

Teams kick off season at home at MT Christmas Invitational

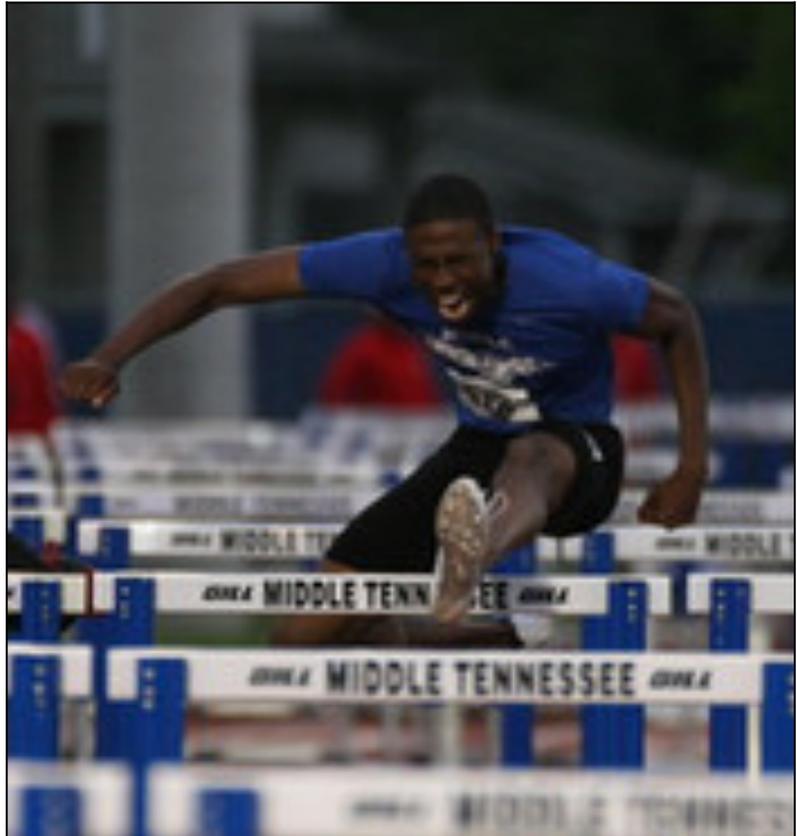
Murphy Center to play host to opening meet

December 11, 2009 · Christian Lemon

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

The Middle Tennessee track and field teams will kick off their 2009-2010 campaign, Saturday, as they play host to the MT Christmas Invitational beginning at 11 a.m. in Murphy Center.

Men's and women's squads from Georgia Tech, Milligan College, Tennessee State, Vanderbilt and Western Kentucky join the Blue Raiders at the meet. Middle Tennessee looks to beginning its quest for another conference title for head coach Dean Hayes.



"This meet is a great reward for all the work our athletes have done in the fall," said Hayes. "It gives them a chance to compete and judge what they need to do before they go home for Christmas vacation. Sometimes we have some strong performances because athletes will get really excited to do well."

The MT women's squad returns a strong quartet of senior talent in throwers Brittany Cox and MeLyn Thompson, Zamzam Sangau and three time All-American Sarah Nambawa. At the 2008 MT Christmas Invitational, Nambawa earned her first of two NCAA automatic qualifying marks of her junior campaign in the triple jump with recorded leap of 43-10.25 (13.36m).

On the men's side NCAA outdoor long jump runner-up Stanley Gbagbeke returns in the jumps and sprints. Gbagbeke's outstanding first season with Blue Raiders in 2009 culminated at the IAAF World Championships Berlin as he represented his home nation of Nigeria and finished 26th in the world. Sun Belt Conference Freshman of the Year Roscoe Payne returns as the reigning conference champion in the indoor 55 meter hurdles and outdoor 400 meter hurdles. The men's team also includes a strong cast of distance runners led by Festus Chemaoui and William Songock, who were crowned 2009 Sun Belt cross country champions.

Saturday's meet will also provide an opportunity to see a handful of the notable freshmen recruits on the men's and women's side. Justin Chambers joins the Blue Raiders as the 2008 Georgia 400 meter champion, while transfer Cherice Robinson will compete for the women after sitting out last season.

The meet will begin at 11 a.m. with the men's and women's weight throw and conclude at 4 p.m. with the men's and women's 4x400 meter relays. Results and coverage will be available post meet on goblueraiders.com

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