Blue Raiders to be represented at 2012 London Olympics

Two student-athletes to compete for Nigeria

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's track and field program will be well represented when the 2012 Summer Olympics open Friday in London. Two student-athletes, one current and one former, will be participating in the games, while a part-time assistant coach also will be on hand.

"The biggest thing is that I always felt whenever there was a chance for any of our student-athletes to compete in the Olympics, world championships or any type of international competition, they should fully enjoy it," MT head coach Dean Hayes said. "They should be proud to represent their country, and especially if they are successful in it.

"Because of me having been an Olympic coach and having done all these international events for the United States, it was always great to represent the USA. I am always happy to have student-athletes from other countries that can represent their countries as well. It makes for a great experience because they get to see and meet athletes from other countries and cultures. An experience like that you cannot measure, especially if they do it on a regular basis."

Rising senior Noah Akwu will compete for his home country of Nigeria in the 200 meters. He is coming off a campaign in which he won the Sun Belt outdoor title in the same event in a time of 20.74 seconds, just three one-hundredths of a second off his personal-best time set at the NCAA Regional.

At the conclusion of the 2010-11 indoor campaign, he became the 85th All-American in the program's history after placing sixth in the event at the NCAA Championships. He followed that up by being selected as the Sun Belt Trackman of the Year in 2011 after taking first place in both the 200 and 400 at the league meet.

Joining Akwu on the Nigerian squad will be former Blue Raider Stanley Gbagbeke. A 2010 MT graduate, he will participate in the long jump for his native country. During his final campaign with the Blue Raiders, he finished as the national runner up after capturing first place at the conference meet and at the prestigious Penn Relays.

His first All-American accolade came after the 2009 outdoor season, in which he also placed second

at the NCAA Championships with career-best mark of 26 feet, 3 inches (8.0 meters).
Part-time assistant coach Dr. Andrew Owusu will be in London to help mentor the Ghanian squad. He has been associated with Middle Tennessee since 1999 and participated in three Olympics, the 1996 games in Atlanta, Ga., the 2000 games in Sydney, Australia, and the 2004 games in Athens, Greece, for his home country of Ghana.

Owusu also has international experience at two world championships, four All-Africa Games and one World Cup.
Akwu and Gbagbeke become the 16th and 17th Olympians in Blue Raider track and field history, and the first since Owusu and three of his teammates participated.

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