Preseason practice begins

Blue Raiders will look to defend title in 2008

August 8, 2008 · MT Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's volleyball program began preseason practice on Friday morning.

· **Photo Gallery**

The Blue Raiders posted one of the best records in the country in 2007 and will defend its regular season and tournament title in 2008. Middle Tennessee has won a share of the regular season and tournament titles the past two seasons. Middle Tennessee lost three starters from a year ago in Ashley Adams, Quanshell Scott and libero Alicia Lemau'u. Adams led the team at the net with 552 kills, averaging 4.28 per game. Adams also had 143 blocks and 311 digs in 2007. "I am very excited to be starting training camp this year. Obviously our expectations are high considering where we ended last year. We have a lot of new faces, we are going to have a different look to our team but return the core of the team. We lost Ashley Adams, Alicia Lemau'u and Quanshell Scott to graduation however we have some very experienced young players," head coach Matt Peck said. Senior Ashley Asberry will help guide the Blue Raiders during the 2008 campaign; she was named Honorable Mention All-America by the American Volleyball Coaches Association. Asberry also received Sun Belt Conference honors, leading the league in hitting percentage and blocks per game. The Murfreesboro, Tenn., native led the team defensively as a junior, recording 191 blocks and averaging 1.48 blocks per game. Asberry also guided the team on offense: she knocked down 379 kills for a .406 hitting percentage. "We still have a very young team with Ashley Asberry being our only senior. We are really impressed with the new players we have. Everyone is in great shape. It has been wonderful

having them here this summer," Peck said. "We had a very nice first session and I think our goal by the start of the season at the end of August is for our team to be playing in mid-season form. I think we will be there and exceed this goal. Junior Leslie Clark has assisted the team on the floor the last two seasons and will continue to do so in 2008. An All-Conference selection in 2007, Clark had her second 1,000-assists season and now ranks fourth on the career records list. Middle Tennessee also returns juniors Ashley Mead, Sasha McGlothin and Ashley Waugh and sophomore Izabela Kozon. Mead added assistance to the offense with 364 kills, followed by Kozon with 349. Five new faces will make their collegiate debuts for the Blue Raiders this season: freshmen defensive specialist Kim Bell (Germantown, Tenn./Germantown HS), outside hitter and middle blocker Lindsey Cheatham (Deerfield Beach, Fla./Cardinal Gibbons HS), outside hitter and opposite Tosin Elebute (Coral Springs, Fla./St. Thomas Aquinas HS), libero Brynne Henderson (Cincinnati, Ohio/Ursaline Academy), and setter Courtney Wilson (Auburndale, Fla./Kathleen HS). The Blue Raiders also add two who transferred outside hitter Lauren Britton (Murfreesboro, Tenn./Central Arkansas) and middle blocker Janay Yancey (Columbia, Tenn./N.C. State). Bell joins the Blue Raiders after playing four years at Germantown High School, where she was named Athlete of the Year. Cheatham received a number of honors in 2007 including FHSAA 2nd Team All-State, Sun Sentinel 1st Team All-County, and Miami Herald 1st Team All-County. Cheatham also led Broward County in blocks and was in the top five in total kills. Cheatham was also named the Cardinal Gibbons High School Most Valuable Player. Elebute was named the 2007 South Florida Sun Sentinel 4A-5A-6A Player of the Year and 5A First Team All-State by the Florida High School Athletic Association. Henderson was a two-year letterwinner at Ursuline Academy in Cincinnati, Ohio, where she holds the school record for digs in a single match and single season. Wilson received Second Team All-State and First Team All-County honors at Kathleen High School. Britton missed the 2007 season due to an injury but played in 22 matches as a reserve player for Central Arkansas in 2006. Yancey returns home after playing two seasons for the Wolfpack. As a sophomore, she recorded 95 kills in 19 matches as a reserve player. "The newcomers have really impressed me and I really think we may have two or three freshmen on the floor this fall beating out some upperclassmen. As a coach this is a really nice position to be in. We have competition everywhere, at the setting spot, the middle, in the outside and the back row all from the new players," Peck said. "We are very excited about that and I think we will start to make personnel decisions here in the next week or so. Everything for us right now is wide open and that is a great position to be in." Middle Tennessee will play in three tournaments, hosting two before beginning conference play on Sept. 26 with rival Western Kentucky. The squad's opponents this season have a 55 percent winning percentage and 11 had more than 20 wins last season. The Blue Raiders will face 2007 tournament teams Duke, Iowa State, Lipscomb, Ohio, Western Kentucky and Xavier.

Printed on May 21, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/33167