

# Davis disappointed in first official practice

## Competitiveness, physicality lacking at outset

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**MURFREESBORO, Tenn.** - Middle Tennessee fifth-year Head Coach Kermit Davis has seen a great deal in his 20-plus years as a college coach but never has he seen, or not seen, what he witnessed during the Blue Raiders' first official practice of the 2006-07 season Saturday morning.

"It was the most unenthusiastic, least physical first practice I have ever had as a head coach," Davis said. "I was disappointed in the competitiveness and physicality of our practice. It was disappointing."

One would think youthful exuberance and the excitement of what lies ahead would be motivating factors as the Blue Raiders hit the court for the first official practice; however, that was not the case during the almost three-hour practice.

"We had to coach effort too much today," Davis said. "We are good at doing that but I don't like to do it as much, especially early on. We have to understand how to be physical and competitive and we have to do that every possession. I know it sounds simple and basic but we have to get to that point."

Middle Tennessee players agreed with Davis' assessment of the initial workout; however, the important thing is what they plan to do about it as the squad braces for the first of three straight two-day practices beginning Sunday.

"This first practice was OK. It wasn't great and it wasn't horrible," senior forward Kyle Young said. "At times we were good and there were times we weren't. There are a lot of areas where we can improve but you take today, learn from it, and make sure you come back better tomorrow. Effort and



competing should never be a concern and it is disappointing that those are the things coach was displeased with today. It has to be better."

**SOPHOMORE STANDOUTS:** Middle Tennessee's talented trio of sophomores - Theryn Hudson, Kevin Kanaskie, and Calvin O'Neil - drew praise from Davis for their practice performance Saturday.

"I thought those three had better practices than most," Davis said. "Kevin and Theryn had solid practices. (O'Neil) got a bad cut early but he came back and had a productive day. Calvin is our most physical perimeter player right now. I thought Kyle Young and Theryn Hudson played well today."

The trio will see their production increase even more during their second season as Blue Raiders after gaining substantial experience during their rookie seasons. Hudson, Kanaskie, and O'Neil, not only earned significant minutes last season, but they also were instrumental in the team's strong run down the stretch. The Blue Raiders were 9-1 in the final 10 regular season games with Hudson starting at center, Kanaskie starting at the point, and O'Neil averaging 14 minutes as the top reserve.

A year later, Hudson said he can see the benefits of what was gained during last season, as well as the offseason.

"It's like the practices are getting much slower and I understand everything better," Hudson said. "I already know all the plays and that seems to make practice so much better because I know what I'm doing and what to expect. I see myself as a leader on this team because we have so many young guys."

**YOUNG GUNS:** Of the 13 players on the Middle Tennessee men's basketball roster, only one - Kyle Young - has more than one year of experience at the Division I level.

Young is a three-year starter who is entering his final season as a Blue Raider; however, no other player has more than one year of experience at college basketball's highest level.

Seniors Tim Blue and Adam Vogelsberg are junior college transfers who have one year of Division I experience under their belt, while Hudson, Kanaskie, and O'Neil also have one year of experience after earning playing time as freshmen.

The remaining seven players on the roster are all entering their first season at the Division I level and of those seven, five are freshmen.

"We do have to remember it's a work in progress," Davis said. "We have some talented young players but we have to remember, they are young. There's only one guy in our program with more than one year of experience at this level and that's Kyle Young. We have to bring these guys along but it is going to be a positive for us down the road."

**INFIRMARY REPORT:** Junior guard Doc Dawson has suffered a ruptured tendon and will be out of action for up to three weeks. Otherwise, Tim Blue, Dino Hair, and Adam Vogelsberg underwent offseason surgeries and were back on the court for Saturday's practice.

"The biggest thing right now is the injury bug," Davis said. "We have to keep Tim Blue's knee healthy, Dino Hair is still recovering from knee surgery, and Adam is about 90 percent recovered

from shoulder surgery. He's real close to 100 percent."

Vogelsberg played all of last season with a shoulder injury he suffered during last year's preseason practices before undergoing surgery immediately following the 2005-06 season. The Home, Kansas native said he could feel a noticeable difference at the outset of practices since the surgery.

"I can feel a big difference and it's a lot better than last year," Vogelsberg said. "It certainly can't hurt not having to worry about the shoulder. The main thing for me is that we have a better year as a team."

Even with an injured shoulder, Vogelsberg was lights out in 2005-06 when he debuted as one of the premier guards in the Sun Belt. Vogelsberg led Middle Tennessee in scoring (12.4) and was the team's only All-SBC selection. He led the SBC in free-throw percentage and was fifth among league leaders for 3-point field goals made.

"The surgery was something that had to be done and it has made Adam a better player," Davis said. "We just saw him playing all of last year with almost 1-1/2 arms. He couldn't throw a ball with his right hand. All of a sudden you see him going to grab rebounds and he could hardly get his shoulder above his head last year."

Blue went through periods of Saturday's practice while spending the rest of the time on a stationary bike.

"He is limited so we have to be smart with him," Davis said. "He can only do certain things right now and he's on a limited basis. Tim is getting better but it's going to be a work in progress throughout the year."

Hair underwent knee surgery last November after suffering a preseason injury during a scrimmage. He was able to go through the entire workout Saturday and continues to make strides.

**I CAN'T HEAR YOU:** Middle Tennessee's three seniors are quiet by nature; however, Blue, Vogelsberg, and Young must be more vocal during practice, according to Davis.

"They are quite guys by nature and that has to change on the court," Davis said. "We have to be a better vocal team and communicate better. That wasn't the case (Saturday)."

It's one thing to lead by example but the lack of communication or veteran players taking ownership in the team is lacking, which concerns the staff.

"I know I need to improve that area," Vogelsberg said. "I see myself as more of a leader this year but I've never really been a vocal person. That's an area where I need to improve to help the team."

**WELCOME BACK:** A series of players from Davis' first Blue Raider team in 2002-03 have returned to campus during the past few days to talk with the squad and visit their former coach.

All-SBC selection William Pippen was in attendance Saturday morning, while Bryant Mitchell and Steven Jackson dropped by earlier in the week.

"I want the former players to know how welcome they are and what they meant to us starting this process," Davis said. "I talk to (Pippen) once every couple weeks. Bryant Mitchell, who is a

Murfreesboro Police Officer, and Steven Jackson, an assistant manager with Wells Fargo, also stopped in this week. It means a lot when they come back. Those guys have great character and are great in the community. I wish 'Pip' could have put on the blue and white (Saturday) morning. He sure could have helped us."

**FAN JAM:** Middle Tennessee will conduct its annual Fan Jam, Oct. 26, at 6:30 p.m. in the Alumni Memorial Gym. The event will feature student and corporate team games, a 3-point shooting contest, dunk contest, as well as free posters and schedule cards for those in attendance. Prizes will be given away and fans also will have photograph and autograph opportunities with the Blue Raider players and coaches. For more information on how to participate in the student or corporate games, contact Patrick Walker at 898-5283.

**UP NEXT:** Middle Tennessee will return to the hardwood for two practices Sunday. The Blue Raiders' first practice runs from 9-11:15 a.m., and they will conclude with an evening workout at 6 p.m.

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