

February 12, 2010

## Brentz, Roberts receive highest Sun Belt Preseason Honors

### Blue Raiders picked to finish first in 2010

MT Athletic Communications

**NEW ORLEANS** - Senior [Kenneth Roberts](#) and junior [Bryce Brentz](#) have been tabbed Sun Belt Preseason Pitcher and Player of the Year, respectively, while Middle Tennessee has been picked to finish first in a poll of the league's coaches as announced by the Sun Belt office on Friday.

"We are honored to have been picked to win the league again, and to have our players recognized as well, but it's like I told our team, I'd much rather them be on the All-Conference and All-Tournament teams at the end of the year," head coach Steve Peterson said.

Roberts and Brentz have received a number of Preseason All-America honors and just last week Brentz was named a First Team Preseason All-America by Baseball America.

In 2009, Roberts posted an impressive 11-1 record with a 3.04 ERA. The Murfreesboro, Tenn., native was named Most Outstanding Player of the Sun Belt Championships after recording two wins on short rest and also received First Team All-Conference and All-Ping! Third Team honors.

Brentz followed his impressive freshman campaign with an unbelievable sophomore year in which he led the nation in four statistical categories while batting .465 with 107 hits, 28 home runs, 73 RBI and 60 runs scored. The Knoxville, Tenn., native was a consensus All-America, Sun Belt Player of the Year and played for the USA National team last summer.

Along with Roberts and Brentz, junior [Tyler Burnett](#) was selected to the Sun Belt Preseason team. Burnett, who has started at shortstop since his freshman year, will move to third base this season. Burnett was named NCAA All-Regional last year after guiding the Blue Raiders in their three games at the Louisville Regional.

"Bryce, Kenny and Tyler will all have to deliver, obviously, but the players around them will also have to produce, or we won't get the job done. Bryce is one of the very best players in the nation, Kenny is the best Friday night starter in a league full of great Friday night starters, and Tyler is a natural third-baseman who could play in the pros if he works hard. The expectations are high, and I would much rather be picked first than eighth, but we are not going to let all of the pre-season hype go to our heads. I'll take care of that, I promise you."

It is the first time since 2006 the Blue Raiders have had three players on the Sun Belt Preseason team and Matt Scott received Preseason Pitcher of the Year honors that year as well, the last player to receive such an honor.

The Roberts and Brentz duo will look to guide the Blue Raiders this season as they defend their title. With eight first place votes, and 114 total points, Middle Tennessee was picked to finish on top in the annual preseason poll.

Middle Tennessee, which ended 2009 with a 44-18 mark, set a number of team records, including wins, hits, runs, doubles, home runs, RBI and double plays. Middle Tennessee won both the regular season and conference tournament for the first time since joining the league in 2001.

"I told our team two stories. One that we were picked because of the success we had last year, and the guys we have coming back. But we were picked eighth last year and won it, so you never know. We have a big target on our backs. The second story was about Louisiana finishing third in the College World Series one year, and the next year they hosted the conference tournament and weren't even in it."

Middle Tennessee will open the 2010 season on Friday, Feb. 19 in a three-game series with Memphis in Memphis, Tenn.

#### All-SBC Preseason Baseball Team

**SP** - [Kenneth Roberts](#) (Middle Tennessee, Sr.)

SP - Matt Ridings (WKU, Sr.)

RP - Lance Baxter (South Alabama, Sr.)

RP - Bart Carter (WKU, Sr.)

C - Matt Rice (WKU, Sr.)

1B - Tim Jobe (FIU, Sr.)

2B - Matt Payton (WKU, Sr.)

SS - Boomer Blanchard (Louisiana-Monroe, Sr.)

3B - [Tyler Burnett](#) (Middle Tennessee, Jr.)



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OF - Todd Baumgartner (Arkansas State, Jr.)  
OF - **Bryce Brentz** (Middle Tennessee, Sr.)  
OF - Adam Heisler (South Alabama, Sr.)  
DH - Murray Watts (Arkansas State, Jr.)

Preseason Player of the Year  
**Bryce Brentz** (Middle Tennessee, Sr.)

Pitcher of the Year  
**Kenneth Roberts** (Middle Tennessee, Sr.)

**2010 SBC Coaches Predicted Order of Finish (first place votes)**

**1. Middle Tennessee (8) - 114 pts**

2. WKU (2) - 103 pts
3. FIU - 94 pts
4. Troy - 90 pts
5. Louisiana-Lafayette (1) - 81 pts
6. Louisiana-Monroe - 57 pts
7. Florida Atlantic - 51 pts
8. South Alabama - 47 pts
9. New Orleans - 40 pts
10. Arkansas State - 32 pts
11. UALR - 17 pts

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