# Bailey to lead Cross Country in 2010

## Team to open '10 competition at Friday's Belmont Opener

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**MUFREESBORO, Tenn.** - The Middle Tennessee women's cross country team enters the 2010 campaign coming off back-to-back runner-up finishes at the Sun Belt Conference Championships.

Led by senior and 2009 All-Sun Belt team member Marla Bailey, the 2010 squad faces the uphill challenge of topping perennial champion Western Kentucky upon losing two of the team's top runners from a season ago.

Bailey earned her first All-Sun Belt nod at last October's championships in Monroe, La., after finishing fourth overall at the competition. The graduation of three-time All-SBC Cross Country member and 2008 Sun Belt individual runner-up Zamzam Sangau, coupled with 2009 All-Sun Belt runner Jackie Serem's decision to leave to Middle Tennessee, the Barrie, Ontario, native is the lone returning all-conference athlete.

"Marla is prepared to step into the number one runner position," head coach Dean Hayes said. "In the past, she has always had Zamzam to lead the pack. Now it is her turn. She has gotten into good shape and should run strong for us."

Fellow Canadians, freshmen Deanna Brasz and Rachel Islam, join the team and could challenge for

scoring position come conference time. Brasz is a two-time SOSSA (South Ontario Secondary Schools Association) Junior champion who is expected to push Bailey and challenge for the second position on the squad. Islam, primarily a middle distance runner, will be in the mix with returning sophomores Stephanie Smith and Alissa Ruggle for the third, fourth and fifth positions.

Smith, a talented runner on the high school level in her native Canada, battled through an up and down freshman season after recovering from a broken leg in 2008. She finished the season 27th at the 2009 conference championships, the fifth Blue Raider scorer.

Ruggle placed 42nd at the 2009 SBC Championships, sixth on the MT roster. She did have promising indoor and outdoor track seasons placing 12th in the mile run at the SBC indoor championships and running a PR time of 4:50.12 in the 1,500 meters at April's Vanderbilt Invitational for the seventh fastest time in school history.

Kayla Bryan rounds out the '10 roster. She took 45th at last year's Sun Belt Cross Country meet.

"The league is getting stronger, which is a good thing," said Hayes. "We want to be able to challenge Western for the title, but they are the defending champions and know how to win. It should be very competitive."

The team will open competition Friday at the Belmont Opener at Percy Warner Park in Nashville, Tenn., at 5 p.m. Stay tuned to GoBlueRaiders.com for coverage and result.

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