

MSSU Athletics Report

1. Sport Program Reports

- a. **Football** – The Lions have begun spring practice. New head football coach Denver Johnson hired three new assistant coaches. Kenny Evans was named as the defensive coordinator, while Corey Fipps was named the offensive coordinator. John Johnson was also hired to coach the running backs.
- b. **Softball** - 11–31, 4-14 MIAA – The Lions will play at Lincoln this weekend on Saturday, April 18. The team finishes up the season next week with a mid-week game against Central Missouri and then plays host to Central Oklahoma and Northeastern State next weekend.
- c. **Golf** – The Lions' golf team recently finished in fourth place at the Washburn Invitational. The Lions are sitting in seventh place in the team standings. Southern will be back in action on April 19-21 at the 2015 MIAA Championships, held at Alvamar Country Club in Lawrence, Kan.
- d. **Men's Track and Field** – The Missouri Southern men's and women's track and field teams are in the midst of a big week that will see them compete at three different locations (Kansas, Central Missouri and Missouri S&T). The Lions' men are ranked 20th nationally and 2nd in the region, while the women are ranked 7th in the region. On the men's side, the Lions have 12 NCAA provisional qualifying marks so far this season. Jeff Fraley is ranked 4th in the 200m (still yet to run the 100m), while he is also part of the 4x100m relay team that just recently set a new school record. That team is ranked 4th nationally, as well. Darion Boure is ranked 4th in the triple jump, while Kennan Harrison is ranked 17th. Nicklas Polizzi is ranked 13th in the discus, while Derek Webb ranks 11th in the javelin.
- e. **Women's Track and Field** – On the women's side, the Lions have nine provisionals. Emily Harris ranks 9th in the 5k and 10th in the mile. Kindra Emberton ranks 11th in the mile and 13th in the 800m. Melanie Bower is 9th in the pole vault, while Brittani Reagan ranks 10th in the long jump.
- f. **Baseball** – 29–8, 19-5 MIAA – The Lions are in first place in the MIAA coming into the final two weekends of the season. They are up five games in the loss column and with a loss by both Central Missouri and Nebraska-Kearney and a sweep by the Lions of Lincoln this weekend, Southern will clinch the regular season MIAA Title and the No. 1 seed in the MIAA Tournament. The team currently ranks sixth nationally in strikeout to walk ratio and ranks seventh nationally in fewest walks per nine innings. They also rank tenth in strikeouts per nine innings, while ranking in the top 20 of eight different categories. The Lions play against Lincoln this Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The formal dedication of the new MSSU Baseball field and the unveiling of the name of the field will be before the game on Saturday. Festivities begin at 12:30 pm.

2. MIAA News:

- a. Rachel Burleson is representing MSSU on the MIAA Strategic Planning Committee. The 2015 MIAA Strategic Plan has been approved. Currently, the committee has assigned and prioritized the time line for the implementation process. The committee will meet in person in Kansas City on June 4th to monitor progress and make adjustments.
- b. An agenda item is scheduled for the AD's to have time to discuss Football Conference Affiliation

3. NCAA News:

- a. At the National level there is discussion about stipends for student-athletes and how that impacts all three divisions.
- b. During the NCAA National Convention in Washington, D.C. a new moniker was voted in for Division II. The moniker *Make It Yours* will be implemented Fall 2015.

4. Athletic Department Information:

- a. Military Appreciation Events- We had military appreciation nights at both baseball and softball this past month. We partnered with the Show-me-gold program on campus and they passed out information and free camo hats as fans came to the games.
- b. American Cancer Society- On Thursday we have the American Cancer Society group coming to the baseball game. MSSU is donating \$1 of each ticket sale back to the Relay for Life.
- c. Pink Events- At the May 4th athletics banquet we will be doing a check presentation to Freeman Foundation for the "Pride for Pink" t-shirts. So far around \$15,000 has been raised with one more pink event to go.
- d. America's Past time- the baseball team held a clinic for 20 MSSU international students this past week. The team taught each of the students the fundamentals of the game and some of the rules of the sport. Most students that attended had never played or seen a baseball game in their life.
- e. Tailgating Update- We are working with AMI radio to change the pre-game tailgating experience for football games next year. Instead of doing free food we will do a free concert before each home football game.
- f. MSSU Athletics Online Store- MSSU shop online store continues to grow. In a YTD comparison sales are up significantly. Last year sales were \$4,106 compared with this year of \$5,813.

