December edition of "Ask the AD"

January 9, 2006 · MT Media Relations

I would like to thank all Middle Tennessee fans who have taken time to pass along suggestions or ask questions for the December installment of "Ask the AD". The response has been outstanding as always and I've taken time to read each and every e-mail we have received and given each careful consideration. Because several questions refer to the same subject matter, I will answer many collectively, but I assure you all the responses are being heard and your willingness to take the time to write is greatly appreciated. We have received some questions regarding personnel issues in the past so please allow me to be clear that it is the policy of this administration to not entertain questions regarding personnel issues in a public forum. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation. Have a Happy New Year - 2006 should be a great one. **Fan:** Chris Scott (Murfreesboro)

Question: Why isn't there any special pricing for tickets purchased by alumni? When I saw that it was $10 to attend home basketball games I waas alarmed.

Massaro Response: Chris, I am sorry you were alarmed at the $10 price for basketball tickets. I think that is a very reasonable price for the amount of entertainment one would get from a basketball game. We are very excited about our product and this year's team and feel like we can make a strong run come March. I think the $10 ticket is appropriate and occasionally we will offer alumni nights with special discounts. We can not do this all the time because at some point we have to make revenue and pay our bills. **Fan:** Chris Groce (Murfreesboro)

Question: Please, please keep Dick Palmer on the basketball broadcasts.

Massaro Response: I have enjoyed working with Dick Palmer this past year. We have a lot in common. He is an old ABA broadcaster and I have enjoyed hearing his stories because I was an ABA fan growing up. I appreciate you commenting on Dick because he is a legend and has meant a great deal to this program. **Fan:** Matthew Smith (Murfreesboro)

Question: Was there an NCAA-wide extension of the three-point arc? I've seen several schools on television who've extended theirs and I wanted to know is this a conference specific rule or NCAA

wide?

Massaro Response: This was an experimental rule that was put in place for all the exempt preseason tournaments like the Preseason NIT and the Maui Classic to name a few. You have seen the extended three-point line during these tournaments. This was only an experiment and not an NCAA mandated rule change. **Fan:** David Brown (Murfreesboro)

Question: As a partner in Advantage Mini Storage it has been a pleasure to buy a corporate package the past several years. Is their any possibility to allow two parking passes for corporate sponsors since we buy 20 season tickets for football?

Massaro Response: I am very glad you have purchased 20 season tickets and I hope you have gotten a lot out of them for your customers and employees. We will look into our parking and see how it can help us grow our BRAA and season ticket base. **Fan:** Tom Scott (Smyrna)

Question: Is there a time table for the radical improvements planned for Reese Smith Field?

Massaro Response: By the opening pitch of 2008 we would like to have a refurbished stadium. This year you will see new lights, a new outfield wall, and new infield grass. On Feb. 1 we will launch a capital campaign for the overall project at Coach Peterson's Groundhog Day Luncheon. This will be a big event because we have a goal of $5 million and the City of Murfreesboro has already made a sizable donation to get things started. As I look at our baseball program, we have had great tradition and solid leadership from our coaches and all we are missing to compete on a national level is a new stadium. **Fan:** Dave DeLong (Newark, Ohio)

Question: Middle Tennessee should use Southern Miss as a model for the football program. Can Middle Tennessee expand football recruiting to Ohio and Pennsylvania? Is it financially feasible to give Coach Peterson two or three more scholarships to build pitching depth?

Massaro Response: I think Southern Miss is a good model for what they have accomplished over the last few years. As for the recruiting, I think it becomes too much of a reach when you go too many states away but we will leave that up to our football coaches because they are the experts in that area. In terms of Coach Peterson, the baseball program is already at the NCAA maximum of 11.7 scholarships. **Fan:** Don (Murfreesboro)

Question: Many feel that the name MTSU self implies 'small' time college athletics. Obviously, we are a mid-major program; however, it is perceived that a name change to the University of Middle Tennessee would garnish more positive publicity and larger name recognition outside of the immediate area. What are your thoughts?

