Track teams to host SBC Indoor Championships

Live video stream available on GoBlueRaiders.com

February 26, 2010 · Christian Lemon

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - For the 24th time in Middle Tennessee track and field history, the school will host the conference indoor championships at Murphy Center. Eleven schools will travel to Murfreesboro compete in the Sun Belt Conference Indoor Track and Field Championships on Saturday and Sunday.

- **Live Video:** Indoor Championships

  Since first hosting an indoor conference meet in 1976, Dean Hayes' Blue Raider teams have taken a combined 18 titles (11 men, seven women) at their home track. The men are aiming to add to that run, entering as the defending champions from a year ago.

  Led by junior 2009 All-American Stanley Gbagbeke, the male squad has a number of athletes in the top five on the Sun Belt Performance List. Gbagbeke, Roscoe Payne and Festus Chemaoi are all slated as the top athletes in the conference in their individual event. Gbagbeke, the latest jumper in the long line of All-Americans for Hayes, is currently qualified for the NCAA Indoor Championships after competing last summer at the IAAF World Championships Berlin. His season best of leap of 25-5.5 (7.75) is the 12th longest in the NCAA this year.

  Chemaoi enters the weekend as the top 800 meter man in the Sun Belt with a time of 1:50.8 run at the GVSU Big Meet two weeks ago. His combination of speed and endurance makes

him one of the most valuable athletes on the men's roster. He is the reigning 800 meter and mile run indoor champion from 2009 which earned him most outstanding track athlete at last year's meet. He is expected to defend both titles and challenge for top positions in the longer 3,000 and 5,000 meters races.

"Festus has amazing range," said Hayes. "His speed makes him tough in the shorter races and if the early pace is slow in the 3,000 and 5,000 meters he can kick at the end to take the win."

Hurdler Payne is set to compete in his second SBC Indoor Championship. The Flint, Mich. native, was named co-freshman of the year at the '09 SBC Outdoor Championships, and won his first collegiate race at last year's indoor championships in Jonesboro, Ark. He and fellow hurdler DeRay Sloss hold the top two conference times and will have to score high to make points for the team.

Other probable men's scorers include Curtis King in the sprints as well as David Emery and Isaac Biwott in the distance races.

The women's team is led by senior thrower Brittany Cox. Cox, a graduate of Glencliff High School in Antioch, Tenn. has been spectacular in 2010, breaking shot put and weight throw records on the school and conference level. Nationally, she places seventh in the weight throw with a mark of 67-6 (20.57m) and 14th in the shot throwing 53-5.5 (16.29m), set at the Middle Tennessee Invitational earlier this month at the Murphy Center. Teammate MeLyn Thompson is second in the conference behind Cox in the shot put.

Zamzam Sangau is the school's top distance runner and a 2010 NCAA Indoor qualifier in the 800 meters. She is the reigning conference champion in the outdoor 800 and 1,500 meters. Like Chemaoi, she will have a full weekend and be called upon to score high in multiple events to help the team to victory. Marla Bailey and Jackie Serem will run in the longer distance races and could score needed points. Both were named to the 2009 Sun Belt All-Cross Country team.

Cherice Robertson who holds top conference marks in both the high jump and 55 meter hurdles and could take both events. Sprinter Nyeisha Wright will compete in multiple events and must perform well. Freshman Amber Jackson will run the quarter-mile. Jackson has improved tremendously in her short time at Middle Tennessee, improving her 400 meter time each week in which she competes. Her time of 57.2 is second fastest in conference this year.

All running events and selected field events for both days of the competition will be broadcasted live on GoBlueRaiders.com and SunBeltSports.org. Full daily wrap-ups and results will also be posted on both sites at the conclusion of the final day's event.

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