

Pregame activities ramp up at MC

Special to The Clinton Courier

The thrills and excitement of the upcoming Mississippi College football season will be augmented by an enhanced gameday experience leading up to each regular-season home contest.

Pregame tailgating and the Choctaw Walk have been staples of lively team spirit displays in the Quad for many years. This fall, alumni, faculty, staff, students, family members and friends are expected to pitch their blue-and-gold-decorated tents. Then, two-and-a-half hours before game time, they will gather to cheer as the Choctaw marching band, dance team and cheerleaders lead the football team in its traditional "Choctaw Walk" through the Quad.

It's a large and loud part of MC's culture that Lori Bobo, university events coordinator, seeks to amplify this year.

"We are a small campus, and we tout ourselves as being an MC family," said Bobo. "To show our support for one another, we need to rally the troops, get the family in order, and make sure everyone understands their role in tailgating."

Representatives from the MC Alumni Association, the Office of Student Engagement, Event Services, the Office of Marketing and Communication and the Office of Admissions had a series of meetings with Kenny Bizot, athletic director, and Blake Weir, assistant athletic director for athletic communication, to tailor a pregame experience that would make the most rabid of collegiate fan bases proud.



MC football players receive high fives from fans on their "Choctaw Walk" through a packed Quad during Choctaw Fanfare August 17.

These meetings helped us realize we have the same motivation and focus – to provide the best possible support for MC's student-athletes – and, if we work together, we can be a huge resource for the MC Family," Bobo said.

The spirit of MC Family pride was evident during Choctaw Fanfare August 17. Blue and Gold fans of all ages joined the new freshmen, transfer and returning students to meet MC's student-athletes from all eighteen varsity teams and cheer for them during an all-sports "Choctaw Walk."

The student-athletes returned the favor, cheering the incoming MC students as they filed through the University's legendary gates on College Street in a custom that

signifies their joining the Mississippi College Family.

Bobo intends for the outpouring of support both groups received to carry into the football gameday experience.

"For that to happen, it requires a lot of different areas to join together and focus on the MC Family and what the Gameday Experience means to the campus," Bobo said. "We need to show that we are a strong family supporting and engaging with one another while maintaining a single focus: the success of Mississippi College."

Ridge Futral, a redshirt sophomore linebacker from Madison, said the support Choctaw student-athletes receive from others in the MC Family – especially on game days – is vital to their athletic success.

"Students provide great crowd energy

that can make a huge impact on the game, helping us maintain momentum and even disrupting communication between the visiting team's players and coaches while they're on the field," said the chemistry and biology medical sciences major. "The Choctaw Walk can provide a good boost of motivation and energy before the game even starts. Crowd support can serve as an external motivator that reminds us that we're playing for an entire community of people."

He said enhanced support also could make a difference in the quality of MC's athletic teams. Recruiting – the lifeblood of intercollegiate athletics – can be impacted by how fervently fans root for the home team.

Bobo said MC fans will be encouraged to contribute to the Choctaw spirit in a variety of ways. All student social clubs and tribes, academic departments, parents and members of MC's other athletic teams will be encouraged to tailgate alongside MC alums. MC's marching band will lead the Choctaw Walk, and special performances by the Choctaw cheerleaders and dance team will augment the football squad's walk through the Quad. Meal replacements will be available during all tailgating sessions for students who usually dine at the Caf.

For more information about how to participate in tailgating at MC, visit www.mc.edu/tailgating, or email Bobo at lbo-bo@mc.edu.



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