Massaro Response: I have had too many front burner issues as it relates to athletics for me to work on changing the name of our University. That is something I can not control and is out of my hands. I will leave that to the Tennessee Board of Regents and our President, Dr. Sidney McPhee. I have been mostly concerned with putting the organization in place that gives us the best chance to succeed. That is my priority for the next few months. **Fan:** Matt Herndon (Murfreesboro)

Question: Chris, you mentioned being able to purchase game worn jerseys. How, where, when, how much?

Massaro Response: We are hoping to have some kind of sale with our game jerseys and old equipment at our spring game, so stay tuned to GoBlueRaiders.com for more details as that time approaches. **Fan:** Del Vineyard (Dickson)

Question: During the 2005 football season I noticed that injured players were assisted off the field by trainers. There are many golf carts running around campus on gameday. Is there a rule against using a cart or is it a choice?

Massaro Response: There is not a rule against using golf carts to transport hurt players. When an injury is severe enough we will use a golf cart or ambulance to take the player off the field. Typically, trainers and doctors prefer not to have the golf cart come out on the field but that is a decision

usually made by them. **Fan:** Jane Lee (Waynesville, NC)

Question: When do you expect the soccer complex to be lighted?

Massaro Response: The soccer complex should be lighted in the next few weeks. Over the holidays, the light poles were delivered so we should have them in place very soon. **Fan:** Don Fizer (Albers, Illinois)

Question: Since I live out of state I have not heard the latest news on the status of MTSU becoming The University of Middle Tennessee? Can you tell me what you know?

Massaro Response: Don, I don't know much about the status. I have a lot of issues to worry about like our daily fundraising and trying to solve problems that I can handle immediately. The name change is something out of my control and I will leave that to higher authorities. **Fan:** Bob Coleman (Franklin)

Question: Until our name is changed we will always be looked upon by the press, fans, other schools, the public, etc... as a second-tier school. I sure like the sound of UMT. While we are at it, can you please get rid of that silly, little mystical horse mascot?

Massaro Response: I think winning will cure all of that throughout our athletic program and that is what I am concentrating on at this time. We want to put a product out on the field and courts that we are proud of and one that wins games. When we win games and championships and we are competing on a national level then that will be what rids us of what you say "is a second tier school reputation". Some prime examples are Gonzaga, Boise State, and Marshall. **Fan:** Alan Windham (Murfreesboro)

Question: I thought the student promotions at Belmont were creative and fun for the students. Any thoughts on copying some of those to encourage student attendance at MTSU's home games?

Massaro Response: Alan, I would concur on your comments about the promotions at the Belmont basketball game and I have asked our marketing department to look into that and see if we can emulate a little of what they did. **Fan:** Mike (Murfreesboro)

Question: I hear talk of a Jumbotron and new turf. Can you give us a time frame when these will show up? Also, in regards to the BRAA, is there any thoughts of changing the license plates every year? I ask this because I know some people are riding around with them on their cars and have not donated in three or four years.

Massaro Response: The field turf is a $750,000 plus investment. I get this question a lot and I want to encourage people to donate to the project because the sooner we get the money the sooner we can put in the new turf. As for the Jumbotron, we are working on a plan that will have one in place. I don't want to be too specific and make promises I can not keep because that would be the worst thing I could do at this point. I do believe both projects are very important and would greatly enhance our program. Alan Farley in our BRAA office is looking into a new design of the license plate already. I would agree with you that it is time for a fresh plate and a different look so that our current members all have a nice new plate. Hopefully, this will encourage more members and bring the ones who haven't donated in awhile to rejoin the association. **Fan:** Chris Hazelwood (Murfreesboro)

Question: Do you expect Coach Stock to make any noticeable changes to the football team? Changes such as style of play on offense and defense or even changes to the uniform. Also, has Coach Stock had any input on the turf?

Massaro Response: He does have a lot of energy and enthusiasm and I firmly believe he will bring a lot of excitement to our football program. I think you will see a highly disciplined football team that acts like winners. In regards to changes he may make I want to let you know that he will have input in all areas of the football program, including turf and scheduling. He and I will work closely together to do what is best for our football program and athletic department. **Fan:** Matt (Starkville, MS)

Question: I live out of town and this year's basketball schedule only has four weekend games. Is

there any way to get a few more home games on the weekend?

