

Q&A with Blue Raider men's basketball coach Kermit Davis

Veteran coach reflects on 06-07, bright future

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1 You seem to like where your team is heading into the off-season?

"No. 1, we were extremely disappointed that we did not win our conference tournament and go to the NCAA Tournament but as you step back you do understand that we played the toughest non-conference schedule of anybody in our league (31st) with the youngest team; we did fight through a couple really significant injuries. With all of that said and done I love the resiliency of our team. It was a really fun team to coach but, more importantly, I think our guys really gained some experience and they are really looking forward to what is going to happen the next couple of years. You think about it, the only guy we lose off next year's team is Adam



Vogelsberg so you have 12 of your top 13 coming back the following year. I think the program is on solid foundation and we have to get the guys in our program better." **2 What did you enjoy most about coaching the 2006-07 Blue Raiders?**

"I am a big practice guy. I love going to practice, and I think our team developed into a much better practice team because we got tougher throughout the year. My biggest thing is guys stayed receptive and tried to compete in practice. When that happens you know your team is going to get better so that was a promising thing. I really liked the way Nigel (Johnson) and Calvin (O'Neil) came on and really started playing their best basketball at the end, that's encouraging. I thought Kevin Kanaskie was our most improved player from last spring to now. I did really like the way Demond (Yates) and Dino (Hair), two freshmen who are kind of the future of what we are trying to do, really got better. All of those things were encouraging. Probably the most disappointing things this season was our inability to win games at home. If we did that then we would have had a chance to have a

really, really good year. "I talked to (North Texas head coach) Johnny Jones the day after our game against them in the semifinals and they were getting ready to play the final, and he just complimented our guys about just how well-prepared they were defensively and almost beating their guys to spot, just how well the young team defended and how tough they were, that was a compliment and that's why we were able to do some things away from home. For us to win eight conference games away from home that's a feat in itself and it allowed us to be very competitive. If we could have just turned a few more home wins then we could have been looking at 18-to-20 wins."

3 Talk about the progress of sophomore Kevin Kanaskie and freshman Desmond Yates.

"You think about where Kevin came from in that he was not starting on our team with 10 games to go as a freshman and at times had struggled. For him to have started his last 42 games for Middle Tennessee shows the improvement that he has made. Desmond Yates had a really good year, and I think the biggest thing about Desmond is he really, truly knows now all the things we told him about rebounding and toughness. I think he knows that what he has to improve on and if he does that then he has a chance to be one of the top three or four players in our league before he finishes, but if he doesn't then he could have some similar results and be left off the all-league teams." **4 What was the biggest reason your team continued to progress and was playing at its best at the end of the season?**

"We didn't have any guy who resisted coaching. No one ever thought about talking back to the coach, they were just receptive. Now did they always do all the right things on the court? No, but no team does. They did listen and they want to be better. We got them tougher. I think if they will stay along those lines and remain receptive they will only get better and that's why our team improved as we went this year." **5 What is the biggest issue the Blue Raiders face between now and next season?**

"I think we lose 16 points and nine rebounds in conference play with Tim (Blue) and Kyle (Young) so we have a majority of our points and rebounds and our entire assists, and 3-point baskets made. We have a good collection of guys coming back, and I think they gained a lot of confidence and good experience in our late run. The biggest thing is we have to get the guys in our program better. We have to really make some progress between now and next November." **6 You lose two seniors who meant a lot to the program in Kyle Young and Tim Blue. Talk about their contributions.**

"We will definitely miss Kyle Young. He has been a staple for five years and for everything he has meant. My hat is off to Tim Blue for what he went through from an injury standpoint. I know Tim didn't have the type of conference tournament that he would have liked or that we would have liked but he went through a lot of difficult times. I just hope Tim will work really, really hard in rehab, lifting over the next couple of months, finish school out, and then he will have a chance to make some money playing basketball." **7 Talk about Adam Vogelsberg and Demetrius Green, two guards you expect to impact the program next season.**

"It was really good to see Adam get back full speed probably in the middle of February. He had some really good practices and you knew after you watched him, in case you forgot, exactly what he meant to your team. Just his character and his work ethic and he's so looking forward to next season and he's had a great year in the weight room. Demetrius Green could be our best talent. Now Demetrius has sat out and he still has to go through all the toughness things in practice but he's had a great year academically and he's another real good kid. His talent level is high so that's two guards sitting out that will mean a lot to us." **8 The timing of Adam Vogelsberg's injury forced some young guards to grow up fast. How did they perform?**

"The timing of about seven or eight days before we opened up against Tennessee and it wasn't like we could get through and experiment with some things against lesser opponents. We jumped right in against Tennessee, Alabama, Toledo, College of Charleston, Memphis, and so on. It was a struggle

at first but I think we are going to be better because of it. These younger guards did improve as the year went on." **9 You have one remaining scholarship. What needs are you looking to fill?**

"We are really looking for the best available player, a guy who is kind of a wing/forward that can shoot and needs to be very offensive-minded and can score the ball. We are probably involved with 10 to 12 and will set up six or eight official visits over the next month. Some of them are in the playoffs or just finishing up there seasons so I feel good about what our staff has done. We are in the middle of a lot of good players and we just have to get the right one where his character and toughness and his talent are good." **10 How do you think the Sun Belt Conference stacks up next season?**

"There are more leading scorers coming back, like 17 or 18 of the top 25 coming back, so I think the league will be the best it has ever been top to bottom since I've been in it and that will be my sixth year. I showed (Vogelsberg and Green) that and told them you may not be on any preseason all-league team next year just based on all these guys that are coming back. We are going to have a good team and be very competitive but there are a lot of coaches in our league feeling good about who they have coming back and how their team finished."

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