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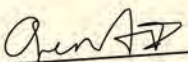
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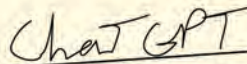
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*The Diploma granted at Artificial Intelligence, this
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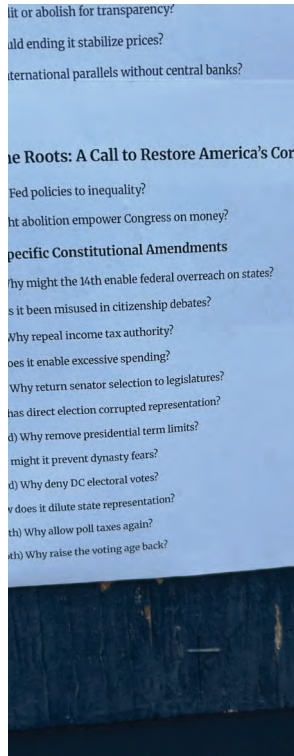
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The Murray State News is the
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organization at Murray State.

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Murray State to define AI policy soon

Faculty speak out about their usage of AI in class

Shelby Bloomer

Contributing Writer

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As artificial intelligence continues to grow in popularity and prevalence, its place in research and instruction is still being determined. Murray State University faculty weigh in on the use of AI in higher education.

Murray State does not have a campus-wide policy governing how students or instructors use AI, leaving faculty members to decide for themselves. While the University does have an Academic Honesty Policy, it does not specifically identify the use of AI as cheating. Rather, it emphasizes the use of “unauthorized information such as ... electronic, online, or digital devices in any academic exercise.” If an instructor chooses to “authorize” the use of AI in their coursework, it would not count as academic dishonesty.

Ihsan Alkhatib is a pre-law adviser and associate professor in the political science and sociology department. He regularly uses AI as a tool, but notes that its use by students may hinder their ability to learn valuable skills.

“But the students should learn to do the work themselves without AI,” he said. “For example, doing research on a topic. The student should learn the skill of reading through lengthy academic articles and books, (and be) able to understand and summarize them and present a literature review. From that, they can write a paper.”

Alkhatib said he uses AI searches to find information on specific topics and runs all of his writings through Grammarly. He also plans to use AI to generate ideas for class discussions and exercises.

“AI makes everyone’s life easier,” Alkhatib said. “The issue is how AI is used.”

Matthew Tennyson, a professor and chair of the computer science and information systems department, serves on a university-wide task force that is working to define how both

students and instructors should use artificial intelligence. Their work to draft these guidelines is still in progress.

As a professor, Tennyson encourages his students to view artificial intelligence as a tool – not a crutch to be relied on.

“I think it’s important for students to learn how to use AI well – what’s appropriate, what isn’t, and how it can be used conscientiously to support learning,” Tennyson said. “AI can be helpful for brainstorming, practicing skills, and getting feedback. At the same time, students do need guidance so they use AI to learn, not to replace learning. I try to talk with my classes about that balance.”

The existence of AI tools has also changed the way Tennyson plans his coursework.

“Because AI tools exist, I now try to design my courses with more emphasis on in-class work where they can demonstrate an understanding of the material,” Tennyson said. “Homework is still valuable for practice and active learning, but I use in-class assessments more heavily when I evaluate what students have learned and when assigning grades.”

He says the CSIS department in particular has moved to embrace AI as an academic discipline, as seen by the new offering of a certificate and minor in artificial intelligence and the creation of new courses in areas such as generative AI, natural language processing and computer vision.

“We’ve expanded our (computer science) and (Master of Science in Information Systems) tracks to include more AI,” Tennyson said. “We’re also proposing a new undergraduate major in artificial intelligence that we hope will be approved for next fall.”

There has been discussion in some academic departments – such as the CSIS department – about creating their own departmental policies on the use of artificial intelligence in research or instruction, but these policies have not been finalized or formulated.



MacKenzie Rogers/The News

Equine herpes cancels 50th annual rodeo

River Murt

News Editor

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An outbreak of horse herpes originating in Waco, Texas, canceled the 50th Annual Racer Rodeo and its activities.

Murray State University Rodeo Coach Matt Papszycki told WKDZ radio station it was because of an outbreak at an event in Waco, Texas.

“We’re postponing the rodeo until we can figure out the severeness of this outbreak down there because we don’t want to bring it to Kentucky,” Papszycki said. “I’m praying for all the people that are involved ... Hopefully they get a control on it here quick and we can move forward. I hate that we had to do it, but it was the right thing to do.”

Papszycki told WKDZ that tickets bought for the rodeo will be good for the rescheduled event in early 2026, and are refundable.

The Murray State University Rodeo Team Facebook page said that exact date for events canceled are to be determined.

Those events are the 50th Annual Racer Roundup College Rodeo, the 2025 Fall Barrel Series Finale and the High School Rodeo.

The page also said Murray State itself has not been affected at this time, and assures the proper precautions are being taken to keep the horses and those who compete safe and healthy.

“Our thoughts and prayers go out to all of those who have been impacted by this out-

break,” the Rodeo Team said in a post. “And additionally, we would like to thank everyone for their patience and continued support as we navigate through this difficult. The health and safety of our horses will always be our number one priority.”

The horse herpes virus affecting Waco, Texas is is EHV-1. According to the UC Davis Veterinary Medicine website, horses affected with the virus will develop a fever, possibly nasal discharge and is expected to recover.

It is “typically” diagnosed with nasal swabs or blood samples by polymerase chain reaction, which will amplify the DNA of the virus, making it detectable.

However, according to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the virus can progress into Equine Virus Myeloencephalopathy.

EHM is a neurological disease syndrome where the virus will damage blood vessels in the brain and spinal cord.

Sid Miller, Texas Department of Agriculture commissioner, alerted Texas, urging those involved in the World Championship Barrel Racing Finals in Waco to act swiftly and monitor their animals.

“This virus can spread fast,” Miller said. “It can be deadly and the earliest signs are often so subtle they’re easy to miss. That’s why monitor your horses right now is critical. The quicker we identify a case, the better chance we have to protect not only our animals, but the entire Texas equine community.”

