

Peterson retires after 25 years as Blue Raider baseball head coach

Long-time coach exits with a 944-733-3 career record

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Steve Peterson, Middle Tennessee's head baseball coach for the past 25 seasons and the program's all-time winningest coach, has announced his retirement, effective immediately.

Peterson amassed 791 wins during his Blue Raider career while leading MT to 11 conference regular-season championships, nine conference tournament titles and nine NCAA Regional appearances. Associate head coach Jim McGuire, who has served alongside Peterson for the past 20 years, will act as the interim head coach as the athletic department begins a



national search to fill the vacated position. "I love baseball, and hopefully I've taught players to love baseball," Peterson said. "But it's not about me. I've been a part of the improvement of the program. Was I the program? No, and I never tried to be. I was just an extension of it. I said this at the Groundhog Luncheon: where there's a will there's a way. I tried to be the will. Everybody out there was the way. The players were the way. The people that donated money and people that came to the games were the way. I just had a will for 25 years to try to keep improving the program. And it's going to keep improving." Peterson began his MT career in 1988 and since has led the program to 16 seasons of 30 or more wins. In four seasons, Peterson's Blue Raiders cracked the 40-win plateau, including a record-setting 2009 campaign where the squad finished with a 44-18 record, marking the most wins in school history. The three-time Coach of the Year will exit the profession with a 944-733-3 career record and 791-637-3 mark at the helm of the Blue Raiders. "Today we celebrate the career of one of our departmental icons," said Chris Massaro, MT Director of Athletics. "His personal impact on hundreds of student-athletes cannot be measured but can only be told in their success stories. Peterson has been a model coach who has won championships doing it the absolute right way. I hope now his dreams are more about his grandchildren rather than groundhogs. On behalf of all the employees in our athletic department he will be missed on a daily basis, and we wish the very best to Coach Peterson and his family." In addition to the numerous team

accomplishments, Peterson has produced eight conference players of the year and 10 All-Americans during his tenure at MT. Many of those student-athletes under Peterson's guidance have continued their careers at the next level, with 60 signing professional contracts, including the No. 3 overall pick of the 2001 Major League Baseball First-Year Amateur Player Draft, Dewon Brazelton. Others have taken skills and fundamentals learned at MT and are earning a living as coaches at various levels. Thirty-one former Blue Raiders are currently coaching at the high school, college, or professional levels. Peterson's peers have recognized his achievements and contributions to the game by bestowing several honors on him. He was named the Tennessee Baseball Coaches Association College Coach of the Year in 1992, 2000 and 2009. Peterson also received his first ABCA Region Coach of the Year honor in 2009 after guiding the Blue Raiders in their record-breaking season. He was also inducted into the Rutherford County Old Timers Baseball Hall of Fame in 2003. In 2007, Peterson was inducted into the Tennessee Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame and the Huntsville-Madison County (AL) Athletic Hall of Fame in April of 2009. In the fall of 2010, Peterson was inducted into the Blue Raider Hall of Fame. Not only has Peterson been a winner on the field, but he's also been a successful fundraiser during his career. Events such as the annual Chuck Taylor Golf Tournament, the Groundhog Day Luncheon, and the Grand Slam Fish Fry have become mainstays on calendars of Blue Raider baseball supporters across middle Tennessee and have raised thousands of dollars for the improvement of Blue Raider baseball. Peterson spearheaded the efforts to pay for the construction of the Stephen B. Smith Clubhouse and Indoor Training Facility, which opened its doors in 1998. One look inside the facility shows the time and effort spent toward this endeavor. It has become known as one of the finest collegiate clubhouses and training facilities in the country. Reese Smith Jr. Field has also benefited from Peterson's fundraising abilities. He has helped transform the park into a fan-friendly area by leading efforts to expand the seating area, add an information center just inside the gate, and improve restroom and concession facilities. Peterson guided efforts during the summer of 2001 to enlarge the dugouts at Reese Smith Jr. Field. He also spearheaded a capital campaign to do significant remodeling of the concession stand, improve and expand restroom facilities, and added a modern press box to accommodate radio, television, and print media. While Peterson has spent 24 seasons leading the Middle Tennessee baseball program, his tenure with the program is much longer. He took two separate tours with the Blue Raiders as an assistant coach under John Stanford before becoming the team's head coach. During 1976-78 and 1985-87, he helped the Blue Raiders win two OVC titles and four Southern Division crowns. During the interim, Peterson served as head coach at Roane State Community College in Harriman, Tenn. While at Roane State from 1979 to 1984, Peterson's teams won a Tennessee state title in 1981, and he was twice named TJCAA Coach of the Year (1981, '84). Peterson put together a sparkling record of 153-96 for a .614 winning percentage. A native of Huntsville, Ala., Peterson stood out as a catcher under the legendary Rudy Abbott at Jacksonville State. He earned his bachelor's from Jacksonville State in 1973 and later earned a master's from Middle Tennessee in 1977. Peterson is married to the former Rita Albert and the couple has three children, Jill, Jenny and John, in addition to six grandchildren. **Dr. Sidney McPhee, Middle Tennessee President**

