Blue Raiders enter into membership agreement with C-USA

Competition will begin no later than July 1, 2014

November 29, 2012 · @MTAthletics

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee President Sidney A. McPhee announced today the University has entered into a membership agreement to join Conference USA for intercollegiate athletics beginning no later than July 1, 2014. Conference USA is an established, nationally recognized FBS conference that sponsors 20 sport championships.

"We have worked at many levels to advance the quality of our athletics program and this invitation recognizes the hard work and excellent results of our athletes, coaches and administrators," McPhee said. "Our affiliation with Conference USA will build upon the strong results we enjoyed as a proud member of the Sun Belt Conference and position us for even greater success."

> "Our affiliation with C-USA will build upon the strong results we enjoyed as a proud member of the Sun Belt Conference and position us for even greater success."

The C-USA membership beginning July 1, 2013, will include Charlotte, East Carolina, FIU, Louisiana Tech, Marshall, North Texas, Old Dominion, Rice, Southern Miss, Tulane, Tulsa, UAB, UTEP, and UTSA. The league office is located in Irving, Texas. ECU will be leaving for the Big EAST Conference in football beginning with 2014 season and Tulane will be leaving for all sports for the 2014-15 campaign.

"This tremendous opportunity is the result of effort from many, especially Dr. McPhee," said Director of Athletics Chris Massaro. "I would particularly like to acknowledge the work of our student-athletes, coaches, and most importantly our former student-athletes and coaches. They are the ones who truly built our foundation for this launching point. This invitation is a validation of their labor and the progress we have made at Middle Tennessee athletically and academically."

C-USA teams and individuals have made nearly 700 NCAA championship appearances since the league's inception in 1995-96. Sixty-seven football programs have earned bowl bids, 90 men's basketball teams have participated in NCAA and NIT postseason play, 47 women's basketball squads have appeared in the NCAA Tournament and 53 baseball programs have made NCAA tournament appearances, including 12 College World Series and a national crown for Rice in 2003. Additionally, 61 men's and women's soccer squads have participated in NCAA tournaments, with Charlotte competing for the men's College Cup crown in 2011.

Conference USA members also enjoy significant national and regional television exposure and revenue sharing through a multi-tiered package that includes partnerships with CBS Sports Network, Fox Sports Media Group and ESPN. During 2011-12, C-USA football teams appeared on television more than 70 times, while 65 men's basketball games were featured, and more than 40 baseball, softball, and women's basketball games and conference championships were broadcast.

Middle Tennessee has spent the last 12-plus years as a member of the Sun Belt Conference where it has won eight All-Sports trophies, 54 conference championships, and had four Athletes of the Year and 38 Coach of the Year winners. The Blue Raiders officially made their announcement to the SBC on November 4, 1999 with the effective date of July 1, 2000.

Prior to the Sun Belt, Middle Tennessee spent two years as an independent and the previous 47 years as a member of the Ohio Valley Conference where it won 11 league titles in football, made six NCAA Playoffs and appeared in four bowl games. The Blue Raiders amassed an overall OVC mark of 192-115-4 (.624) during their 47 seasons of football competition, while having 15 Players of the Year and 177 first team all-OVC selections. In basketball, the women registered 11 OVC titles, while the men garnered five. In all, the Blue Raider athletic program has accumulated 102 OVC Championships and nine All-Sports trophies.

> "We have been impressed by the continued success at Middle Tennessee, which is a direct reflection of the outstanding leadership at that institution."

The Blue Raiders will begin their quest for C-USA titles no later than 2014-15 with eight being available for men and nine for women. The men will compete in baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, tennis, indoor track and field, and outdoor track and field. The women will take part in basketball, cross country, golf, tennis, indoor track and field, outdoor track and field, volleyball, soccer, and softball. The sports MT will not field teams will be in men's soccer, women's rowing, and women's swimming and diving.

"We have been impressed by the continued success at Middle Tennessee, which is a direct reflection of the outstanding leadership at that institution," said Conference USA Commissioner Britton Banowsky. "They fit very well within the footprint of our conference."

Conference USA bowl synopsis

Conference USA has guaranteed spots in five games during the 2012 season and serves as a primary backup for two other games. The AutoZone Liberty Bowl has the top selection of C-USA teams and the league will also send teams to the Beef 'O'Brady's Bowl St.Petersburg, Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl, R+L Carriers New Orleans Bowl and Sheraton Hawai'i Bowl. The

conference also has agreements with the Heart of Dallas Bowl and Military Bowl to participate in those games should the primary partners for those games be unable to provide teams for those bowls.

