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Peterson to be inducted into Hall of Fame

Owens 742 wins in 23 seasons

Athletic Communications

The most successful baseball coach in the history of Middle Tennessee State University, Steve Peterson, will be among the quintet of individuals who will be inducted into the Blue Raider Athletic Hall of Fame on Saturday afternoon, September 11th, prior to the home football game with Austin Peay that evening.

Peterson's teams have recorded 742 wins in his 23 seasons, an average of more than 32 wins per year, and have earned 10 conference championships and nine NCAA post-season appearances since he took over as Head Coach of the Blue Raiders in 1988.

"It is so humbling that it's intimidating, and I am not a person that gets intimidated," said Peterson on his selection to the Hall of Fame. "I am now in my fifth decade as a Blue Raider, and learning about Blue Raider baseball. From time to time, I get to meet some of the all-time greats that are in the Hall of Fame, and to think that my name is going to be included with theirs is humbling.

"When I took this job, all I wanted to do was continue what Coach (John) Stanford had started, of building and progressing the program," added Peterson.

Former player and now assistant coach Mike McLaury notes that while he is the pitching coach, Coach Peterson has his hand in it as well.

"He makes all of the decision, who's starting and who's coming into the game. Working for him, he lets you do your own thing. I really appreciate that. He treats you like a man. And it is a great honor that he is going into the Hall of Fame."

McLaury is very comfortable being a coach on Peterson's staff.

"I like the way Coach Pete goes about his business. That is the way I approach coaching, and that's the way a lot of his players approach it. It is just basic fundamental baseball. He loves the game of baseball itself. It is not all about the players and coaches. It is about the integrity of the game, and he teaches that to all his players."

Former head coach John Stanford, who hired Peterson as both a graduate assistant and an assistant coach, knew "Coach Pete" was going to be a great coach.

"He was sharp, and he knew baseball, and he was an old catcher," said Stanford. "Dave Hall at Columbia State called me and said Pete wanted to get his Master's Degree, so I told Dave to send him on up and I'd interview him.

"Now, Pete never wears a suit unless it's a funeral, or his daughter's getting married, but he showed up in a suit. I already knew a lot about him because I had seen him as a player and an assistant at Columbia State. The interview was very brief, and I offered him the job. That ten minutes may have been the only time Pete ever wore that coat and tie," said Stanford.

After getting his Master's Degree, Peterson stayed on for two more years, but left to take the head coaching job at Roane State. He stayed there for six years and built a strong program, then got the itch to come back to Middle Tennessee as an assistant coach.

Stanford recalls asking Peterson, after three years, if he was ready to take over as head coach of the Blue Raiders.

"Pete said yes, and that was all there was to the transition. I knew that wherever he went, he was going to be a great baseball coach. He had learned a lot from Rudy Abbott at Jacksonville State and Dave Hall of Columbia, both very successful coaches," said Stanford.

"The only hang-up was getting our president, Dr. Ingram, to agree. He was always a stickler for checking things out, making sure credentials were good, and he questioned Pete's lack of experience as a head coach at a four-year school.

"I knew Dr. Ingram pretty well, and I told him that 'Pete knows baseball, knows what it takes to discipline, he knows what it takes to have good practices, and get his boys in class, and that's all I can tell you,' recalled Stanford. "Dr Ingram thought about it for a moment, and then said, 'Okay, hire him'".

That was in 1988, when Peterson grabbed the reins of the Blue Raider baseball program, while Stanford took over as the Director of Athletics.



Steve Peterson will enter the Blue Raider Hall of Fame on Sept. 11. ()

Peterson has not only put good teams on the field year after year, but he has overseen the largest expansion at the baseball facility in the history of the program. The Blue Raiders now play in state-of-the-art Reese Smith, Jr. Field, and also have the Stephen B. Smith Clubhouse and Indoor Training Facility, all built on Peterson's watch.

During his 23 years at the helm of the Blue Raider baseball program, Peterson has seen his players enjoy success after MTSU. Nearly 100 of his former players are either in coaching, or have been drafted by the pros.

Peterson has coached nine All-Americans, and has developed Players of the Year and Pitchers of the Year in both the OVC and Sun Belt, and has had 48 1st Team All-conference players. He was named the Tennessee Baseball Coaches Association's Collegiate Coach of the Year in both 1992 and 2000, and was inducted into their Hall of Fame in 2007.

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