Looking to pick up where he left off

Green's intensity, focus greater during this preseason

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Demetrius Green vividly recalls his fast-paced finish that coincided with Middle Tennessee's strong push at the end of last season. It's likely no coincidence the Blue Raiders reeled off 10 wins in their last 14 games at the same time Green was enjoying his best stretch during a breakout season. Green remembers the hot finish. He also committed to memory the chilly start to his first season as a Blue Raider after sitting out the 2006-07 campaign.

- **Photos:** Preseason practice photo gallery

Working to avoid another slow start drives Green as much as the satisfaction of last year's best moments. "Last year I got off to a slow start and I have talked to (Blue Raider Head Coach Kermit) Davis a lot about that and understanding that I needed to start this season with a greater sense of urgency," Green said. "Each day I come to practice I try to make sure I am focused and ready to work. I believe I am more intense than I was at the start of last season." Green was one of Middle Tennessee's most consistent and best all-around players in the second half of last season. After averaging eight points and 4.3 rebounds in his first four games, Green's average climbed as high as right at 15 points per game at one point. His 12.5 season average was second on the squad. Green scored double figures in 20 of the team's last 23 games. Few were better in the Sun Belt Championships, where Green averaged 15.3 points, as well as leading the Blue Raiders in rebounding (5.5) and steals (7). He shot 41 percent from 3-point range in helping lead the Blue Raiders into the championship game against WKU. Green poured in 21 points, grabbed five rebounds and collected three steals in Middle Tennessee's upset of South Alabama in the SBC semifinals. Davis said he has seen a greater passion and more consistent approach to this year's

preseason from Green and believes his focus should transfer into a productive start to the 2008-09 campaign. "(Green) has had seven or eight really good workouts," Davis said. "Through the first eight practices he may have been one of our most consistent energy guys. He is playing with a lot of speed and communicative vibes that have been great for our team. When 'Duna' practices and plays with a high energy level he can be a very productive player because he is a talent but he has to remain consistent and bring that type of energy and approach every day." **THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...**

Senior guard Kevin Kanaskie's Blue Raider career has been a portrait of consistency, production, toughness and accountability. Don't expect anything different in 2008-09. Kanaskie has established himself as one of the best guards in Blue Raider history and one of most well-rounded ever to wear the uniform because of many outstanding attributes but it is consistency that stands out most. "Kevin is our most consistent player day-in, day-out. It just never changes," Davis said. "He is on all-league teams because it never changes. Right now if you had to rate the most consistent guy I would rate Kevin our most consistent. He does it every day and he does it the right way every day." Kanaskie enters his senior season fourth all-time at Middle Tennessee in assists (365) fifth all-time in 3-point field goals made (145), ninth all-time for free-throw percentage (.796) and he is on pace to enter the 1,000-point club with 873 career points. Durability also is a characteristic. The tough, hard-nosed competitor has endured pain and illness in some instances. When the horn sounds Kanaskie has steadily answered the call to duty. He is on pace to set all-time records for games played and most minutes played in a four-year career. "I don't know if Kevin's minutes will be as high this year just because of the balance but I know he's going to have a really good senior year," Davis said. "I also know it's hard to keep him off the floor. Kevin has been the exemplary college guy. He plays through injuries, he's a great student, and he's very accountable." **EARLY RISERS**

Middle Tennessee's players were scheduled to be on the floor prepared to practice Friday at 5:20 a.m. When Davis arrived at Murphy Center at 4:30 a.m., his players were already there taped and ready for the early-morning workout. "We have a good group of guys who work hard and are receptive to coaching," Davis said. "We've been going at it pretty hard and practices can be demanding. It makes you feel good to walk in for an early-morning workout and see all of the players there and ready to work on getting better." Davis gave the Blue Raiders extended time off following Friday morning's practice. The team was off the remainder of Friday and players will have Saturday to themselves before returning to practice Sunday at 5 p.m. "This will allow them some time to get their legs back, get their treatment and get rolling because next week we have to start progressing our team toward playing," Davis said. **HIGH ENERGY**

Junior guard/forward Darren Avery has enjoyed a productive start to Middle Tennessee's preseason practices. In fact, he's been one of the team's most steady players through the first week. "D.A. has had a real solid first eight practices," Davis said. "He has practiced with a high energy level, he's more physical, and he's defending even better. D.A. has been steady and I really like seeing how he's been able to sustain it over a long period of time." Redshirt freshman Antwaun Boyd has shown improvement with each workout and continues to polish his game after sitting out the 2007-08 season. "Antwaun's energy level the last four practices has been much better and he had his best practice (Thursday) so he's getting better each time," Davis said. "He's getting balls to the rim better and I'm excited about his progress." **BOOGIE'S BACK**

Sun Belt Preseason Player of the Year Desmond "Boogie" Yates returned to practice Thursday after nursing a nagging hamstring injury. Yates, who missed the first eight preseason practices and conditioning prior to that, is still not 100 percent in terms of his conditioning. "He is light years away right now so we have to get him in better shape," Davis said. "Boogie is just kind of on and off right now but he will get going. I think he's kind of fighting some conditioning right now but he was out

almost two weeks. He is not anywhere close to where he needs to be at this point." Junior forward Calvin O'Neil sat out Friday morning's practice because Davis wants to be patient with his talented player's progress into the preseason. O'Neil underwent offseason knee surgery following an ACL injury in last season's opener. The rugged defender took four charges in Thursday's workout before getting a well-deserved day off. "Calvin is fine but he started to drag his knee a little (Thursday) so we wanted to give him Friday's practice off so he really has two full days and most of another to rest before we go back to practice Sunday night," Davis said. "When we get Boogie back right and Calvin's back out there full speed then our team changes." **TIME CHANGE**

Tip-off for Middle Tennessee's game against Tennessee, Nov. 21, has been moved from 7 to 7:30 PM. **TIME FOR A TUNE-UP**

The Middle Tennessee men's basketball team will play two exhibition games. The Blue Raiders' first tune-up will be against Cumberland, Nov. 1, at 4 p.m. The final dress rehearsal is against North Alabama, Nov. 6, at Murphy Center at 7 p.m.

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