Season Preview: Outfielders

Stephens a staple in center field

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This is the third and final part of a three-part series highlighting the 2013 Blue Raiders. Part three discusses the outfielders. Middle Tennessee opens the season on Friday at 3 p.m. vs. Ball State at Reese Smith Jr. Field.

Preseason All-Sun Belt selection Trent Miller will move from his normal position in right field to take over first base. The shifting of the infield is due to the injury to Hanke LaRue, who typically play third base but is recovering from a torn labrum.



Starting in left field for the Blue Raiders is senior Jordan Rorex. Rorex finished last season tied for the second on the team in stolen bases when he went 10-of-11. He will look to use his speed in the outfield tracking down fly balls. He batted .227 a year ago with 22 hits in 97 appearances.

Junior Jake Ellison will get the start in right field. Ellison is new to the Blue Raiders after transferring from Walters State Community College this year. While attending Walters State, Ellison earned All-TJCCAA Second Team honors as an outfielder in 2012. He hit .349 with 50 RBI and nine home runs. Head coach Jim McGuire is excited about the power Ellison brings to the lineup and his play in the outfield.

"Jake is our other power guy in the lineup. He might be our best defensive outfielder, plus-plus arm in right field that gives us a little more there. He has to give us some punch hitting in the five or six hole behind Trent," said McGuire.

Junior Ryan Stephens looks to pick up where he left off a year ago in center field. Stephens started 59 games for MT and was tied with Rorex for second on the team in stolen bases. Stephens hit .261 with 54 hits in 207 appearances at the plate. Having Stephens in center field with Ford and Thomas in the middle infield, MT will look to be very strong up the middle defensively.

"Ryan is a very good defender. He really gives us an addition with Johnny and Ford having that

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strong defense. He can run the ball down and he will run the show out in the outfield. He has to give us a little more offensively as well. He gives me confidence in the outfield that he will give us every play he gets his glove on," said McGuire.

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