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CEV apartment cleaning fees come to light

Harper Spaulding
Staff Writer
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Students question CEV's charging practices after receiving additional cleaning fees months after moving out.

Some former residents of CEV expressed frustration after the apartment complex charged them with a cleaning fee occasionally months after moving out of their apartments. *The News* spoke to two former residents of CEV, both of whom expressed frustration with CEV's lack of transparency and unclear cleaning requirements.

Both students requested to stay anonymous to avoid repercussions from CEV. For their anonymity, the students will be referred to as they and them.

Student A said CEV charged them \$65 for cleaning their apartment two months after their move-out. Upon contacting management about the charge, Student A received an email from property manager Onyx Rickard stating that all dorms required professional cleaning prior to move-out.

"They didn't give me a report but said I needed professional cleaning for the room," Student A said. "Their argument was that all rooms required it and they said if I showed I purchased professional cleaning already, they would remove the fee."

Student A provided a copy of their lease agreement, which did not include any mention that rooms must be professionally cleaned prior to move-out. The lease does state that students must thoroughly clean their rooms prior to move-out, and that residents who don't are liable to a reasonable cleaning fee.

Rickard said in his email that upon an inspection by professional vendors, Student A's apartment was deemed in need of professional cleaning, including carpet cleaning. Student A said they had cleaned their room as adequately as possible before move-out. When Student A requested a copy of the vendor's report, CEV declined and said they did not receive a detailed written report from vendors.



Graphic by MacKenzie Rogers/The News

CEV declined to comment regarding their cleaning requirements or fees.

Student B moved out of their apartment in mid-August, later, CEV charged them and their roommates \$95 in cleaning fees. The property manager said they were charging what the cleaning company had requested, however, CEV declined Student B's attempt to get an itemized list of the charges.

"I wanted to see the breakdown of these charges because nearly \$400 for our apartment alone seems like a lot so I went to speak to the manager for an itemized statement," Student B said. "They were dismissive and seemed annoyed I asked."

Student B said they had trouble with CEV before regarding transparency over electricity bills. CEV refused to provide itemized statements for the apartment's electric bill after Student B inquired about fluctuating prices. They said it was hard to anticipate month-to-month expenses because bill prices fluctuate.

Student B said the additional fee has put a strain on them and their family. Their mother was furloughed during the government shutdown, and has still not received a paycheck.

"An extra \$95 on top of rent and electricity is difficult right now," Student B said. "If they showed me a statement, I would say okay and just pay it, but I'm even more upset because of the lack of transparency."



We are proud to celebrate your achievements and the dedication that brought you to this moment. You are ready to lead, serve and make a meaningful impact in your communities and professions. We are inspired by your perseverance and excited for all that lies ahead. Racer Nation is proud of you!

The Patterson Family

Political tensions flare around flyers

River Murt
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Oversight and open dialogue are called for after alleged censorship and harassment involving the campus bulletin board between Waterfield Library and Oakley Applied Science.

The drama supposedly originated prior to minister Nicholas Bowling's visit to campus on Oct. 28, where posters publicizing his event and were torn down. It is not known who or how many people are responsible or why the posters were torn down.

Colson Thomas, College Republicans president, said in an interview with a *Murray State News* reporter on Nov. 12, the posters were "routinely destroyed, defaced" for every attempt there was to replace them. As a result, Thomas said new posters would be put up to "test the waters."

He said it became a game of "who's going to win" and the issue mainly revolves around free speech.

The new posters were nailed to the board, headed as "Rebuilding the roots: A Call to Restore America's core values," consisting of 95 questions for traditional marriage, abolishing welfare, and specifically repealing the 14th, 16th, 22nd, 23rd, 24th and 26th amendments.

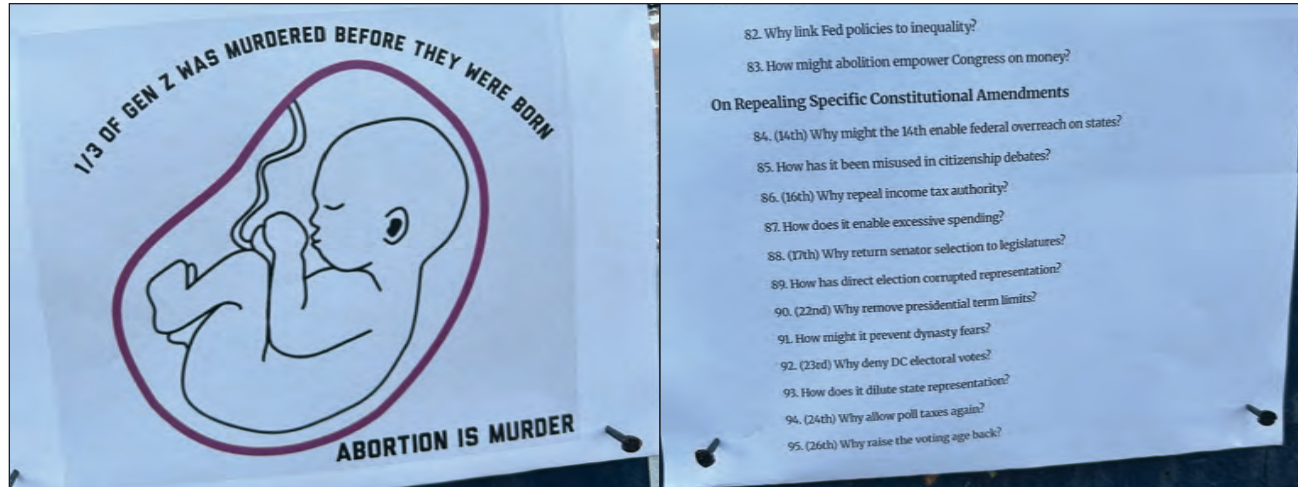
- The 14th Amendment is responsible for defining citizenship in the United States, and for abolishing slavery;
- The 16th Amendment gives Congress the power to collect income taxes;
- The 17th Amendment allows citizens to vote for U.S. Senators, rather than Senators being selected by state legislatures.
- The 22nd Amendment is responsible for giving the President of the United States term limits;
- The 23rd Amendment gives Washington D.C. electoral participation in the presidential election;
- The 24th Amendment prohibits a poll, price or tax allowing voting in elections;
- The 26th Amendment allows citizens 18 and over the right to vote.

