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MT students to produce TV games for SBC FIU and Arkansas State games to be on ESPN GamePlan and ESPN360.com

Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Mass Communication students from Middle Tennessee State University will step on the national stage of collegiate athletics this weekend when they will produce, direct and provide on-field talent for a live telecast of the MTSU-Florida International football game on Saturday afternoon at 3:30 pm. It will air on both ESPN360.com and ESPN GamePlan.

They will also do the same thing for Middle Tennessee's home game with Arkansas State on November 21. By airing these two additional games, the Blue Raiders will have 10 of their 12 games this season on television.

"This is an outstanding opportunity for our students in the College of Mass Communications to demonstrate on a national level what they have learned in the classroom, and to apply their skills and knowledge in a real-world environment," said Dr. Roy Moore, the Dean of the College of Mass Communications. "It also illustrates the sound partnerships we have formed with MTSU athletics and media networks such as ESPN.

"And with the games on ESPN360.com and ESPN GamePlan, this is potentially the biggest audience we have ever had."

In the past, students from the Mass Communications department have produced other Blue Raider athletic events for the local MTSU station, Ch 10, MTTV. As many as eight events per year, four in the fall and four in the spring, have been produced by students. A volleyball game has already aired this fall.

Middle Tennessee Director of Athletics Chris Massaro feels that the biggest thing about the whole project is that it is a co-op between the Mass Communications and Athletic Departments in a real-life, meaningful experience for the students.

"This will provide us a great platform to telecast games from our campus, using our students, to a high-profile outlet such as ESPN," noted Massaro. "It is an opportunity to showcase the great work that our students and staff can do on a national platform.

"It is a win-win for both departments, and for MTSU."

Student personnel will come from the Advanced Seminar class, and will involve nearly three dozen students in the two games.

Marc Parrish, Director of Electronic Media Communications, will oversee the project. Parrish, who will serve as the telecast's Executive Producer, has stressed to his students what a great opportunity this will be compared to just filming a game or event.

"For the first time, we have control over a game, and that is huge for us," said Parrish. "We have, in the past, just documented a game. We couldn't stop it, we had no control over it, we had no TV timeouts where we take commercial breaks, and things like that," said Parrish.



Middle Tennessee will use its upgraded mobile production lab to air games against FIU and Arkansas State. ()

"This time we do have control, we have TV timeouts, and the director picks the shots he wants from different locations. That is great for our students to be able to experience that."

Dustin Cunningham will be the producer this week for the FIU game, while K. P. Williams will be the director. Cunningham will be the director for the game with ASU on the 21st, with Tony Holt serving as the producer.

Richard Lowe will be the sidelines reporters for the FIU game. Lowe, who has done play-by-play on other projects, is excited about the opportunity, and so is his family.

"When I heard about this, I immediately went to the decision makers and asked for the job of sideline reporter," recalled Lowe. "I was fortunate enough to have gotten it. And my family in Atlanta is going to sign up for ESPN GamePlan just to watch me."

Lowe has already met with Blue Raider Network announcers Chip Walters and Kelly Holcomb, who will call the action in the booth, to make sure he can fit into the broadcast in a seamless manner.

"I sat in on a game earlier this year and just watched and listened to them," said Lowe. "I want to fit in. I don't want to do anything to disrupt the chemistry that they have."

The production will involve six cameras, five game cameras and one in the booth.

Parrish noted how important the camera operators are to a project of this magnitude.

"They have to deal with what is known as depth of field, which requires that they maintain camera focus on plays that are coming toward them, or going away from them. The degree of difficulty goes up as the daylight goes away and night falls, as it will at a game that starts at 3:30 pm.

Parrish revealed that the students have worked on certain aspects of the game as a team to be able to cover each likely scenario.

"For instance, if there is a penalty, the director will yell "Flag" and every camera will immediately go to its pre-assigned target, such as the referee, or coach, to see what develops. That way the director has a choice of shots. A director is only as good as what the camera operators send."

The heart of the project will be the University's newly-refurbished production truck. The truck was re-wired this summer and has HD capabilities. It also has a new monitor wall, instead of the 32 small monitors it was originally equipped with.

There is also a new digital audio console, as well as a new graphics system. There will be a character generator person in the truck who will do all of the screen graphics for the game.

The truck will be parked under the stadium and will house nine people during the telecast. Students will do all of the work from producing and pulling cable to setting up the cameras.

A practice run is set for Saturday morning to go over crew positions and other items.

Dr. Moore said that, in addition to the benefit to the students and the university, there is another positive by-product of events such as these.

"When I meet with our journalism and electronic media alumni, it is not unusual for them to rave about how their work at the games, including the mobile production laboratory, was a capstone experience for them," said Moore. "I have seen them cover the games in the past, and I was impressed then."

He hopes to be even more impressed on Saturday, as his students take their MTSU experience to the next level.

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