Track to open indoor competition

Teams to play host to MT Christmas Invitational

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee track and field teams will open 2010-2011 competition on Saturday at the Murphy Center as the squads will play host to the 2010 MT Christmas Invitational.

With the athletes working hard all fall semester, they will finally be given the chance to get the jitters out against competitors from other schools.

"This meet is the culmination of the fall practice season," said head coach Dean Hayes. "It is a chance reward the athletes and let them compete against other teams and see what they need to work on going into the break. For the coaches, we get to see them in a meet a find what we need to correct and improve while we still have time."

The 2010-2011 campaign will see the team competing without some of it top athletes from past seasons as other members will be called upon to step up to help continue to the high level of success the program has endured throughout its history.

The Blue Raider men's top returners include 10-time Sun Belt Conference Champion Festus Chemaoi. Chemaoi has dominated the conference middle-distance races from the 800 to the 3,000 meters for the past three seasons amassing the second most individual indoor and outdoor

conference titles in program history. The Ainobkoi, Kenya native will look to add more titles in 2011 and earn a birth in his first NCAA Championship.

Hurdler Roscoe Payne and jumper Josh Butler are expected to score in multiple events if the team is to have success. Payne, a two-time conference champion, will look to get back to the top of the medal stand as he was unable to garner SBC gold in 2010. The Flint, Mich., native just missed 2010 NCAA qualification placing 13th in the 400 meter intermediate hurdles at the NCAA East Preliminaries, one place from an NCAA birth.

Butler came on late in 2010, but quickly asserted himself capturing the Sun Belt Outdoor high jump crown and taking runner-up honors in the triple jump. The senior should score in multiple jump events for coach Hayes.

“We have some good men coming back and we really focused on recruiting sprinters and quarter-milers this season. Our mile-relay should be much stronger and we should score better in the sprint events, which is something we have gotten away from the past few seasons.”

For the women, sprinter/jumper Nyeisha Wright, the 2010 conference long jump champion, is a quadruple threat with the proven ability to score points in bunches. The Colorado Springs, Colo., native tallied a combined 21 points in four different events at the 2010 SBC Outdoor Championship. She also ran on the third-place 4x100 meter relay team.

Other athletes including Cherice Robertson, Kiara Henry and Kortney Thurman can score in multiple events. Robertson combined for 27 points at the 2010 Sun Belt Indoor Championships. Her weekend was highlighted by winning the high jump title.

“We should be very deep in the jumps this year. It hurts losing Sarah (Nambawa) because should could always pull out the big jump, but we have four who can score well for us. Our mile relay should also be strong.”

Live results will be available for Saturday’s meet. Full results and coverage can be found post-meet at GoBlueRaiders.com.

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