The posters are also adjoined with several Bible verses as well as graphics such as an unborn child, captioned "1 / 3 of Gen Z was murdered before they were born. Abortion is murder."

"(We wanted to see) what people would let us put up, and we realized very quickly, no, they're just going to tear down every single thing," Thomas said. "Other groups can put whatever they want up there and no one ever messes with it. We've never touched anyone else's stuff up there, but we have to routinely replace our stuff. Sometimes upwards to four to five times a day, as much as that sounds ridiculous to hear, we still do it because it's become almost a principle thing to us."

College Republicans sent *The News* a press release on Nov. 13, condemning campus censorship, emphasizing the importance of respectful debate and free expression.

The organization said it urges Murray State University to reaffirm its commitment to protecting First Amendment rights, and "that all students can express their views without



Posters nailed to bulletin board between Waterfield Library and Oakley Applied Science

Photos by Baden Grubbs/The News

fear of retaliation or vandalism."

"Disagreement is healthy," the release said. "Debate is necessary. But destroying or censoring what you don't like is not free speech; it's suppression. Murray State should be a campus where all students, regardless of political affiliation, feel safe and respected when they share their beliefs."

Sidda Roche (they/them), Alliance president, expressed the same sentiment in an email sent to Ron Patterson, Murray State president, on Nov. 10.

"I am personally of the belief that everyone has a right to be here and make their voices heard no matter what political affiliation or religious belief," Roche said.

But Roche also raised concerns, not so much about the posters and the bulletin board themselves, but the conduct surrounding them, reaching out on behalf of student concerns, specifically in regard to Murray State's Turning Point USA.

Roche expresses to Patterson that this is more than one area on campus, more than a bulletin board.

"Turning Point USA has also consistently gone against regulations for how posters get put up in buildings and on campus," Roche said. "I personally work in Faculty Hall and have had to take down posters that were posted in abundance, over fliers and without dean's permission."

Roche said Turning Point USA has tabled in the Curris Center so much they're told some students will actively stay away from the building altogether because "members of this organization will walk in your way and follow you instead of staying with their table."

"They also crowd up walkways in a way that I, in my several years here, have never seen another organization do," Roche said.

One student filed a police report for alleged harassment against some members of Turning Point who were "guarding" the materials posted to the board, Roche said.

"I don't know what I am asking you to do about this, but I do know that it's important to me that somebody in charge knows how uncomfortable a large portion of the student body is," Roche said. "I, as a student organization leader, often see people messaging in our group chats about safe



Photo provided by Gray Hawkins/The News

routes to take on campus to avoid these people, and how the political atmosphere on this campus this semester makes them feel unsafe."

Patterson sent a campus-wide email from the address, President News, offering students the opportunity to take an Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity Survey.

Questions ranged from inquiring if students are exposed to a variety of different ideological, political perspectives, and whether students feel free to express their ideas on campus and in the classroom.

"Your feedback is invaluable," Patterson said.

The Murray State News contacted the harassed student for comment, but the student declined for safety reasons.

Student Government Association President Ali Khatib and College Democrats President Jocylen Starks were asked to comment on this story, but did not respond by press time.



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Good luck after graduation!
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From,
The MSU Ads Club

Sex extortions, scams slam campus

River Murt
News Editor
rmurt1@murraystate.edu

During the month of October, Murray State students were the victims of at least four sexual extortions.

The incidents are tracked in the Murray State Fire and Crime Log as per the Clery Act.

The following cases follow a pattern, and *The Murray State News* does not express interest in the exposure of the victims involved.

The names of the victims and those related included in the reports requested from Murray State through the Freedom of Information Act, are redacted. For clarity, victims will be referred to as they or them.

The first instance occurred on Oct. 4 when a student reported to Murray State Police that they were receiving threatening messages from a dating site.

Officer Atlas Tylantiss spoke with the victim about the complaint. "(They) stated that (they) sent a nude picture of himself to an unknown individual on a dating app. Shortly after, they began receiving messages from an unknown phone number demanding that he send Bitcoin currency," the police report said "The sender advised that if payment were not made, the previously shared nude photo would be disseminated."

Tylantiss asked the student multiple times if they had any idea who was responsible. The student said they didn't, and couldn't figure out why, the report said.

Tylantiss advised the student to block all unfamiliar phone numbers and to avoid contact with unknown online sources and sharing explicit material.

SEXUAL EXTORTION ONLINE

AN INDIVIDUAL SENT EXPLICIT PHOTOS TO AN UNKNOWN INDIVIDUAL ONLINE BY REQUEST. THE INDIVIDUAL THEN SENT BITCOIN AND A PREPAID CARD TO THE UNKNOWN INDIVIDUAL IN EXCHANGE FOR NOT SENDING THE PHOTOS OUT TO OTHERS.

Inactive / Investigation Suspended Pending Other Evidence

2025-005140

10-24-2025

09:00

10-25-2025

10:10

Screenshot of Murray State Fire and Crime Log

That same day, another student experienced a similar situation, reporting it a week later on Oct. 11 when the extortion began, according to the Crime Log. Reports say the perpetrator demanded \$1,500 in gift cards.

"The caller advised that (they have) been texting someone on Snapchat and now (that someone) is demanding money from (them) or (the perpetrator) will release pics of (them)," the police report read.

According to the report, Tylantiss spoke with the student and found they were initially communicating with "an unknown female through Instagram before continuing via phone."

The female threatened to post nude pictures of the student online if he did not comply.

Tylantiss advised the student to cease all communication, to block everything related to the individual and not send money or gift cards.

Another student reported the same story on Oct. 13 and was brought to the Murray State Police Station.

