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## Bunio to be inducted into Blue Raider Hall of Fame in September

### Defensive Coordinator from 1979 to 1994

*Athletic Communications*

Any number of adjectives could describe Ed Bunio, for 16 years the defensive coordinator and linebackers coach for Middle Tennessee's football teams from 1979 through 1994. Head Coach Boots Donnelly called him "hard-working", "loyal", "compassionate", and "a man of great character".

"We worked with each other for 18 years (including two at Austin Peay), and I have never been around anyone who had more compassion for people, more love for what he did, more intelligence and communication skills around athletes," said Donnelly. And you'll never find a guy with more character than Ed".

Bunio's defenses were among the best in the Ohio Valley Conference every year. After the rebuilding years (1979-1981), the Blue Raiders put together a streak of eleven seasons in which the defense gave up no more than 15.5 points per game in any one season. The lowest totals were 9.2 ppg in 1990, and 10.0 ppg in 1982 and 1983, and 10.3 in 1988.

Among the standout players that he coached were five who were named as OVC Defensive Players of the Year and six All-Americans. Four players, Don Griffin, Marty Carter, Mike Caldwell and Kenny Tippins, played in the NFL.



Ed Bunio will be inducted into the Blue Raider Sports Hall of Fame on Sept. 11. ()

A native of Pittsburgh, Bunio wound up playing at Austin Peay, and then coached at Clarksville High School and Austin Peay. He was retained by Donnelly from the outgoing Governor's staff, and his defense led the league in 1977.

Bunio and Donnelly discussed the possibility of him coming to MTSU when Donnelly accepted the job in 1979.

"After I had interviewed with Boots, he asked me what my plans were, and I told him I was going to Pittsburgh to see my grandmother," recalled Bunio. "He told me to go ahead and go, and that he'd get back to me when I got back.

"Well, I know how Boots is, so after a couple of days, I called him. He said he hadn't decided yet, so I called him again the next day. Still no decision, so I slammed the phone down and said to myself, 'I'm not calling that sucker again'.

"Two days later, he called me in Pittsburgh and asked me if I still wanted to work for him. I said yes, and he said be here in the morning ready to go to work. I was here the next morning."

Bunio felt that going to MTSU had a lot of advantages. "All I wanted to do was win football games. The facilities here were much better, it was a bigger school, and the players were bigger and most of them were faster. I felt like if we could win a championship at Austin Peay, then we could do it at Middle, as well."

When Bunio got to Middle Tennessee, he quickly learned that he would have to deal with a mind-set in addition to installing a new defense.

"When we first came here, all the players wanted to do was rest. They didn't know how to push, how to fight thru stuff. It took us two years to do that, plus install a new defense at the same time."

Working for Boots Donnelly was an experience that Bunio will never forget.

"There was very little that was fun about it, because we all got fired every week," laughed Bunio, "but he knew the game, every aspect of it. Our defensive philosophy was to get you in a third down and long situation, take away 30-40 percent of your offense, and make you punt the ball. If we could do that, we were going to win the game.

"I had opportunities to go other places, but I didn't want to be a head coach. That was not my bag. I knew that when I was here, I didn't have to worry about discipline except for my position, I didn't have to worry about parents, I didn't have to worry about anything else. I knew that we could win here, and that's why I stayed with Boots."

Bunio loved the on-field coaching, and working with the players and coaches, but the things he recalls with the greatest degree of pleasure about his collegiate coaching career was the later benefits.

"The thing I enjoyed the most about coaching was not the games, or the wins and losses, but the things that impress me are things like running into former players coming back to games, or see him in the grocery store, and finding out he's married, has a good

job, I meet his kids and they are 'yes, sir' and 'no, sir', and they are good kids, and are doing well in school. To me, that's the important things in life."

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