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Heralded point guard Washington signs with Blue Raiders

Successful background excites Davis

Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - James Washington Jr., knew what he was looking for when considering his next college basketball stop. His search ended during an official visit to Middle Tennessee.

Washington, a 5-foot-10 point guard at Indian Hills Community College, has signed a National Letter of Intent with Middle Tennessee as the NCAA National Signing Period began Wednesday. He led Indian Hills to a 30-3 record and the squad was ranked at or near the top of the National Junior College standings all season before being upset in the Region XI finals.

Rod Emmanuel, a highly-sought transfer guard from Santa Fe Community College, also signed a National Letter of Intent with Middle Tennessee Wednesday.

"James is very excited about the future and Middle Tennessee," said Indian Hills Head Coach Jeff Kidder. "He came back from his visit and was non-stop telling us about coach (Kermit Davis), the players, the staff, and his future school. The visit was a home run for James and a grand slam for the program."

Washington shot 46 percent from 3-point range and averaged 7.5 points and 4.6 assists in garnering All-Region honors despite playing through back and groin injuries the final five weeks of his only season at Indian Hills Community College in 2008-09.

The well-rounded southpaw point guard believes Middle Tennessee was the perfect fit for him and he expects to be an ideal impact player Head Coach Kermit Davis and his staff sought during the recruiting process, particularly after the Blue Raiders lost three starting senior guards following the 2008-09 campaign.

"I felt like Middle Tennessee was the perfect fit for me," Washington said. "I really enjoyed my visit and Coach Davis has been with me all along. Coach Davis is very up front and you know what the expectations are before you get there. There was no doubt it was the right direction for me and I feel like I am the man to help us get where we want to go. I'm use to winning and I've been groomed to run a team my entire life. I feel like we can get it done at Middle Tennessee. I feel like it will be a special year."

Washington has demonstrated a knack for getting the job done at each level of his young basketball career, which includes playing for legendary coach Floyd Irons at national prep powerhouse Vashon High School, in St. Louis, Mo., and as an initial signee and contributor at Western Illinois in the Summit League, where he led the conference in 3-point field goal percentage as a freshman.

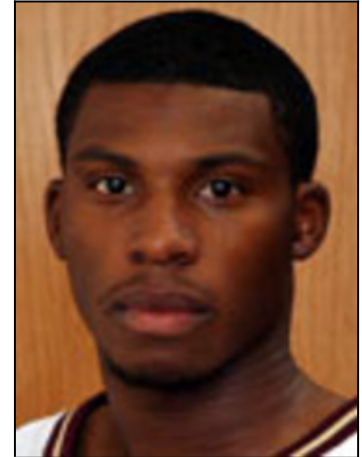
"Obviously James is a proven player at the Division I level," Davis said. "The full year he played at Western Illinois he led the Summit League in 3-point shooting which proves he has had big games and done it at our level. All he has ever done is win and the record speaks for itself. He played for one of the very best high school coaches in the country in Floyd Irons. His father is a high school coach at Gateway High School and the past year he was fortunate enough to play for one of the top three or four junior college coaches in the country in (Kidder). James has had an unbelievable background and I think he will be ready to fit in immediately in those terms."

Washington helped lead Vashon High School to a 144-4 record, two state championships and one runner-up finish. Vashon was going for its third straight Missouri State High School Class 5 state championship, as well as a perfect season and the national championship, before losing to Tyler Hansbrough's Poplar Bluff team during Washington's senior season.

He signed with Western Illinois and after an injury forced him to redshirt as a freshman, he came back as a redshirt freshman and made an immediate impact, averaging 10.5 points, 2.5 assists, 2.5 rebounds and shooting 42 percent from 3-point range in his 30 games. Following a coaching change at Western Illinois at the end of the 2007-08 season, Washington transferred to Indian Hills and helped it make a run at the NJCAA Tournament.

"I think (Washington) is a complete player at his position," Kidder said. "He's got that quality of leadership you look for in a point guard. He plays as hard in practice as he does in the game. He gets the ball to people on time. He can shoot it and guard well. He is tough-minded and his teammates enjoy playing with him. We had several good players this year and we had guys sign with Marquette, St. Johns, Iowa State, possibly one to Arkansas, TCU, and James fits right in. He was one of our main leaders. I think he will be a terrific player in the Sun Belt, and I think he will have two terrific years at Middle Tennessee."

In addition to Emanuel and Washington, five players signed NLIs with Middle Tennessee during the early signing period last



Point guard James Washington Jr., has signed a National Letter of Intent with Middle Tennessee. (Indian Hills CC)

November, including four prep standouts and one junior college performer. They include, James Gallman (5-11, guard, Fulton (TN) HS); John David Little (6-3, guard, Olive Branch (MS) HS); David Murray (6-4, guard, Leeds (AL) HS); Trevor Ottley (6-9, forward, Garden City (KS) JC); and J.T. Sulton (6-7, forward, Yazoo City (MS) HS).

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