The victim reported a person was threatening to release

illicit images if money wasn't given, and was attempting to call the victim over and over.

In the victim's written report turned over to the Murray State Police Department, they provided the gmail of a black-mailer, who they gave pictures to, and in turn demanded \$100 to not post the pictures online.

The person also wanted the victim's phone number to reach their friends and family online, to attempt claims the victim "threatened to rape them."

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Student shares varied experiences as double major

Shelby Burley
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With the end of the fall semester approaching, many students are reevaluating where they stand academically. For some, that means considering a gap year or taking summer courses; for others, it means immersing themselves deeper in academia — perhaps through double majoring.

Comet Gill, a history and theatre major, offered insight into what double majoring really entails.

"I wasn't absolutely certain of what I wanted to do, and I wanted options," Gill said.

Like many college students navigating an often fast-paced and demanding academic environment, Gill originally selected history for career-oriented reasons. But the major's lack of social inclusivity made it difficult for him to form connections.

"History can be time-intensive later on, and I didn't want to let myself give up something I'm passionate about," he said. "Majoring in theatre forces me to keep up with a passion of mine."

Deciding where you want to be in life can be daunting, and Gill encourages students considering a double major to "plan things carefully." If your chosen fields don't significantly overlap, prerequisites and course scheduling become critical. Humanities courses, for example, are sometimes only offered every other year, requiring careful planning — and sometimes pushing back if an adviser is hesitant.

Adding a second major can also create financial strain. With educational funding decreasing nationwide, the added time in school can be challenging.

"My least favorite aspect about double majoring is that it can add additional years of school," Gill said. "Being in school doesn't bother me, but after four years I will no longer receive scholarships."

“*Even when things get overwhelming, I feel grounded knowing I'm doing something that matters to me.*

—Comet Gill

This issue isn't unique to Murray State. According to Gallup News, 87% of Americans who stop pursuing their degree cite cost as a very or moderately important reason for not enrolling. Other leading concerns include work conflicts (81%), total time to degree (73%) and a lack of remote learning options (70%).

Despite financial barriers, Murray State offers a range of resources. Programs such as the McNair Scholars Program support first-generation and underrepresented students seeking to pursue doctoral degrees by offering mentorship and funding for research opportunities.

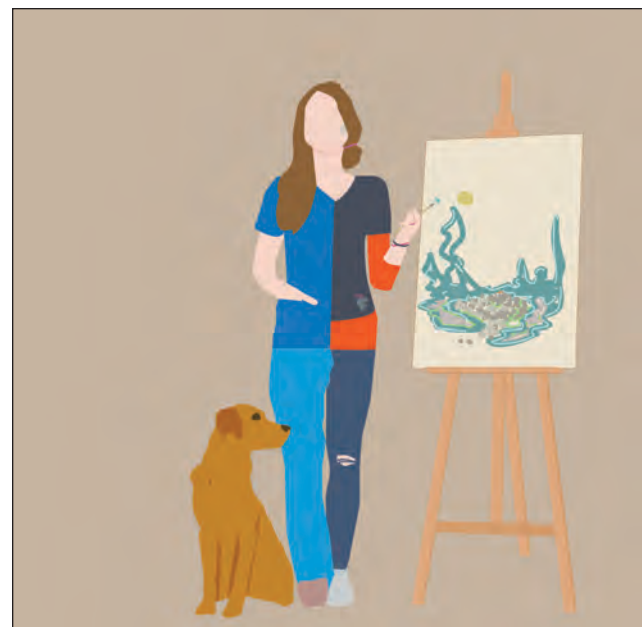
Gill also emphasized the importance of understanding the workload.

"I feel like it's better that I'm busy — although sometimes it can get stressful," he said.

After facing a medical emergency last semester, Gill found himself juggling missed rehearsals and multiple papers in a single week. Despite this, he pushed through.

"I think most people would drop a major at that point," Gill said, "but I am still happy with how things are going."

Despite the challenges, Gill believes double majoring has been worth it.



MacKenzie Rogers/The News

"Even when things get overwhelming, I feel grounded knowing I'm doing something that matters to me," he said.

For students considering a second major, Gill's experience serves as a reminder that the path isn't easy — but it is possible with planning, persistence and passion.

As Murray State continues to expand its resources for academic support, the choice to double major remains a personal one, shaped by each student's goals, finances and the subjects that make them feel most alive.

In the end, double majoring isn't just about earning two degrees. For many students like Gill, it's about creating an academic life that feels both challenging and fulfilling.

Fall 2025 outstanding seniors to speak at graduation

Staff Report

Caroline Chambers and Amelia Lutz were named as the fall 2025 Outstanding Seniors at Murray State University.

Students recognized with this honor are known for their academic excellence and professionalism.

Chambers, of Cunningham, Tennessee, will earn a bachelor's degree in agribusiness and a minor in unmanned aerial systems.

A 3.96 GPA student, Chambers is a recipient of the Presidential Fellowship, a member of the President's List every semester of her college career, served as Murray State Horticulture Club president, Omicron Delta Kappa Honor Society president, as well as Honors Student Council treasurer for two years. She also earned Outstanding Horticulture Club Senior in April 2025. Chambers' hard work has paid off at Murray State. She received six scholarships totaling nearly \$23,000 for the 2024-25 school year.

While a member of the Honors Student Council, Chambers helped raise around 2,000 tulips over two years for a fundraiser and beautification project. She also volunteered at Needline and used her connections in the farming community to help provide 300-plus pounds of meat during reductions in government assistance.

After graduation, Chambers plans to work in the agribusiness industry and help manage her family farm.

"Being a Racer has meant being surrounded by faculty and friends that are excited about my growth not only as a student, but as a person," Chambers said. "Being a Racer has also meant having opportunities within my field that I would never have anywhere else. I

am eternally grateful for the programs, mentors and friends that have made me the person I am today. Being named Outstanding Senior is an honor that I forever cherish, but overall is just a representation of exceptional opportunities I had access to here at Murray State."

Amelia Lutz, of Saint Meinrad, Indiana, will earn a bachelor's degree in music with a minor in Spanish.

