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Where are they now?

Catching up with former Blue Raider Jeff Thomas

Sarah Fryar

It has been ten years since Middle Tennessee fans watched former Blue Raider Jeff Thomas dominate Horace Jones Field. The time has come, however, for the previous 6'3" 278 pound defensive tackle to regain the spotlight. Thomas played at Middle Tennessee from 1996 to 1999 and played during the Blue Raiders' inaugural season of I-A football. GoBlueRaiders.com caught up with Thomas to talk about his life and what he is doing a decade later.

Talk about your most memorable moments as a Blue Raider. There are so many to choose from. Probably my most memorable moments though would be leaving home and stepping on campus for the first time, the first fall football camp and the instant sense of family between the players. When I first came onto the team in 1995 "Boots" Donnelly was the coach and we were still an OVC team. By my final season in 1999 we were a 1A team under Andy McCollum and playing in a brand new stadium. So my favorite memories were both on and off of the field.

What did you do after your final season at Middle Tennessee? I received my Bachelor's in Public Relations that December and enrolled in the following spring semester in hopes to get my Master's in Business Administration. I also worked out for a few teams but eventually got hurt and wanted to make money so I got a job. I worked for Country Weekly Magazine in Nashville then went to play arena football for the Columbus Warthogs.

Where are you now in your career? Currently, I am the Manager of the Goodness Grows Program for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture. We are responsible for helping companies like Pepsi Co., Lance Snacks, and Texas Pete market their products. We work with over 1,800 companies on their marketing programs.

Talk about your family. I married the former Stephanie Keith who was actually a cheerleader for Middle Tennessee that I met in summer school prior to my last season. We have been married for six years and have a four-year old daughter, Avery. Stephanie is the Vice-President of the North Carolina State Employees Credit Union and we reside outside of Raleigh.

When was the last time you attended a MTSU football game? The last home game I attended was the 2007 Homecoming game versus Louisiana-Lafayette. I try to make the games when MT plays at North Carolina State or South Carolina. I've been to a couple at Clemson also. My wife actually surprised me with tickets to the Motor City Bowl as a birthday present in 2006 too.

Are you impressed with the football program now? Oh, I think it's great and I think Coach Stockstill is great. I follow the team as closely as I can whether it's by TV or internet. I am very impressed with Coach Stockstill and Director of Athletics Chris Massaro for scheduling great games and convincing big teams to come play MTSU.

How do you keep up with Blue Raider football? Anyway I can, but mostly online. I live in ACC country here and there are a surprising number of Big 10 fans as well. The SEC is hardly even covered. To keep up with Blue Raider football I read the Daily News Journal, watch ESPN and log onto GoBlueRaiders.com.

Do you stay in contact with any of your former teammates? Yes. Facebook.com has made it very easy to stay in contact with some of the guys. I talk as often as I can to my former roommate Charlie Clark. Wes Langford, Hansford Johnson and Dwone Hicks are some of the guys I have kept in touch with since our days on the team. I also see some of the other guys at games and events.

Jeff Thomas insists his family loves everything MTSU and daughter, Avery, is an avid and loyal Blue Raiders fan. Since obtaining his position as Manager of Goodness Grows, Thomas created the Got to Be NC Ag Jam Festival. The family friendly food and music festival celebrates North Carolina agriculture with samples of local foods, beverages and other products from area growers and producers. For more information, log onto ncagjam.com.



Jeff Thomas played for the Blue Raiders from 1996 to 1999. ()

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