

Stricklin's winning attitude rubs off on MSU

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Mississippi State University Athletic Director Scott Stricklin said there is a comfort level, an optimism and a feeling of family that draws people to the campus.

"There's something special about Mississippi State," Stricklin said. "I felt that 23 years ago when I came here as a freshman, and it remains today. Only now, there's this tremendous energy and momentum that contributes to the growth of our University and our community."

Stricklin said there is a tremendous opportunity at MSU to continue on an upward trajectory.

"Attracting and retaining quality students, coaches and staff will remain a priority, plus we have some exciting plans regarding our athletic facilities that will assist in creating great experiences," Stricklin said.

He said the goal for MSU Athletics is to create great experiences for student-athletes, coaches, staff, students, fans and alumni.

"Being a part of creating those experiences is a thrill for those of us who work in the athletic department," Stricklin said. "It's special when we get those emails and phone calls from fans who are proud of something good that has happened in Bulldog athletics."

And a lot of good things have been happening at MSU this year.

Four teams finished the 2010-11 school year ranked in the nation's top 20, including football, baseball, men's tennis and men's outdoor track and field. And all 16 of MSU's sports programs finished above the NCAA threshold for academic progress.

"The best experience in athletics is winning," Stricklin said. "We've done our share of winning at Mississippi State, but the challenge has always been to win consistently. Our goal is to build our programs up to the point where every student-athlete who wears the Maroon and White has a chance to play in the postseason and compete for championships on a consistent basis."

Stricklin said it has been fun watching the university and the athletic department grow and become more aggressive in how they promote, recruit and sell MSU.

Plus, the athletic department has set school records for private fundraising to athletics and football ticket sales.

MSU President Mark Keenum said Stricklin has done a tremendous job since taking over as athletic director just over a year ago.

"He is a Bulldog and thus understands firsthand the challenges and opportunities facing Mississippi State in the fast-changing world of college athletics," Keenum said. "He also worked at Auburn and Kentucky and already had very strong relationships with so many of his SEC colleagues. That has enabled him to be an effective advocate for Mississippi State with respect to league matters. I have also been impressed with his leadership abilities and vision in employing strategies that are enabling Mississippi State to compete in the best conference in America."

MSU football coach Dan Mullen said Stricklin is “True Maroon.”

“He believes in this university and this State,” Mullen said. “He is the right man to lead our athletic department.”

MSU’s head women’s basketball coach Sharon Fanning-Otis said Stricklin has a passion for his work and empowers people to do their job.

“He is committed to success and constantly brainstorming ways to improve our programs,” Fanning-Otis said. “He believes in relentless effort to win across the board and his focus, energy, encouragement and support is a tremendous example for us all.”

Fanning-Otis also said Stricklin is a man of integrity with faith, family and friends being very important to him.

MSU’s baseball coach John Cohen and Scott Stricklin were at MSU together during their student days. During Cohen’s first year at Kentucky, the athletic director asked him, “What do you know about Scott Stricklin?”

When Cohen arrived at MSU, he was excited to learn Stricklin would be returning to MSU in the athletic director’s office.

“He is somebody with tremendous vision,” Cohen said. “He is such a creative person, not just a creative administrator, but a creative person. He is one of those people who quote President Kennedy by always asking ‘Why not?’. He thinks ‘big picture’ and ‘little picture.’ I am a big fan of his and I believe that he is one of those people, along with MSU President Mark Keenum, who are providing tremendous leadership for the university.”

Bo Hemphill, senior associate AD, said Stricklin has an amazing ability to understand and deal with the number of issues faces on a daily basis as an athletic department.

“He works tirelessly to build relationships with alumni, coaches, student athletes and our staff to make sure we do all we can to enhance the experience MSU athletics provides our followers,” Hemphill said.

Stricklin said he always knew he wanted to work in athletics.

“So, as a young person, you think being an athletic director would be pretty cool,” Stricklin said. “As you grow and mature in the business, you realize that it takes a degree of good luck and timing, along with hard work and other factors, to have an opportunity like this. I feel very blessed to get to do what I do.”

Stricklin said former athletic director Greg Byrne and Mitch Barnhart have served as his role models in the business and played a major role in his career direction.

“I worked for Mitch Barnhart at Kentucky, and he was and remains a mentor for me and other young ADs,” Stricklin said. “Greg Byrne and I worked at UK together, and then Greg gave me the opportunity to come back to MSU when he became the AD in Starkville ... I’ve been fortunate to work with and for many talented individuals, and I’ve learned something from each of them.”

Stricklin and his wife, Anne, have two daughters. Abby is 10 and in fifth grade at Ward-Stewart and Sophie is 7 and in second grade at Sudduth Elementary. Anne is active with the Starkville Parent-Teachers Association.

Anne is a Starkville native and a graduate of Starkville High School. The family are members at the Starkville Church of Christ, where the couple was married 18 years ago.

When he is not at work, Stricklin likes to run, read and spend time with his family.

His parents David and Eula Stricklin, are retired and live in Madison. His brother, David, is a pilot for Delta Airlines and his sister, Leanna, is a pharmaceutical representative. They also live in Madison with their respective families.