

Memphis Grizzlies spread cheer across the Mid-South with a season of giving back from sports page 1



For more information on Season of Giving, visit grizzlies.com/community.

ganization. **Vince Williams Jr.** celebrated **Red Tub Day** on Saturday, Dec. 13, supporting the **Memphis Family Connection Center** by providing Christmas gifts for 500 children at risk and in foster care.

Rookie **Cedric Coward** supported **STREETS Ministries for their Christmas Basket Distribution**, greeting families and placing baskets in the trunks of cars on Saturday, Dec. 13. Coward also attended the nonprofit's **Christmas Basketball Classic** on Thursday, Dec. 18, issuing Grizzlies swag and words of wisdom to the young basketball players ahead of their matchup.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope helped support **Operation Christmas Basket's** annual food drive on Saturday, Dec. 13, a tradition more than 40 years old that provides more than 7,000 families with fresh produce, protein, pantry staples and more. For the second year in a row, **Santi Aldama** and **John Konchar** partnered with the **TEAM Mentor Alumni Program** to host 20 families from **TEAM Mentor** and the **Office of Youth Services** on Monday, Dec. 15, gifting students the opportunity to shop for their favorite styles of shoes.

Alongside his family, **Brandon Clarke** hosted a special holiday celebration for the **Boys & Girls Club of Greater Memphis**, providing food, games, gifts and a donation to the families on Thursday, Dec. 18. Four Grizzlies players – **Santi Aldama**, **Kentavious Caldwell-Pope**, **Ty Jerome** and **John Konchar** – hosted families from

the Boys & Girls Club, local schools and other Memphis organizations to be treated to **Suite Nights** throughout the **Season of Giving**.

The organization supported several holiday celebrations across Memphis this year, including the **Footo Park at South City Annual Holiday Celebration** on Thursday, Dec. 11, and the **South Memphis Alliance Dream Seekers Holiday Party** on Monday, Dec. 22, making the holiday season special for local families and children. **The Memphis Grizzlies Scholars Program** and **TEAM Mentor** also hosted their annual holiday celebration at **Main Event** on Thursday, Dec. 18, allowing program mentors and mentees to enjoy games, activities, giveaways and fun.

The Grizzlies put on a full-team event for all players and coaches to participate in, hosting more than 250 guests at **FedExForum** and serving dinner to families from the **164th Airlift Wing, My Town Miracles and Girls Inc. of Memphis** on Friday, Dec. 19. To wrap up the Season of Giving, **Grizz** and the **Grizz Girls** stopped by **Le Bonheur Children's Hospital**, passing out candy canes and Grizzlies swag to families in the hospital going through treatment.

For more information on Season of Giving, visit grizzlies.com/community. Fans who want to support the Memphis Grizzlies and purchase 2025-26 season tickets, single game tickets or partial plans can do so now by going online to grizzlies.com/tickets. For more information on the Grizzlies, visit grizzlies.com, 'like' Memphis Grizzlies on Facebook or follow @memgrizz on Twitter/X and Instagram.

Memphis Hustle acquires Colby Jones from Motor City Cruise... from sports page 1

seasons with the Detroit Pistons, Washington Wizards and Sacramento Kings averaging 3.2 points and 1.9 rebounds in 10.2 minutes after being drafted 34th overall in the 2023 NBA Draft out of Xavier where he helped lead the Musketeers to the NIT Tournament Championship in

2022 where he was named NIT MVP. Zilinskas (6-6, 205) has appeared as a reserve in 12 games for the Hustle this season averaging 6.1 points and 2.3 rebounds in 19.4 minutes after going unselected in the 2025 NBA Draft.

Sanders and Cox named to American's Preseason All-Conference Team from sports page 1

coming off consecutive seasons as Memphis' saves leader, including a 2024 campaign where he led the American and was ranked within the top 20 nationally with nine saves. The right-hander logged a save in Memphis' series-clinching win against Florida Atlantic (April 13) and notched back-to-back saves to complete a sweep of UAB during the 2025 season.

The former No. 4 right-handed pitcher and No. 10 player in Mississippi in the class of 2020 according to Perfect Game was also named to the 2024 NCBWA Stopper of the Year Midseason Watch List, also garnering a nod on the preseason watch list for the same award ahead of the 2025 season.

SEASON TICKETS ON SALE NOW

Season-ticket pages are \$99 plus fees and include a reserved seat in the grandstand at FedExPark Avron Fogelman Field for all 31

home games in 2025.

Kids ages 17 and under will receive free admission all season. Please note that free youth tickets are only in the general admission area and not in the grandstand.

Tickets can be purchased by visiting www.gotigersgo.com.

