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## Niemeyer to be inducted into Hall of Fame

### All-American and 3-time OVC Player of Year

*Athletic Communications*

In any listing of the all-time tennis greats at Middle Tennessee, All-American Fred Niemeyer's name would be at or near the top. In recognition of the great collegiate career that he had, Niemeyer will be one of five inductees in the 2010 Class of the Blue Raider Athletic Hall of Fame on Saturday, September 11th.

"Fred was a great athlete, number one," said Coach Dale Short, who both recruited and coached, the Magog, Quebec, Canada native. "You could see the raw talent. He was fairly calm, very lanky, great power in his legs and a live arm."

Short pin-pointed Niemeyer's strongest characteristic.

"He was such a great competitor. He would fight you tooth and nail in anything and everything, mini-tennis, ping pong, whatever it was," said Short. "I've been told that I was a strong competitor myself, but I couldn't hold a candle to Fred."

"In the coaching ranks, if you can find a guy who is a real competitor, a great athlete, and has some idea of fundamentals, you've got a great catch. Fred was green when he came in, but his serve had a lot of potential, and he was way up there both athletically and mechanically."

Short recruited Niemeyer in 1993, and he made an immediate impact on an already-talented Blue Raider tennis team in the spring of 1994. He teamed with senior Paul Goebel, himself a Hall of Fame inductee, to earn All-American honors in 1994 in doubles. He also earned All-Ohio Valley Conference designation as a freshman, and was the Region III Indoor Qualifying champion.

As a sophomore in 1995, Niemeyer won the first of his three consecutive OVC Player of the Year trophies, capturing the No. 1 singles, and being ranked as the 61st best player in America.

Niemeyer gained All-American honors again in 1996 as a junior, this time teaming with Anthony DeLuise in doubles. He also claimed his second consecutive OVC Player of the Year honor. At the end of the season, he was ranked 10th nationally in doubles, and 65th in singles.

Niemeyer saved the best for last, as he had a tremendous senior season in 1997. He gained his first All-American honors in singles, defeating opponents from Illinois, Oklahoma State, and Ole Miss before losing to John Basti of USC in the semi-finals. He also gained his third OVC Player of the Year Award.

Short called Niemeyer "an incredible doubles player", noting that he had a big serve, and liked it when he had a target at the net.

"He liked to bang at them," recalled Short.

Niemeyer turned pro after his senior season, and toured with the pros for 12 years before retiring. On the pro tour, he played against some of the best players in the world, including Andre Agassi and Roger Federer. In his only Grand Slam appearance, he reached the second round of Wimbledon in 2003 by beating World No. 8 Felix Mantilla. He also reached the second round of Wimbledon in doubles.

He was Canada's No. 1 player, off and on, from January 7th, 2002 until January of 2006. He also played Davis Cup for Canada, which he liked because of the team aspect of it.

Short said that credit for some of Niemeyer's development would have to go to his Blue Raider teammates when he first arrived.

"When he got here, he was playing No.4 and No. 5 when Paul Goebel was a senior. Paul recognized his potential, wanted to help him out and sort of coached him along. So did some of the others.

"Fred got better and gained confidence, stayed in school, and went on to become probably the best pro player that MTSU has ever had.

"If he had turned pro at the end of his freshman year, he might not have made it," said Short. "He wasn't ready then. I think staying in school and maturing was the best thing for him.



Fred Niemeyer was known for his competitiveness at Middle Tennessee. ()

"Now, Fred made it on the pro tour for 12 years because of his skills and competitiveness, but I think you have to give his teammates as assist for helping him along in his college days."

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