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Signing class rated among best in nation by HoopScoop

Recruiting services, analysts high on Blue Raider signees

Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - It is easy to see why Middle Tennessee men's basketball coach Kermit Davis beams when he talks about the prospects of the 2009 signing class rated one of the best in the nation by HoopScoop - a widely-respected recruiting publication.

The Blue Raiders will welcome seven new players into the fold for the 2009-10 season and Davis believes the versatile newcomers will "bring an influx of energy and enthusiasm" into the program.

National recruiting experts seem to agree as HoopScoop has Middle Tennessee's signing class rated 28th nationally.

"(Middle Tennessee) has a class now ranked 28th on our list of top recruiting classes of 2009," Francis said. "Even more important is the fact that the Blue Raiders have the highest-ranked recruiting class in the nation if you exclude the ACC, Big East, Big 12, Big Ten, and Pac-10 and Mountain West Conferences."

The 2009 class, which includes five guards and two forwards, was completed on the first day of the NCAA Late Signing Period Wednesday when Santa Fe Community College guard Rod Emanuel and Indian Hills guard James Washington Jr., signed National Letters of Intent with Middle Tennessee.

"Emanuel is widely regarded as one of the top 3-point shooters in the JUCO ranks, and Washington is a pure point guard who can also keep you honest from behind the arc with his 3-point shooting," Francis said.

The two highly-regarded junior college guards join a class that already included five signees in the NCAA Early Signing Period last November. Those players 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).

All of the signees come from a winning background and each played significant roles in their team's success. Murray was the MVP of the Alabama Class 3A State Tournament after leading Leeds to the Alabama Class 3A state championship for the first time in school history. Gallman was named to the All-Tournament team after helping lead Fulton to the Tennessee Class 2A state championship. Little helped lead Olive Branch to the state tournament, Ottley's Garden City team reached the National Junior College Tournament and Sulton is regarded as one of the top prep players in Mississippi.

Additionally, Emanuel's two seasons at Santa Fe included one conference championship and a runner-up finish and Washington helped lead Indian Hills to the top of the national junior college rankings during his only season there as well as playing in three state championship games at Vashon High School in St. Louis, winning two.

"This class has a great blend of different positions with versatile players who can really shoot it," Davis said. "The character of the group is off the charts. They can't wait to get to Middle Tennessee and get started and that's exciting for us. We have a good group of players coming back but I believe these new guys will bring an influx of energy and enthusiasm into our program."


Davis also believes Middle Tennessee's perimeter shooting was tremendously upgraded with this class.

"We think this is the best class of shooters we have signed," Davis said. "We hope to replace three really good senior guards. We have some outstanding frontcourt players in Boogie Yates, [Theryn Hudson](#), [Montarrio Haddock](#) but we really need some backcourt experience and the main thing is these guys can shoot the ball."

ESPN recruiting analysts believes Middle Tennessee's incoming freshmen also have the potential to push veterans for playing time at the outset of their college careers. Murray is a physical guard with a strong all-around game and ESPN recruiting analysts write, "David is a strong and solid wing guard. He is not extraordinary at any one thing but is good at all aspects of the wing position. He has good strength and should be college ready once he hits campus."

ESPN basketball writers like Gallman's quickness, defense and ability to run team, indicating, "Gallman is an athletic lead guard that does a great job running the team. He is very quick and pushes the ball in transition at high speeds when he can finish at the rim or penetrate and kick to an open teammate. In the halfcourt Gallman can slash and make open shots to the arc. He is a tremendous on-ball defender. Gallman applies great pressure and has good anticipation in the passing lanes. Quick as a cat and tougher than that. Gallman is a demon on the defensive end of the floor. He takes stopping his opponent personally and makes bringing the ball up the floor an adventure for the opposing point man."



David Murray, left, and James Gallman are part of a Blue Raider men's basketball signing class rated 28th nationally by HoopScoop. (MT) 

ESPN recruiting services say Little is "a versatile guard with good size and strength. He is a very good shooter that can score in transition as well as in the half court with his ability to get to the rim. Little is a good enough ball handler and passer to help at the point as well. He is a good athlete with excellent upside and will provide Middle Tennessee with quality guard depth at the point and shooting guard positions as a freshman."

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