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Coveted combo guard Emanuel signs with Middle Tennessee

JUCO coach lauds him as do-it-all contributor

Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Rod Emanuel was one of the guards Blue Raider Head Coach Kermit Davis coveted as a potential impact player during the recruiting process and the hard work paid off when the Santa Fe Community College standout signed a National Letter of Intent with Middle Tennessee as the NCAA Signing Period began Wednesday.

- **Video:** [Coach Davis on recruiting class](#)

James Washington Jr., a stellar point guard at Indian Hills Community College, also signed a National Letter of Intent with Middle Tennessee Wednesday.

While there is little doubt of the potential for impact, Santa Fe Head Coach Chris Mowry says the program landed much more than a skilled basketball player when the 6-foot-3 combo guard opted to continue his career at Middle Tennessee.

"Rod is a great representative of the program on and off the court and in the classroom," Mowry said. "He is someone Middle Tennessee will be very proud to have as a part of the program. On the court, he is an all-around guard. He doesn't do just one thing well, he does everything well. He can beat people off the dribble. He is very unselfish and he doesn't try to take over a game to get his points. If he catches it and is open he will take his shots but he doesn't force things. On the defensive end he is a solid defender. He is a very good rebounder and that's something a lot of guards don't do well. He's just very unselfish and very even keel."

Emanuel was named the Mid-Florida Conference Freshman of the Year and also was a member of the MFC First Team and First Team FCAA All-State after leading the Saints in scoring with 17.1 points as a freshman in 2007-08. He earned first-team All-Region honors and was first-team All-Mid Florida Conference after averaging 15.7 points and shooting 42 percent from 3-point range as a sophomore in 2008-09. He also was named the National Junior College Player of Week after going 12-of-15 from the field and averaging 24 points and seven rebounds during one two-game stretch.

Davis said the Orlando, Fla., native will be a perfect fit to help fill Middle Tennessee's most immediate needs on the perimeter.

"We wanted to sign a bigger guard who can play both positions and Rod can do that. He is 6-3, long and athletic and he has made unbelievable improvements at Santa Fe," Davis said. "He is one of the best junior college guards out there and we thought he was underrated. He has been all-region in Florida, which is full of great junior college players, and he has won one conference championship and finished second in another so he definitely is use to winning."

Emanuel said the reasons for selecting Middle Tennessee were innumerable and in the end it made for an easy decision.

"Middle Tennessee is a great place and I'm looking forward to my time there," Emanuel said. "I like the coaching staff and the players. It's a winning program and that's important. I'm looking forward to building on what already has been done there. Coach Davis has always been fair and they were with me all along. I think they like my game and what I do on the court, but I believe they care about me and my future and that's important."

Mowry said there was substantial interest in Emanuel but his official visit to Middle Tennessee was the decisive factor.


"(Emanuel) really enjoyed his visit," Mowry said. "He basically decided he wanted to go to Middle Tennessee and not make any other visits so he committed and now he's signed. Middle Tennessee got a good one with Rod."

Emanuel's versatility will serve Middle Tennessee well as it unveils a new backcourt in 2009-10.

"I bring scoring and I can help my teammates, I try to create for them," Emanuel said. "I bring leadership, defense, but the main thing is that I will do whatever Middle Tennessee needs me to do. I feel like I can do it all so I'm always willing to do what the team needs done."

One aspect that will fit will is Emanuel's tenacious rebounding from one of the guard positions. His athleticism and size enable him to be a strong factor in that area; however, Mowry says instinct is what makes Emanuel a top-flight rebounding



Santa Fe Community College guard Rod Emanuel has signed a National Letter of Intent with Middle Tennessee. (Santa Fe CC) 

guard.

"(Emanuel) did not get to play guard at (Evans) High School because he was 6-3 and they played him at the 4 so he had to rebound," Mowry said. "I believe that has made him a better rebounder at the college level."

But the area where Emanuel's game has flourished most is perimeter shooting. He shot 37 percent from 3-point range as a freshman and improved to 41 percent as a sophomore in 2008-09, despite the 3-point line being moved back one foot.

"Because Rod was an interior player in high school he didn't handle the ball much because they had three other guys doing that," Mowry said. "We put him on the perimeter and he really didn't shoot 3-pointers when he got to us but over his time at Santa Fe he has really worked and developed that part of his game. He shot better than 36-37 percent both seasons and he actually increased his percentage when they moved the line back so he will continue to develop in that area."

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