Comments from MT head coaches

Football Head Coach Rick Stockstill

"My experience in the Sun Belt Conference has been great. I have enjoyed competing against some fine coaches and excellent student-athletes. I think both commissioners, Wright Wates and Karl Benson, had great vision. I am very excited about joining Conference USA. It is a tradition rich conference that is recognized nationally and offers many opportunities. I am honored and extremely excited to be part of C-USA."

Men's Basketball Head Coach Kermit Davis

"Obviously, we've had a really good experience in the Sun Belt. We're extremely excited for our players, our fans and our program. I think the Conference USA move is going to be very, very positive for MT basketball and we look forward to it in years to come."

Men's Golf Head Coach Whit Turnbow

"The Sun Belt Conference has been home to our golf program for 12 years and we have enjoyed competing and the camaraderie amongst the coaches. Change in our industry is inevitable, and this is a move that will be beneficial for the entire university. There is a new day upon us and we welcome the challenges that await us in Conference USA."

Men's Tennis Head Coach Jimmy Borendame

"We've had great success in the Sun Belt Conference during my tenure. Conference USA is a very competitive conference. We play a number of these schools already, and look forward to competing with them for titles right away."

Baseball Head Coach Jim McGuire

"We're excited about joining Conference USA. With traditional baseball powers like Rice, Southern Miss and East Carolina, becoming a member of Conference USA will create a new level of excitement for our players and fans. We enjoyed our time and success in the Sun Belt and will continue to strive for championships in our new league."

Softball Head Coach Jeff Breeden

"I'm excited about the move to Conference USA and the impact it will have on our program. The Sun Belt has a great softball reputation, but C-USA is very strong and we look forward to competing against some of the best programs in the country."

Track Head Coach Dean Hayes

"We appreciate the time we spent in the Sun Belt Conference and enjoyed competing there. In going

with the times, though, changes are made. We are excited about the direction that Middle Tennessee is headed and we look forward to competing in Conference USA."

Volleyball Head Coach Matt Peck

"The Sun Belt has improved dramatically in volleyball over the last few years, but we look forward to new challenges in Conference USA. I believe Conference USA has a very high ceiling for volleyball."

Women's Golf Head Coach Chris Adams

"The Sun Belt Conference has been great to us, but we're excited about the opportunity to compete in Conference USA. It will be a new challenge, but one that we're looking forward to for our program and our fans."

Women's Tennis Head Coach Shelley Godwin

"What an exciting time to be a part of the MT Athletics family. This move to Conference USA will present our program with new opportunities to grow and develop. We are looking forward to a bright future as a member of Conference USA."

Women's Soccer Head Coach Aston Rhoden

"We are excited about our future as a member of Conference USA and look forward to the challenges ahead."

Women's Head Basketball Coach Rick Insell

"I am excited for the Blue Raider family. It speaks volumes on how far our athletic program has come over the past few years. We, as an athletic department, have accrued a lot of success in the Sun Belt Conference and I thank commissioners Wright Waters and Karl Benson for helping put our programs in the forefront. To be a part of Conference USA is exciting. Now, we have to finish off what we've started in the Sun Belt and face the challenges that await us in Conference USA."

A look at Conference USA Members

Charlotte 49ers

Location: Charlotte, N.C.
Member Since: 2013
Football Stadium: Charlotte 49ers Football Stadium (15,000)
Basketball Arena: Halton Arena (9,105)
Some Sports Alumni:
Cedric Maxwell (1981 NBA Finals MVP with Boston Celtics, #31 retired)
Matt Hardy (Professional wrestler)

East Carolina Pirates

Location: Greenville, N.C.
Member Since: 1997

Football Stadium: Dowdy-Ficklen (50,000)
Basketball Arena: Williams Arena at Minges Coliseum (8,000)
Some Sports Alumni:
Kay Yow (Highly successfull women's basketball coach at NC State)
Chris Johnson (3x Pro Bowl Selection, 2009 NFL Offensive player of the year)