5. Lionbacker Annual Campaign:

- a. We are putting the finishing touches on our Lionbacker Brochure and will be sending it out and starting our campaign within the next few weeks. We have themed this year's Lionbacker Campaign "Grow the Pride". This year, any current Lionbacker who gets another person to join the Lionbackers, will receive a gift. We thought this would be a great way to engage our current supporters to help us grow our numbers.
- b. With our campaign for this year, all of our head coaches will be receiving a list of Lionbackers to call to thank for their support, answer questions, and talk to them about renewing. Then starting in May and June, the Membership Committee will take on the job of making the next wave of renewal calls. Our goal is to really focus on upping our renewal rate this year along with growing the membership.

6. Recent Events:

- a. Kansas City Socials – With the help of our sponsor, BBC Electric, we were able to have a few social events at the Marriott prior to our basketball games at the MIAA Championships in Kansas City. This included the first round for the both the men and the women and the semi-finals for the men. We had great attendance for these events and at the games in general and it was a fun weekend in Kansas City.
- b. All Athlete Night at Softball – Friday April 10th – The Softball Double Header vs Missouri Western was All Athlete Night. We invited all of our Athletes to attend the game to support the softball team and we provided free hot dogs and drinks for all athletes that attended. We had a great response and crowd that evening.
- c. Lion Pride Luncheon – Thursday April 16th – We had our final Lion Pride Luncheon of this school year yesterday. It was our fans first chance for one on one interaction with our new Football Coach Denver Johnson as well as some of his staff. We also had our baseball coaches there talking about our #17 ranked team and the playoff push coming up.
- d. Student Athlete Talent Show – Thursday April 16th – We had our annual Student Athlete Talent Show last evening as a fundraiser for Make A Wish. We had numerous acts from all of our sports teams. It was attended very well, a great fundraising event, and a fun reminder of how talented our athletes are in a lot of different areas.

7. Upcoming Events:

- a. 110% Club Event – Sunday April 26th at 2pm – snacks and refreshments provided in the Football Dome. Coach Denver Johnson will be on hand to speak to the members of our 110% Club to give insight into how spring practices are going and his general plans for our football program.
- b. Lionbacker Annual Campaign – April and May
- c. LaFerla Fundraising Event for Football – June 11th – Dr. Mike and Bre LaFerla are hosting an event in

conjunction with MSSU Athletics at their house as they did last year for our Men's Basketball Program. Tickets will be \$100 and will include your dinner and drinks (beer and wine included). All proceeds will go towards the football program.

d. SouthernFest 2015

- i. Dinner/Auction at Downstream Casino – Thursday July 30th
- ii. Rod Smith Green & Gold Golf Classic – Friday July 31st

8. **Athletic Facility Updates:**

- a. **North End Zone Facility Project:** See Rob Yust, Vice President of Business for updated and detailed report.
- b. **Baseball Stadium Project:** There will be a Grand Opening event on April 18th. See foundation report for more information regarding the schedule
- c. **Leggett & Platt:**
 - i. We have begun getting quotes for new basketball goals. We have no back-up goals, so if something were to happen to one of our goals or backboards during a game, we would not have a good contingency. We have currently received a quote from Spalding, and will be getting at least two more quotes from other companies. Spalding is the supplier of backboards/goals for Pitt State and Missouri State, and was requested by both MSSU men's and women's head basketball coaches.
 - ii. We are examining the cost of more useful lighting for pre-game introductions and other special events.
- d. **Softball Fields:** A new scoreboard for softball was installed. The scoreboard is a Nevco brand, which is also what we have at baseball and basketball. Sign Designs installed it.
- e. **Young Gym:** The renovation of the floor in Young Gym has been approved. It will take place this summer and will start after our Sports Academy and be finished before our summer volleyball camps.
- f. **Fred G. Hughes Stadium:** MSSU is currently reviewing RFPs for football turf and drainage replacement. An RFP is currently being compiled for a Lionbacker entertainment Deck known as the LaFerla Ortho Deck Zone. More details to follow.