A 3.98 GPA student, Lutz is a member of the Murray State Honors College, a Murray State University Trustee Scholarship recipient and a U.S. Department of State Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship recipient for study abroad, which she completed in Salzburg, Austria.

She has served as vice president of Alpha Mu Gamma national collegiate foreign languages honor society, All Campus Sing committee chair for Honors Student Council and flute section leader in Racer Band.

Lutz also has research experience with Posters at the Capitol in Frankfort, Kentucky, where she presented her poster, "Implementing a Paleographical Analysis to Provenance a Spanish Santorale" in March 2025. She also presented a poster on her original undergraduate research on a Spanish manuscript at the Kentucky Honors Roundtable at the University of Louisville in February 2025.

After graduation, Lutz plans to serve as a Seton Teaching Fellow in New York, New York.

"Being a Racer has meant getting to learn and grow surrounded by friends and classmates who show me every day just how much is possible," said Lutz. "I am forever grateful to the teachers, friends and mentors that took the time to be there for me during my years at Murray State. Being named Outstanding Senior is



Photo provided by the Office of Public Relations
Lutz and Chambers were recognized at Senior Breakfast.

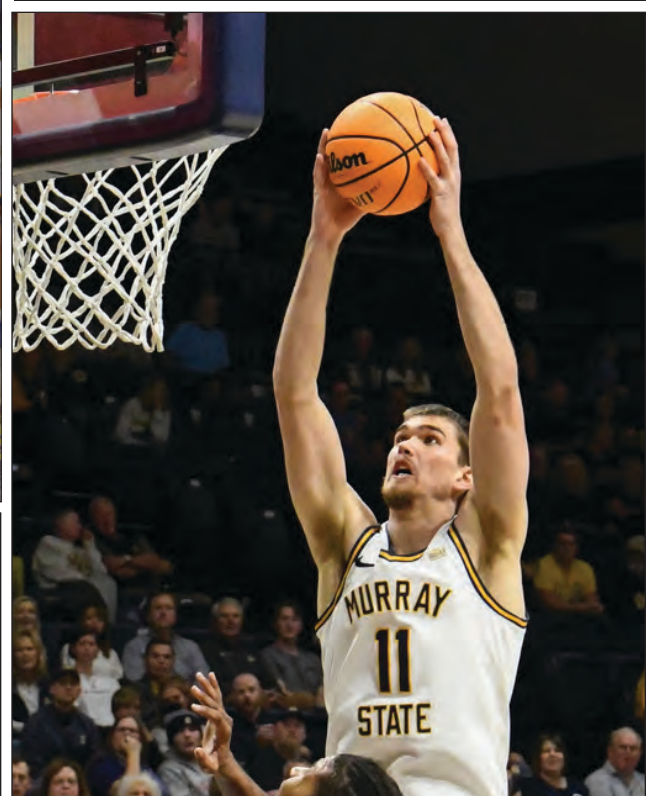
a great honor that I will carry with me for the rest of my life."

The fall 2025 commencement ceremony will take place at 10 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 13, at the CFSB Center.

Racing to March

Another Murray State college basketball season has begun and both the men's and women's teams are off to a hot start with wins at home and on the road. Our photographers have documented the games from the doubleheader Nov. 15 against Nicholls State and Saint Louis.

Photos by: Cate Taylor, Mya Bolton and Alyssa Dawson



SEMESTERS OVER WORD SEARCH

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Local, campus outreach group celebrate community

Gray Hawkins

Features Editor

ghawkins4@murraystate.edu

While most students are thankful for a break away from research papers and looming final exams, Thanksgiving isn't a comforting family holiday for everyone. A local advocacy and support group is offering a community alternative.

Young Feminist Meetup, a youth-outreach affiliate of the West Kentucky National Organization for Women, is hosting a Friendsgiving potluck at noon this Saturday, Nov. 22, at the Marshall County Library Benton Branch. Reagan Peery, the event organizer and co-leader of the Young Feminist Meetup, said she wants this event to be as welcoming and accessible as possible to the community, especially to Murray State students who won't have a traditional Thanksgiving this year.

"I felt it would be something NOW could host (to) help people feel a little bit more included in the community and better around the holidays," Peery said. "It's a pretty personal event for me. I'm not speaking with my family anymore ... It really puts into perspective for me that a lot of people also aren't having a traditional Thanksgiving."

The Young Feminist Friendsgiving is open to all, but a link for attendance and food contributions for the event is available on the West Kentucky NOW's Facebook page to help the event organizers and volunteers know how much food to prepare. Peery said she is planning a trivia game for the event with holiday-related

questions as well as feminist history and women's health topics to tie into the organization's broader community values.

"Before NOW, I had an overall feeling of a certain level of isolation living in Kentucky," she said. "Joining NOW and getting to meet my co-leader, Sam (Sexton), inspired me in so many ways to even do this position and ... find a sense of belonging and community. I think for Friendsgiving, it's the same kind of wanting to find a sense of family and community of people who are like-minded, open and kind."

Presley Billingsley (they/she), a freshman psychology major, is the president of the recently formed NOW Campus Action Network, a student group aiming to improve education, service and action on Murray State's main campus. In CAN's first meeting on Nov. 17, Billingsley and Sam Sexton, co-leader of the Young Feminist Meetup, encouraged attending students to join the event.

Billingsley said the Young Feminist Friendsgiving is a great way to build connection and comfort through "good food and good people (that) truly make you feel loved."

"I know our culture highlights connection and family during this time of year, so being alone hits extra hard," Billingsley said. "For people not connected with their families, whether it be by distance, circumstances or death, I hope that this Friendsgiving can give them some food, friends and fun during the holiday season."

Peery said she intends for next year's Young Feminist Friendsgiving to partner with CAN and the Murray



Graphic provided by West Kentucky NOW.

Transit Authority to ensure more Murray State students, particularly international students who stay on campus over break, have the opportunity to come together with a community who welcomes them warmly.