2026 AMERICAN CONFERENCE PRESEASON HONORS

Preseason Player of the Year Dawson Bryce, 3B, Charlotte

Preseason Pitcher of the Year Ethan Norby, East Carolina*

* denotes unanimous selection

For complete information on Memphis Tiger Baseball, visit www.GoTigersGo.com and follow the team's social media channels on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Blackburn introduces HUSTLE... from sports page 1

“This bill focuses in on the financial security and safety of college athletes who – finally – are earning compensation for their name, image, and likeness (NIL),” said Senator Cantwell. “Many of these athletes will be in a unique situation where they will earn NIL income during a relatively brief period of their careers. Our bill will set up a specific NIL Account where they can set aside some of that income and build long-term savings. The bill also will protect athletes and their NIL earnings against financial exploitation by unscrupulous agents. Since athletes have been able to earn NIL, some have been victimized by agents who have charged shockingly high commissions or have tried to take ownership of the athlete’s intellectual property rights. Our bill will rein in these abuses and require agents to register with a state.”

BACKGROUND

•Since the Supreme Court affirmed in 2021 that college athletes have a right to profit from

their name, image, and likeness, college athletics has turned into a multibillion-dollar marketplace. NIL deals generated over \$1.2 billion in the 2023-2024 period, with projections to exceed \$2.5 billion by 2025-2026 if revenue sharing is fully implemented.

- Athletes who just a few years ago were prohibited from accepting basic sponsorships are now signing deals with national brands, monetizing social media platforms, licensing personal trademarks, and participating in increasingly complex commercial partnerships.
- While this new environment gives athletes unprecedented earning power, these athletes can often lack the financial tools, institutional support, or regulatory safeguards necessary to navigate such a complex market.
- In a 2022 NCAA survey of over 9,800 athletes, 49% indicated a need for educational resources specifically on tax and financial literacy. In the same study, only 9% of student-athletes had ever met with a financial counselor.
- This mismatch—significant income paired with limited guid-

ance—shows that student-athletes must be further empowered to invest in their financial futures and protect their long-term financial well-being.

THE HUSTLE ACT

- The HUSTLE Act would:
 - Allow student-athletes to contribute their NIL income up to the annual gift-tax exclusion amount to an NIL Investment Account, with the funds growing tax-free;
 - Allow up to \$35,000 of unused NIL account funds to be rolled over into an IRA or other retirement vehicle once the athlete has been out of college sports for at least a year;
 - Require trustees to provide financial education to ensure athletes understand and manage their NIL savings responsibly; and
 - Direct the U.S. Department of the Treasury to issue regulations to prevent abuse, ensure proper reporting, track contribution limits, and define additional qualified expenses.
- The HUSTLE Act would also

modernize the Sports Agent Responsibility and Trust Act by:

- Requiring athlete agents to register with a state before representing athletes in NIL endorsements;
 - Capping agent fees at 5 percent and certifying their registration to the athletic association that governs the athlete’s sport;
 - Further banning a range of deceptive practices, including misrepresenting NIL opportunities to influence enrollment or transfer decisions and signing athletes to contracts that extend beyond their eligibility; and
 - Requiring athletic associations—such as the NCAA or other national governing bodies—to maintain a public, searchable online registry of all registered and certified athlete agents, dramatically increasing transparency for athletes and families.
- Senators Blackburn and Cantwell have worked with outside entities to solicit feedback for this bipartisan legislation to support college athletes:

Recap: Memphis women’s basketball caps conference play with victory over Rust

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – Memphis women’s basketball capped non-conference play with a 107-63 victory over Rust on Sunday afternoon at Elma Roane Fieldhouse.

The Tigers head into American Conference play with a record of 6-7, having won two games in a row and three straight games at home dating back to November. They hit the century mark for the first time this season; 107 points is the most since Jan. 5, 2013, against Wright State.

On a dominant day for both sides of the ball, Memphis forced 35 Bearcat turnovers and turned it into 49 points. After Rust (7-9) took a 26-24 lead early in the second quarter, the Tigers turned up the pressure, forcing a six-minute scoring hiatus fueled by six live-ball turnovers to take a 13-point lead into halftime.

Tigers scored at least 23 in every quarter and 60 in the second half. They shot 59.7% from the field, their best figure since Jan. 27, 2016, against UCF.

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It was more of the same out of the break; Rust hit four threes in the third period but could only watch their deficit expand as Jordan Hunter scored 11 of her 14 points in the frame. The hosts closed the game with the same intensity, capping the big victory with a 24-4 run to eclipse 100 for the first time since December 2023.

Hunter added six rebounds and five assists to her season-high point tally, and Daejah Richmond added a career-high six steals and five assists as the Tigers totaled 27 dimes. Cori Allen and Chaé Harris each had 12, and Tamya

Smith posted 11 points and three steals in 15 minutes of action. Patsy Johnson and Talyia Cawthon carried the offensive load for the Bearcats, scoring 46 of their 63 points. In what was an all-encompassing victory, perhaps the biggest discrepancy was in two-point shooting. Memphis shot 34-of-51 (66.7%) from inside the arc while Rust made just 15 shots on 39 attempts (38.5%). The Tigers will open American Conference play with a two-game roadstand in North Carolina, beginning with a New Year’s Eve showdown with Charlotte at 2 p.m. on ESPN+.

For complete information on Memphis Tigers Basketball, visit www.GoTigersGo.com and follow the team's social media channels on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

