

Men Give Hayes 41st Conference Title

February 26, 2006 · MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - It wasn't the most dominating performance, but it was enough. Middle Tennessee's men won the final event, the 4x400-meter relay, winning the Aeropostale Sun Belt Championships by six points and giving head coach Dean Hayes his 41st conference title in 41 years at the helm of the program. The women's team made a nice run on the final day of the meet to finish fifth.

- **Photos:** [Championship Gallery](#)

The men battled itself as well as South Alabama and Arkansas State throughout the day. The Blue Raiders failed to capitalize with big point totals in several events, including the triple jump, where injuries and fatigue began to take a toll.



"We made some errors but still had enough to win," Hayes said. "[Derek] Dell, [Jonathan] Guillou and [Tony] Carufe really saved us with points in the mile and 5000-meters." The Blue Raiders posted five first-place finishes on Sunday after being shutout the first day of the meet, including a school-record from junior James Thomas and sprint victories in the 200- (Orlando Reid) and 400-meters (Sean Waller), the 55-meter hurdles (Linnie Yarbrough) and the 4x400-meter relay (Daryl Terrell, Jermaine Barton, Reid and Waller). Thomas broke his own school record by almost half-a-foot, winning with a mark of 57-1.5 in the weight throw. He earned Outstanding Male Field Performer honors after his win on Sunday and a third-place finish in the shot put on Saturday. The junior said both of his finishes were very exciting and the competition was very close. "I couldn't hope for anymore. It was spectacular," Thomas said. "I felt a lot of pressure from [Florida International's Michael] Letterlough. We were neck-and-neck the whole time. He could put [a throw] out there and challenge me. It was good competition. The throwers feed off each other, give each other strength and pump each other up." The Blue Raiders also were seventh and eighth with Nick Diel (49-9.75) and Willie Parker (48-9) in the weight throw, picking up valuable points in the end. The trio of Thomas, Parker and Diel posted 27 points between the shot put and weight throw for the meet. Waller led four Blue Raiders in the top seven in the 400-meters, winning his third SBC 400-meter