Massaro Response: I agree with you Matt that the lack of weekend games this year is very disappointing. Some of it is our doing because during the month of December and the latter part of November it is very difficult for us to schedule games on Saturday. We host the State High School Football Championship, the State Cheerleading Championship, and we also have graduation. We had four straight dates from November to December that we could not schedule a home basketball game on Saturday which makes for a very difficult preseason. We are also at the mercy of our conference in the games that they schedule for us. We will make every effort we can to get more weekend dates next year. **Fan:** Michael (Gallatin)

Question: Are there any plans on bringing some "big name" basketball teams to the Murphy Center?

Massaro Response: Obviously, as our basketball program grows every year having big name programs come to the Murphy Center will be very important. We are working on a game against Memphis next year at the Gaylord Entertainment Center. Coach Kermit Davis works very hard on scheduling each year and the season opener against Utah State at home was a great game because they have made the NCAA Tournament four times in the last six years. **Fan:** Mike (Murfreesboro)

Question: I have traveled everywhere to watch the Blue Raiders play football and what I like at a lot of the SEC schools is their tailgating after the game. I have asked several other tailgaters and the reason this doesn't happen is because most are afraid to leave all of their tailgating stuff out there. Can you get more campus police to watch the tailgate areas?

Massaro Response: I do have a little experience being around the SEC schools. What I have found is that most people pack up their cars and their tailgating stuff and lock it up before they enter the stadium, then unpack and continue tailgating after the game. We did increase the security in the tailgating areas this year, and will do what we can to help people. However, it is difficult for our security to tell who belongs to what tent, who is putting stuff away or who may be taking something that does not belong to them. I would encourage people to tailgate before and after the game but while the game is being played try to lock most of your belongings in your car and that way you are securing your own possessions. **Fan:** Del Vineyard (Dickson)

Question: Have you considered selling the naming rights to our stadium?

Massaro Response: It is very difficult to sell naming rights to stadiums and the market has softened quite a bit. All you have to do is look at the Titans situation to realize this. We are looking at ways to get corporate help to finance the field turf and the Jumbotron, so we are definitely exploring options down that avenue that you suggested. **Fan:** Landon Larson (Murfreesboro)

Question: I was wondering if you had any plans to move the Cheerleading under athletics?

Massaro Response: Thanks for all your hard work, Landon. Most of our fans probably don't realize that Cheerleading does not report to Athletics. Student Affairs oversees the Cheerleading program under the direction of Dr. Bob Glenn, and Jonathan Presley does a great job as coach. I am very impressed with the hours Cheerleaders put in and the dedication they have to their sport. There's not a lot of rewards at the end of the day for these students so I want to encourage our fans to always thank the cheerleaders and band members for all the hard work they do each and every time they have an opportunity. **Fan:** George Sceniak (Murfreesboro)

Question: I have spent the last four months working the disaster relief effort in Gulfport, MS so it has been a little difficult keeping up with the local news regarding the football program. I look forward to watching the new and improved product that Coach Stockstill will bring to Murfreesboro. You have my promise that I will return to the stadium and once again purchase season tickets. Hopefully, the four seats that I had a few years ago are still available. I seriously believe the Blue Raiders will be