"For a quarter century, Coach Peterson has inspired student athletes with his integrity, commitment and success. He is a role model – not only to his players and coaches, but the entire MTSU community.

"Coach Pete amassed an amazing and historic record with the Blue Raiders and he will forever be remembered as a hall of fame coach. But his true success is best reflected in the young men he has coached through the years, many of whom rose to the highest professional levels of the sport. He

taught them to win in baseball and in life.

“I speak for the entire Blue Raider family in congratulating and thanking Steve for his remarkable accomplishments as a baseball coach, mentor and teacher.” **John Stanford, former Blue Raider Head Coach**

“I knew about (Coach Peterson) when I was at Motlow State because he was playing at Columbia State. He was later recommended to me as a graduate assistant, so when he came in ready for his big interview, I hired him in about 15 minutes. I already knew enough about him to know he would be valuable. He built a program that everybody is proud of. He did outstanding work as far as facilities, coaching and the whole works, in addition to being a great family man. He is such a knowledgeable guy about baseball because he was a catcher, and they know as much as the coach does. He helped promote the field to what it is today, and it’s one of the best in the country. He became Mr. Baseball here and he’s been a credit to the university in every way possible. The proof’s in the pudding.” **Jim McGuire, Middle Tennessee Associate Head Coach**

“I’ve had the honor of working with Coach Pete for the past 20 years and have learned so much from him both personally and professionally. From when we started in the OVC to transitioning into the Sun Belt, Coach Pete continued to raise the bar of excellence for the Blue Raider program. But it wasn’t just his coaching ability on the field that was key to the development of players. It was the relationships he built with them after they left Middle Tennessee that truly defined his career. It will be hard to imagine not seeing that number 25 on the field.” **Steve Smith, longtime friend and Blue Raider baseball supporter**

“It’s the end of an era. I played for Coach Pete and enjoyed being one of his ardent supporters and friends. He is MTSU baseball and he’s done a fabulous job. He set a standard for all of us to work and live by. Coaching that many games and that many students, there’s a fine line of intensity and fun, but he had a great combination of both. I know that the next person will have big shoes to fill.” **Bryce Brentz, former Blue Raider All-American, 2009 Sun Belt Player of the Year and current Portland Sea Dogs outfielder**

“The first thing that came to mind when I heard coach was retiring was if I had to do it all over again, I wouldn’t play for another coach. He helped me become a better man and a better player. I was raw coming out of high school and he showed me the right direction I needed to go. One thing I appreciate now looking back is that when I was a freshman, he was honest with me and never went back on anything he told me. I just respected so much his brutal honesty. The way he trusted me as a freshman to go out there and play every day was really special. He was hard-nosed and my type of coach.

“He always loved the routine play. We practiced that so much, and (to him) that was the beauty of the game. When you’re young, you don’t see that, but now I realize his vision about the game was bar none, the best I’ve ever been around. I never thought this day would come. He’s a great man and a great coach. He made my experience at MT what it was, and it was unbelievable.”

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