helm of the program. George broke her own school record in the 400-meter hurdles, posting a time of 58.72 to win the event. The senior also won the 400-meters in her first attempt at the event this outdoor season, and anchored the winning 4x400-meter relay team. NCAA regional qualifying times were posted in all three events, with the intermediate hurdles mark the fourth fastest in the Mideast Region this season. "We got off to a rough start during the Indoor season



but we knew we had a chance during the Outdoor meet if we put it all together," George said. "It may have been a long shot but we tried to come out and work hard. Our team really competed and I like what this team did. As far as me personally, I knew I had to step up and winning both events really helped us. Coach Hayes believes in me and I wanted to go out and make him proud." Florimond also made her last conference championships a memorable one, posting first, second and fourth-place finishes in field events. In her first attempt at the javelin this season, the senior set the school record with a winning throw of 140-9, besting her own mark from last year by almost 10 feet. Florimond also came in second in the discus and fourth in the shot put, picking up 23 points in all for the Lady

Raiders. The Lady Raiders also posted season-bests in numerous running events, almost all in the event finals on Sunday. Sophomore Tiffany Owens ran season-bests in both the 100- and 200-meters, as did sophomore Shanna-Kay Campbell. Freshman Antranette Stringer and junior Kerry Barrow posted season-bests in the 200- and 400-meters, as well, with George, Stringer and Barrow sweeping the top three spots in the 400-meters. The trio and Campbell were the four members of the winning 4x400-relay. Junior Candice Robertson posted a personal-best in the 100-meter hurdle preliminaries and won the event on Sunday, with senior Jessica Anderson right behind in second. Robertson also ran a season-best in the intermediate hurdle finals for a fourth-place finish in the event. Freshman Marjorie Gombert put in her best performance of the season in the 800-meters for a third-place finish, and junior Sara Lunning posted season-bests in both the 3000-meter steeplechase and 5000-meters, finishing sixth and seventh, respectively. Junior Meaghan Byrd was also a highlight in the field events for the Lady Raiders, breaking her own school record in the hammer throw by almost 20 feet, posting a second-place mark of 162-5 on Sunday. She also finished second in the shot put with a season-best mark of 47-5.25. Freshmen Sierra Douglas and Stephanie Tamgho both had season-bests in the triple jump, finishing fifth and sixth, respectively, in the event. Tamgho also turned in her best performance of the season in the long jump with a mark of 19-8, good for fourth place. The conference championship is the fifth outdoor title overall for the women and second in the Sun Belt. It was also Hayes' 24th Coach of the Year award and first outdoor honor since 2001. "Everyone contributed to the championship, with great performances all around," Hayes said. "Kishara was a stud and Laetitia was terrific. We were just about as perfect as we could be all three days, and that's what it took to win the title." The Blue Raiders also had a terrific meet, albeit without the usual depth of a Hayes squad. Middle Tennessee finished fifth overall, half-a-point from fourth place. Junior Linnie Yarbrough, senior Lindsay Sims and freshman Alex Pruitt were the big winners for the men, each claiming victory in an event. Yarbrough won the 110-meter hurdles, his third victory in six events this season. He also placed sixth in the 400-meter hurdles and posted the best mark by a Blue Raider long jumper this season with a fourth-place mark of 23-11.5. It was Yarbrough's first collegiate appearance in the long jump. His only goof was a false start in the final event of the meet, the 4x400-meter relay, preventing the Blue Raiders from a fourth-place finish. "It was a great, competitive weekend on everyone's behalf," Yarbrough said. "We came down to New Orleans to compete and I'm honored to be a big part of the team success that we enjoyed. The big thing is everyone concentrated on their individual events, which helped our team. We all leaned on each other when it counted. We had the feeling that we were not going to let each other down and that was great. Female or male, I knew my teammate had my back and it doesn't get much better than that. I think that contributed to the team success. We fed off the women's team as far as their drive and the emotion they displayed and that really helped put us over the top." Sims ended his Blue Raider career with a bang, winning the javelin with a personal-best mark of 200-8, only the third mark over 200-feet in Middle Tennessee history. It was the third time this season that Sims set a personal-best. Pruitt tied his season-best, clearing 6-10.75 in the final field event of the meet Sunday night. The mark ties his previous regional qualifying mark from earlier this season and is his best jump of the 2004-05 year. Junior VanTonio Fraley posted season-best times in both the 100- and 200-meters, placing third in both events and running regional qualifying times in both. Sophomore Jonathan Guillou and junior Derek Dell posted excellent performances, with the two finishing 2-3, respectively, in the 10000-meters Friday night and coming back for third- and fifth-place performances in Sunday's 5000-meters. **Women's Team Rankings - Final**

- 1) Middle Tennessee State 153.50
- 2) Florida International 121
- 3) North Texas 119.50

- 4) Western Kentucky 119
- 5) New Mexico State 94
- 6) South Alabama 60.50
- 7) Arkansas State 59.50
- 8) New Orleans 34
- 9) Arkansas Little Rock 32
- 10) Louisiana-Lafayette 23

Men's Team Rankings - Final

- 1) Arkansas State 146.50
- 2) South Alabama 113
- 3) Western Kentucky 109.50
- 4) North Texas 101.50
- 5) Middle Tennessee State 96
- 6) Louisiana-Lafayette 80
- 7) Florida International 73
- 8) Arkansas Little Rock 70.50
- 9) New Orleans 23

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