indoor title in three tries. The junior was happy with the win after struggling with injuries for a month heading into the conference championships. "I've been battling through injuries for the last month. First it was a high hamstring and then my foot, a chip-fracture in my foot," Waller said. "I just came back a little more than a week ago. I'm very happy to win the race, but I was hoping the other guys could get one-through-four and pick up all of the points." Waller won with a time of 48.11, with Reid third in 48.30, Barton sixth in 48.86 and Terrell seventh in 48.96. Junior Reid came back an hour later to blitz the field in the 200, winning with an NCAA provisional mark of 21.20, almost two-tenths of a second faster than his previous best this season of 21.39. Senior VanTonio Fraley was fourth in the event in 21.45, with Pete Senatus seventh in 21.95 and Barton eighth in 21.98. Yarbrough won his first SBC indoor title, cruising to the 55-meter hurdles championship in 6.34. He led a contingent of three Blue Raiders in the top six and credited his victory to all of those around him who have supported the senior for so many years. "It was a real big win. I give credit to my family, coaches, teammates and friends who have supported me," Yarbrough said. "I just wanted to get to the line because everybody had a great start. The competition was very stiff and it was a mentally tough race, but I came out on top and it feels good." Junior Juan Walker was third in the race in 7.41, while Senatus came in sixth in 7.66. Another key contributor who had a big day on Sunday was senior JJ Sturm, who posted a personal-best 48-0 in the triple jump, finishing second and besting his PR by a foot-and-a-half. He said it was really unexpected, especially after his knee surgery last June. "It exceeds everything I thought I would do, coming back from knee surgery [last June] and getting my personal-best in the last three meets," Sturm said. "My run-through could be smoother. My goal was just to get through the season. I am super happy with how things went. The triple jump is not my main event. I didn't figure to get a medal at the conference meet." Junior JaKeith Hairston was fifth in the triple jump with a mark of 46-11.5, while Walker was seventh with a mark of 46-5.5 despite not making his final two jumps because of a heel injury. The biggest points of the day may have come after 4 p.m., when Carufe picked up three points in the mile run with a sixth-place finish in 4:25.02. Then in the 5000-meters, seniors Jonathan Guillou (15:04.92) and Derek Dell (15:04.02) put on a great run in the final two laps to take fourth and fifth place. South Alabama had the top three spots, but Guillou's and Dell's finishes allowed the Blue Raiders to hold on to a two-point lead heading into the 4x400-meter relay. In the relay, Terrell started well and Barton had a good first lap before fading in the final 100 meters. But Reid made up the deficit, giving the baton to Waller for the stretch run with a slight advantage. Waller distance himself from the field, winning in an NCAA provisional time of 3:14.36. In the men's 55-meter dash, Fraley was third in 6.33 and Walker eighth in 6.45. It was the fifth Sun Belt indoor title for the men and the 11th the Blue Raiders have won at Murphy Center. "We knew we had a good mile relay but so did North Texas. The guys ran very well and Orlando made a big difference," Hayes said. "Orlando did a great job. The throwers had a great meet with PR's left and right, and Linnie finally got his first indoor title. We were just good enough to win." On the women's side, the Blue Raiders climbed three spots to finish fifth behind champion Western Kentucky. Seniors Candice Robertson and Meaghan Byrd both went out on top with victories on Sunday. Robertson tied the Sun Belt championship meet record held by former teammate Jerkita McClorin, finishing in a personal-best 7.88. Robertson led three Blue Raiders in the top five and posted her third straight victory in the 55-meter hurdles at the SBC meet. "My goal this season was to get in the record books and I did that," Robertson said. "I wanted to beat everyone to the first hurdle, but when I didn't do that, I just wanted to get past them. I felt really strong before the race, so I knew it was going to be a good day." Freshman Iceca Epps was third in the hurdles in 8.10, with sophomore Sierra Douglas fifth in 8.22. Byrd broker her own school record in winning the weight throw on her final attempt for the second straight year, posting a mark of 55-7. The senior said she's been working all season for a first-place finish and finally got it in the biggest meet of the year. "I've

been itching for a win all season and finally got it when it matters," Byrd said. "I was really focusing on not thinking too much about technique. I wanted to forget the mechanical side and just be fast and explosive. It all came down to the last throw the last two years. I was really nervous at the end but it turned out well." Sophomore Stephanie Tamgho posted another stellar performance Sunday, finishing with a personal-best 41-5.25 to place third in the triple jump. She missed an NCAA provisional mark by less than two inches. The sophomore was a little disappointed she missed the NCAA mark but felt good about her efforts on the whole. "I'm a little disappointed because I missed my [NCAA] mark," Tamgho said. "I wasn't as confident as [Saturday], but I still got my [personal-best] and I'm happy about that. I really tried but hurt my ankle in the preliminaries. I'm just a little upset. It's still a good jump, especially since I didn't triple jump until I got to Middle Tennessee [in January 2005]. Also for the women, Shanna-Kay Campbell placed fifth in the 400-meters in 56.32, with TraMayne Gillyard seventh in 57.07. In the 800-meters Marjorie Gombert and Veronia Patterson were fourth and fifth, respectively, with times of 2:17.00 and 2:19.68. The women's 4x400-meter relay of Gillyard, Robertson, Campbell and Antranette Stringer placed second in 3:47.53. "Candice and Meaghan were both really tough and Shanna-Kay finally came around," Hayes said. "Iceca in the hurdles was also good and Stephanie had a great meet with two PR's." Full results for the Sun Belt Championships may be found at GoBlueRaiders.com on the track page. Some of the Blue Raiders will participate in next week's Last Chance Invitational in Ames, Iowa.

Printed on July 31, 2014

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/4891>