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Local restaurant provides free meals for neighbors in need

Ainsley Beatty

Chief Copy Editor
abeatty2@murraystate.edu

The Willow Bistro has launched a free lunch punch card for those on SNAP benefits for the month of November.

The program was announced on Nov. 7 on the restaurant's Facebook page. The bistro is offering all SNAP recipients a free lunch punch card, which can be used for 10 free lunch items from their seasonal menu this month.

Erik Watson Concrete, another local business, partnered with The Willow Bistro for the program. They will be matching the "monetary value of all meals provided and donate that amount to our local Needline and (Soup for the Soul)," according to the Facebook announcement.

The Willow Bistro was opened in 2014 by Breanna and Quique Morales, after moving to Murray, Kentucky, from New York City. The building was once Gloria's World Village Restaurant, an international restaurant.

The Moraleses kept most of the international dishes from Gloria's menu to serve at The Willow Bistro while adding their own dishes to the menu, such as more American and authentic Mexican food, according to a biography on the business's Yelp page.

Breanna Morales said she was driven to help community members worried about losing their SNAP benefits due to the government shutdown.

"I started to imagine how I would feel if I was put in their situation," she said. "I, of course, cannot solve this problem, but I knew there had to be something that I could do to help."

While brainstorming on how she could help the community, Erik Watson, the owner of Erik Watson Concrete, reached out to her. Morales said Watson was also



Photo by Kris Fister/The News

The Willow Bistro and Erik Watson Concrete owners created a SNAP benefits alternative for locals in need.

looking for a way to help.

"We threw out some ideas to one another and came up with the free lunch punch card," she said. "The Willow Bistro provides the food and service. Erik Watson Concrete matches the amount we would have received for those meals and donates it to Needline and Soup for the Soul."

The reception from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. On social media, the bistro's announcement has received 414 likes and 240 shares, which is the most engagement they have ever had. Morales said many community members reached out "thanking (the bistro) and wondering if there is anything they can do to help."

While The Willow Bistro will not be taking donations, she said some have offered to add to the monetary donation from Erik Watson Concrete.

Morales said the SNAP recipients who have claimed their cards have been "pleasant and extremely grateful."

"We have only had six people that have claimed their free lunch punch card, but it has been less than a week since we first posted about the program," she said. "I am sure the number of people will increase quickly."

For more information on The Willow Bistro and their free lunch punch card program, please visit their Facebook page or website or contact them at thewillowbistro@gmail.com.

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OPINION: Belmont is basketball's biggest rival

A dive into Murray State basketball history shows glimpses of past hardwood battles

Laney Evans
Sports Editor
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One of the best parts about college basketball is the sheer number of cut-throat, decades long rivalries, both within and outside of conference play. From Kentucky vs Louisville, Duke vs North Carolina, Michigan vs Michigan State and Cincinnati vs Xavier, rivalries are often one of the most entertaining, adrenaline-inducing aspects of college basketball for both the players and the viewers.

One of the most beloved topics of discussion within Racer Nation is who is Murray State basketball's biggest rival?

We posted on social media on Friday, Nov. 14 and presented the same question to see what people had to say.

An overwhelming majority of people who responded to our post said the Belmont University Bruins. After ample discussion in the newsroom, we've reached the same conclusion, and it's not a surprise as to why.

The first time the Bruins and Racers met on the men's stage was in November of 1986 in Racer Arena. They played again in 1997 during the first year of Racer basketball in the former Regional Special Events Center, the now CFSB Center. Murray State overcame Belmont 79-59 and boasted a three-game win streak against the Bruins until 2007.

In 2012, Belmont joined Murray State in the Ohio Valley Conference and the

teams began to play twice a year—thrice if they met in the conference tournament—which only added fuel to the fire. The two schools transitioned from the OVC to the Missouri Valley Conference together in 2022, and their conference tournament record remains at 2-3 in the OVC and they have yet to meet in the MVC tournament.

Murray State's longest winning streak in program history began on Nov. 30, 2014 and ended after 25 games on March 7, 2015, against Belmont in the OVC championship game when Taylor Barnette sank a three-point shot from the top of the key with 3.2 seconds left in regulation. At the time, the Racers were ranked #25 in the country, and though they didn't make the NCAA tournament, they made it through three rounds of the NIT tournament before losing to Old Dominion University.

The two have met 30 times and the Racers have won 12 of those to Belmont's 18 wins. Though the teams have met fewer times than other debatable rivals, the series record is closer than that of any other team the Racers have faced. Additionally, of the 30 games played, five were for a conference championship.

The women's team's history with Belmont looks a little different, with 26 total meetings and only six Racer wins, four of which were at home. Murray State's longest losing streak against Belmont was 11 games from 2001 to 2021, when the Racers finally earned a 72-66 win at Belmont's Curb Event Center in Nashville, Tennessee.



Kristopher Fister/The News

Former Racers Nick Ellington and AJ Ferguson battle for a rebound with a Belmont player.



Kristopher Fister/The News

Junior guard Haven Ford waits for a play to develop against Southern Illinois' defense.

The first time the women's teams met in a MVC tournament was on March 16, 2025, when the Racers beat the Bruins 83-62 in the MVC tournament championship in Evansville, Indiana at the Ford Center. The Racers then went on to fall 92-57 in the first round of the NCAA tournament to the No. 6 Iowa Hawkeyes.

The second most mentioned Murray State rival by the fanbase on social media was the Austin Peay Governors, with the Southern Illinois Salukis at a close third.

From 1941-2023, the men's team boasted a 90-46 overall record against the Governors and a 9-6 OVC tournament record from 1967-2020.

The women hold a 55-53 record against the former OVC foes, with their most significant win being 116-80 on December 7, 2024 at the CFSB Center. The team also scored their second highest number of 3-pointers during this game, when sophomore Halli Pooch scored six of the team's 16 three point shots. Katelyn Young also scored her, at the time, career-high in points with 31 against the Governors in 2022.

Southern Illinois has a marginal lead in the all-time record versus Murray State, leading 23-21. Six of those games have been played with both teams being members of the MVC, with Murray

State's record being 2-4 against the Salukis in those games.