Florida International Panthers

Location: Miami, Fla.
Member Since: 2013
Football Stadium: FIU Stadium (23,500)
Basketball Arena: U.S. Century Bank Arena (6,000)
Some Sports Alumni:
Carlos Arroyo (Professional basketball player with the Boston Celtics)
Brad Eldred (First Baseman for the Detroit Tigers)

Louisiana Tech Bulldogs

Location: Ruston, La.
Member Since: 2013
Football Stadium: Joe Aillet Stadium (30,600)
Basketball Arena: Thomas Assembly Center (8,098)
Some Sports Alumni:
Terry Bradshaw (Four-time Super Bowl champion with the Pittsburgh Steelers)
Karl Malone (Second leading scorer in NBA history, two-time Olympics gold medalist

Marshall Thundering Herd

Location: Huntington, W.Va.
Member Since: 2005
Football Stadium: Joan C. Edwards Stadium (38,019)
Basketball Arena: Henderson Center (9,043)
Some Sports Alumni:
Randy Moss (7x Pro Bowl selection currently with the San Francisco 49ers)
Hal Greer (NBA Hall of Famer)

North Texas Mean Green

Location: Denton, Texas
Member Since: 2013
Football Stadium: Apogee Stadium (30,850)
Basketball Arena: The Super Pit (9,797)
Some Sports Alumni:
"Mean" Joe Greene (NFL Hall of famer, NFL defensive tackle and assistant coach)
"Stone Cold" Steve Austin (Professional Wrestler)

Old Dominion Monarchs

Location: Norfolk, VA

Member Since: 2013
Football Stadium: Foreman Field at S.B. Ballard Stadium (20,000)
Basketball Arena: Ted Constant Convocation Center (8,472)
Some Sports Alumni: Justin Verlander (Major League Pitcher)

Rice Owls

Location: Houston, Texas
Member Since: 2005
Football Stadium: Rice Stadium (47,000)
Basketball Arena: Tudor Fieldhouse (5,208)
Some Sports Alumni:
Lance Berkman (2011 World Series Champion, 6x All-Star)
Larry Izzo (3x Pro Bowl Selection, Asst. Special Team Coach with New York Giants)

San Antonio Roadrunners

Location: San Antonio, Texas
Member Since: 2013
Football Stadium: Alamodome (65,000 American / 59,000 Canadian)
Basketball Arena: Convocation Center (4,080)
Some Sports Alumni:
Devin Brown (NBA Player for Chicago Bulls)
Johan Edfors (Professional Golfer)

Southern Miss Golden Eagles

Location: Hattiesburg, Miss.
Member Since: 1995
Football Stadium: M.M Roberts Stadium (36,000)
Basketball Arena: Reed Green Coliseum (8,095)
Some Sports Alumni:
Brett Favre (An NFL quarterback of some note)
Ray Guy (Former NFL punter, named top punter on NFL's 75th anniversary team)

Tulane Green Wave

Location: New Orleans, La.
Member Since: 1995
Football Stadium: Louisiana Superdome (69,703)
Basketball Arena: Fogelman Arena (3,600)/New Orleans Arena (17,832)
Some Sports Alumni:
Matt Forté (Pro Bowl Franchise Running Back with Chicago Bears)
John "Hot Rod" Williams (NBA Standout with 13-year career and Cleveland blocked shots leader)

Tulsa Golden Hurricane

Location: Tulsa, Okla.

Member Since: 2005
Football Stadium: H.A. Chapman Stadium (30,000)
Basketball Arena: Donald W. Reynolds Center (8,355)
Some Sports Alumni:
Steve Largent (Former U.S. Congressman, Seahawks wide receiver, Hall of Famer)
Nancy Lopez (World golf hall of famer with three LPGA championship wins)

UAB Blazers

Location: Birmingham, Ala.
Member Since: 1995
Football Stadium: Legion Field (72,000)
Basketball Arena: Bartow Arena (8,500)
Some Sports Alumni:
Vonetta Flowers (first African-American Winter Olympics gold medal winner)
Graeme McDowell (Professional golfer, 2010 U.S. Open Winner)

UTEP Miners

Location: El Paso, Texas
Member Since: 2005
Football Stadium: Sun Bowl (51,500)
Basketball Arena: Don Haskins Center (12,500)
Some Sports Alumni: Tim Hardaway (Former NBA All-Star, Olympic Gold Medalist)
Seth Joyner (1991 NFL Defensive Player of the Year, two-time Super Bowl champion)

Printed on March 11, 2014
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/64239