viewed as a serious contender in our conference and eventually garner a top 30 ranking.
Massaro Response: Thanks for the kind words and we look forward to seeing you back at Floyd Stadium supporting the Blue Raiders. I also want to thank you for working with the disaster relief effort because people like you are what makes America great. Some of our athletes did a big fundraising effort to raise money and supplies for other Sun Belt Conference student-athletes and I was very proud of their effort as well. We want to compete like heck on the field but at the same time there is a special kinsman ship among athletes that bond them together during times like this. I concur that my vision is to have a Top 30 program and to be a hard-nosed football team that wins championships, goes to bowl games, and wins bowl games. We look forward to your season ticket purchase and we are appreciative of your support. **Fan:** Mike Hughes (Hendersonville)
Question: I read your view last month on the Pegasus. I just want to let you know that this issue is a lightning rod for the fan base. Everyone I talk to is either indifferent about the issue or they are flat out mad and embarrassed. I myself am tired of not being able to explain what my mascot is, who decided it would be the Pegasus and what in the world does it have to do with anything at the University. Yes, the MT logo looks good but the winged horse just doesn't fit our school. Until administration starts to warm up to this they will never get the fan base that the new coaches and sports administration deserve. I know that winning will help too but I just want to emphasize that the logo is not a minor piece of the puzzle. They took away the real Blue Raider mascot and gave us a winged horse. It is almost like a sick joke ... even a slap in the face. I know if Lou Holtz found out that the fan base didn't like the mascot then Holtz would politic like crazy to change it. I remember them toying with the interlocking USC and battling with Southern Cal on the rights of what could and could not be done. The Titans really listened to the fans when picking their mascot and logo and have reaped the benefits. What is it that fans and alumni can do to get this changed? Who makes the decision on this?
Massaro Response: I don't think people are not coming to our games because of the mascot. I came from a place where a mascot debate was always raging with the Gamecock because some fans called it a fighting chicken. I do believe the teams make the mascots. There are a lot of questionable ones out there like the Fighting Blue Hens to the Slugs, but winning performance and being first class is what ultimately drives fans. I believe the bigger piece of this is the product on the field. I hear your point about the Titans. I think they had an advantage moving in to the area with a fresh approach. I am not sure what all occurred when the mascot was changed and they came up with the Pegasus. Right now, my concentration is getting our athletic department to where I want it to be. I feel like it is more important to find the resources that our teams need to be successful. **Fan:** Jeremy Haynes (Murfreesboro)
Question: What do you have in store to get more fans to Floyd Stadium this season and if there are going to be any games televised or played during the week?
Massaro Response: We are currently working with some of our league TV partners to get games televised on a more regional and national basis. I do think television is a critical component of our success. As for a mid-week game, our home opener on Sept. 14 will be played on Thursday night against Tennessee Tech and hopefully we will have more of those in the future. We are excited about next year and hope our fans are as well. I want to encourage them to purchase tickets because it is going to be a very exciting year. **Fan:** Larry Nixon (Woodbury)
Question: With what I believe will be an increase in attendance next year at football games, is anything going to be done for people bringing motorhomes? For those that tailgate all weekend, will electrical hookups of at least 30 amps and hopefully 50 amps be provided in the tailgate area of Greenland Drive?
Massaro Response: Larry, we appreciate all your support. You and your family are terrific Blue

Raiders. We put in some electrical hookups last year for our RV fans in the Greenland Drive tailgating area. The long range plans would be to continue those outlets down that row of the parking lot a bit further. We are hoping to do this but it all depends on funds and how much we raise in the BRAA this year. Fans can have a direct impact on things like field turf, Jumbotrons, and even additional electrical outlets in the tailgating areas. **Fan:** Marc Rogers (Franklin)

Question: I am very proud of our student-athletes and coaches for winning the Sun Belt All-Sports trophy three times. Are there specific universities whose athletics programs you consider benchmarks in terms of the vision you have for us over the next five to 10 years?

Massaro Response: Thank you for your comments about winning three Sun Belt All-Sports trophies over the last four years. This means we have the top all-around athletic program in the conference and we are very proud to win the last two in a row. As I look across the country at some of the other universities, you have to look at Florida State for what they have done over the past 25 years and Louisville is another program who has come on over the past few years. Also, more recently, programs like Boise State and Marshall have really made that successful jump from I-AA to I-A. Those are some of the programs we keep our eye on and try to pattern ourselves after to name a few. **Fan:** Marc Rogers (Franklin)

Question: I know this is on your list of things we must upgrade, but is there any news on expanding the Blue Raider Radio Network for football in 2006, basketball in 2006-07, and baseball in 2007?

Massaro Response: I think upgrading our radio network is a critical importance for us going into the upcoming year. Obviously, the more stations we can get the more influence we can have in getting our Blue Raider games out throughout the middle Tennessee area. The Blue Raider Network is a critical component of the athletic department and we will work extremely hard in trying to continue the development of additional stations.

Printed on May 21, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/4714