Although the current Racer nation may not see Western Kentucky University as a frequent foe, day-one fans recall the decades when the two schools battled for the status of the best basketball program in Western Kentucky.

The men's teams have only met ten times since 2007 and have split the matches 5-5, while the women have only met six times in the last two decades, and have fallen by at least seven points in each of their meetups.

The Hilltoppers lead the overall series 100-55 over the Racers.

If this series was closer, WKU would have more of a chance at being Murray State's biggest rival. The massive difference in record dissuades us from choosing them, but they definitely deserved a shoutout.

The women's basketball team will meet Belmont for the first time of the 2025-2026 season on Sunday, Jan. 18, and the men's team will meet the Bruins in Nashville on Saturday, January 31.

All in all, rivalries, no matter who you consider a rival, are some of the most important traditions in college basketball. The ever-changing atmosphere of college basketball only adds to the anticipation and excitement around these matchups.

Men's club volleyball on third season, building a legacy

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As campus winds down on Monday and Wednesday nights and students retreat from the academic to the residential side of campus, the squeaks of sneakers and the gentle bump of synthetic leather ricocheting from parallel forearms echo from the Carr Health South Gym. Within the four walls of the 25,000-square-foot, 87-year-old gym where thousands of Racers have played intramural sports, coached little league games and hosted various clubs is the home of the Murray State men's club volleyball team.

Founded on the vision of bringing together peers for friendly competition, the team has grown significantly over the last three years. It is now a conglomerate of former high school players, intramural all-stars and rookies. After being awarded Murray State's Student Government Association 2025 Organization of the Year Award and traveling to several tournaments during the 2024-25 season, the team has proven its longevity and is continuing its success in the 2025-26 season.

The team can be found tabling at Racer Nation Orientation and club fairs, grabbing dinner on campus, or trying out new hobbies like roller skating. When they are not putting in the

physical and technical work on the court, they are building social chemistry that translates to more cohesive competitive play.

"One of the most rewarding parts is seeing all the players build friendships and become family within the club, especially this year," said senior coach Nellie Morton. "Everybody gets along so well on the court and off the court."

This season, the team has competed in a scrimmage against Union University and in two tournaments, the first at Tennessee Tech and the most recent at the University of Louisville.

The self-funded team relies on fundraisers, to support their travel and uniforms, including open-to-the-community tournaments and bake sales. The team's board, which consists of the president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, and three coaches, communicates with other clubs in the South and Midwest regions to play in their tournaments. The team's goal is to organize and host a tournament within the next few seasons.

After two years of gathering established talent and newcomers alike to join the team, co-founder and Murray State graduate Quinn Templeton passed the torch to current president and co-founder Randy Rivas Leyva Rojas, a psychology major from Louisville, Kentucky. A former high-school athlete at DeSales High School, Rojas is the club



Parker Lally/The News

Murray State men's club volleyball team posing after a successful scrimmage at Union University.

team's outside hitter and has watched the team grow from four to six guys playing casually to a 14-man roster with two organized practices a week.

As the spring semester approaches, the team is looking for dedicated athletes and will hold a round of tryouts near the beginning of next semester. No experience is needed to try out; in fact, only four current players have high

school experience. The only requirements are hustle, commitment and a competitive spirit.

"College is absolutely a new time to just try new things and it's a place where you figure out who you are and what you like and don't like," Rivas said. "So I would say give it a shot. It's all about welcoming new people and building new skills."

ESPN returns to YouTube TV

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After 15 days and 15 nights without access to some of the most highly-anticipated college football, National Football League and college basketball games, YouTubeTV subscribers finally have full access to the previously available television channels after Disney and YouTube TV came to a licensing agreement on Friday, Nov. 16.

Although the previous licensing deal was set to expire on Friday, Oct. 31, the two companies failed to reach a new agreement. On Thursday, Oct. 30, Disney content was removed from Google-owned streaming platform, depriving YouTube TV subscribers of channels such as ABC, ACC Network, ESPN, Freeform, FX, SEC Network, and NatGeo.

Kentuckians were unable to watch the annual University of Louisville and University of Kentucky men's basketball games unless they had cable or other Disney streaming services such as Hulu Live TV and Fubo TV.

YouTube TV subscribers were also barred from viewing the University of Kentucky's wins over Auburn and Florida, or the University of Louisville's overtime loss to the University of California and one-point loss against Clemson University.

When negotiations began in early October, YouTube TV claimed that Disney's offers were costly and would put the burden on consumers. Disney's largest revenue collector, ESPN, charges over \$10 per month per pay-TV subscriber, which is higher than any other network in the United States.

It also noted that the blackout negotiation tactic provided an opportunity for benefiting Disney's streaming products—Hulu Live TV and Fubo.

Disney's rebuttal claimed that YouTube TV should pay a fair rate for the channels, and accused Google of "using its market dominance to eliminate competition."

Amidst the wave of negotiations, YouTube TV offered \$20 in credits to subscribers that could count towards in-app purchases or the monthly fee of \$59.99-82.99. However, many sports fans resorted to the \$6 24-hour Sling TV pass.

After over two weeks of continued back and forth between the two parties, these channels, as well as any recordings that were previously in their library, will be restored.

The deal includes the ability to include the Disney+, Hulu Bundle. Disney has also said access to various live and on-demand programs from ESPN Unlimited, which includes ESPN+ content and will be available on YouTube TV to base plan subscribers with no additional costs by the time 2026 wraps up.

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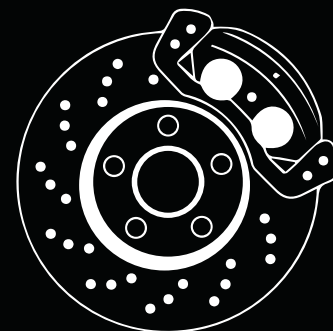
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Kristopher Fister/The News

Head coach David Schwepker celebrates with senior Ella Vogel, freshman Mija Pristovnik and senior haidi Miliou during a timeout at Racer Arena.

