



# EAST TENNESSEAN

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## ETSU PRIDE: ARE WE REALLY BUCED UP?



ANGELA FREESE | East Tennessean

### *Game attendance numbers steady despite lack of school spirit, community support*

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ETSU's resident superfan Jeff McCorkle has been attending campus athletic events since 1992 and has watched the stadium stands go from packed out to practically empty.

"I've seen it at its highest and I've seen it at its lowest," said McCorkle, who graduated from ETSU in 2005 with a political science degree. "Right now it's not at its highest."

Standing on the sidelines for the last 20 years, McCorkle has seen the ebb and flow of ETSU school spirit. Regardless of how many fans are in attendance, McCorkle comes out to games because he loves supporting campus athletics.

"It gets my energy levels up," he said. "It's exciting to watch. After 20 years I still get into the games. It's always fun to be there and see how great the atmosphere is."

A lot has changed in campus athletics since McCorkle started attending ETSU basketball games back in '92. ETSU now offers 17 on-campus sports that participate in the Atlantic Sun Conference and the NCAA Division I. Approximately five years ago the soccer program was introduced at the university and since its inception, the athletics department has seen a steady rise in student participation.

"We started the program four years ago and I think each year we've seen an increase in it," said Scott Calabrese, head coach for the men's soccer team. "I definitely think student participation and attendance is on the

rise and I think a lot of that has to do with the growth of on-campus housing."

Currently 2,851 students live on campus, leaving more than 12,000 of the 15,000 students commuting to the university. ETSU has generally been classified as a commuter school in the past but because almost 3,000 of the university's 9,000 undergraduates live on campus, ETSU is no longer under this classification, said Zack Walden, student government associate vice president.

As on-campus and close-to-campus housing options increase, so does student attendance at athletic events Calabrese said.

"We now have more students invested in the experience that comes with living on campus," he said. "The more traditional four-year students that you have on campus the more that definitely has an influence on student engagement in sports."

ETSU Ticket Manager Brandon Hudson said that student attendance at men and women's basketball games has been increasing up until this year, where he's seen a slight decrease at recent games.

The seating capacity of the MSHA Athletic Center is 6,000. Approximately 1,200 students attended both the Jan. 23 men's game and the Jan. 24 women's game, with overall community and student attendance reaching 3,900 and 4,092, respectively.

"Both games were the second largest that we've seen in the past year," said Hudson.

Despite larger turnouts for games with big name

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— Jeff McCorkle,  
on game attendance



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