Volleyball closes season without MVC Tourney bid

Anna Knasel
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The women's volleyball team went 4-21 in the 2025 season, finishing last in the Missouri Valley Conference after a six-game losing streak to end the season—falling short of making the MVC tournament.

Head coach David Schwepker entered his 27th season for the Racers, the strongest and most successful coach for the Racer volleyball team. In 2022, he led the Racers to their first MVC tournament, but they have yet to make another appearance.

The Racers' offense lacked its spark from the 2024 season, where they went 14-14. Their season was cut short by late-season losses against Bradley, Illinois State, Belmont and Valparaiso. The Racers' star players who shone in the 2024 season while still leading their respective categories, had a noticeable

difference in their performances this year.

Senior outside hitter Ella Vogel ended her senior year with Murray State with a 322 kill season, putting her fifth in career kills for the Racers with 1,277 across her four seasons. Vogel led the team in kills and was responsible for 355.5 out of the Racers' 1,310 total points. She had her highest kill game on Friday, Oct. 10, against Indiana State where she reached 24 kills and her season-high 26 points. Although her offensive shine primarily through kills, she also had the second most blocks for the Racers with 51, only behind senior middle hitter Morgan McClure who earned 72.

An underrated attacker this season has been junior outside hitter Lily Burnett. Although she only played in 51 sets—considerably less than other players on the roster—she finished with 112 kills, the fourth most on the team. Freshman setter Katie Titus highlights a bright future for the Racers as she leads

the team with 416 assists and fourth most digs with 132 in her first season. Another freshman, libero Halle Forester, had 191 digs, the most for the team, and with the fourth most digs on the Racers with 28.

The Racers' strongest game occurred on Sept. 5 with their win against Western Illinois where they scored a total of 86 points through five sets, their most amount of points scored in a game that resulted in a win. The key players in that game were Vogel with 17 kills, freshman outside hitter Mija Pristovnik with 15 and Burnett with 14. Alongside her double-digit kills, Vogel also had a game-leading 14 digs.

As a team, the Racers' offense is underproducing kills, as their opponents score 286 more kills than the Racers. The Racers were also unable to have a winning streak of any kind; all four of their wins spread out, snapping their losing streaks just to start another in the next game. Murray State commits 49 more errors than their opponents,

causing close sets to be lost not from their weak offense, but instead, problems on their defense. However, one of the Racers' skills involve their solo blocking where they have 19 more successes than other teams.

While defending, the Racers have shown more resilience with 1,250 digs in 94 sets, highlighting the strengths of Forester, Nuccio, and Pristovnik. The Racers made more attempts both defensively and offensively but also made increasingly more reception and attack errors.

Even though the Racers' 2025 season ended without an MVC spot, there are multiple impressive rookies to look out for next season. With the star newcomers Titus, Forester, and Pristovnik all expected to play in the 2026 season, the Racers show hope for the seasons to come as their rookies develop and continue to grow. The graduating seniors McClure, Nuccio, Vogel, and Miliou ended their tenures with 776 combined points in 337 sets played.

Congratulations
Elisha Butryn
December 2025 Grad

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NOV. 8 @ NORTHERN IOWA: L 31-14
NOV. 15 VS. NORTH DAKOTA: L 35-17

SOCCER

OCT. 30 @ INDIANA STATE: W 2-0
NOV. 6 VS. UIC: L 1-1; 4-3 PKS

RIFLE

NOV. 2 VS. JACKSONVILLE STATE: W 4714-4706
NOV. 8 @ OHIO STATE: 2ND OF 4
NOV. 9 @ UTEP/WEST VIRGINIA: 3RD OF 3

VOLLEYBALL

OCT. 31 @ ILLINOIS STATE: L 3-0
NOV. 1 @ BRADLEY: L 3-0
NOV. 7 @ SOUTHERN ILLINOIS: L 3-0
NOV. 8 VS. VALPARAISO: L 3-0
NOV. 13 VS. BELMONT: L 3-1
NOV. 14 VS. NORTHERN IOWA: L 3-0

MEN'S BASKETBALL

NOV. 3 @ SIOUX FALLS VS. OMAHA: W 85-77
NOV. 7 VS. MISSISSIPPI VALLEY: W 108-60
NOV. 11 @ DALLAS VS. SMU: L 102-91
NOV. 15 VS. NICHOLLS: W 99-79
NOV. 18 VS. LITTLE ROCK: W 89-68

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

NOV. 3 VS. TREVECCA: W 102-61
NOV. 7 @ EVANSVILLE, IND
VS. SOUTHERN INDIANA: W 79-77
NOV. 11 @ BROOKINGS, SD
VS. SOUTH DAKOTA STATE: L 91-60
NOV. 15 VS. SAINT LOUIS: W 96-88
NOV. 18 @ URBANA-CHAMPAIGN, IL
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NOV. 24 @ GRAND CAYMAN VS.
MCNEESE STATE 6:30 P.M.
NOV. 25 @ GRAND CAYMAN VS. GEORGE
WASHINGTON 6:30 P.M.
DEC. 2 VS. MOREHEAD UNIVERSITY 7 P.M.
DEC. 6 VS. BELLARMINE 2 P.M.
DEC. 13 @ HENDERSON, NEV VS.
AKRON 3 P.M.
DEC. 18 VS. DRAKE TBA
DEC. 21 @ VALPARAISO 1 P.M.

FOOTBALL

NOV. 22 @ INDIANA STATE NOON

RIFLE

NOV. 22 @ UNIVERSITY OF
KENTUCKY 9 A.M.

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21						

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

NOV. 22 VS. UAB 2 P.M.
NOV. 28 VS. GEORGE MASON @
DAYTONA 12:30 P.M.
NOV. 29 VS. BOSTON COLLEGE @
DAYTONA 10 A.M.
DEC. 3 @ MOREHEAD 5 P.M.
DEC. 6 @ CLARKSVILLE, TN
VS. AUSTIN PEAY NOON
DEC. 15 VS. MEMPHIS 11 A.M.
DEC. 20 VS. LINDSEY WILSON 2 P.M.

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