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Blue Raiders sign four during early period

Local standout Hammonds highlights class

MT Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The men's basketball program has signed four student-athletes to National Letter of Intent on the first day of the NCAA early signing period as announced by head coach Kermit Davis on Wednesday.

The signing class includes shooting guard Kerry Hammonds Jr., from Murfreesboro, Tenn., and point guard Jeffery Simmons of Greenwood, Miss. Two forwards 6-foot-7 Melvin Baker from Amarillo, Texas, Shawn Jones, 6-foot-8, from Hialeah, Fla., round out the class for the Blue Raiders.

Hammonds a 6-foot-5 senior at Siegel High School who signed his letter of intent earlier in the day, was a Mr. Basketball finalist last season after averaging 19.7 points a game and 8.2 rebounds per game as a junior at Siegel High School.

Simmons, a senior at Greenwood High School, has been rated the third best point guard in the state of Mississippi by Lavel Johnson's Magnolia Prep Hoops report. As a junior, Simmons averaged nearly 14 points per game and over four assists per game on the way to being selected to the Mississippi Underclassmen All-Star game.

"Jeffery was absolutely the most athletic point guard we saw all summer in our evaluations as a staff. He is unbelievably fast in transitions with the ball and I can't imagine there being a better athlete in the country at his spot. I think he is a kid who has been very well coached and is going to have a great senior year. Every time we watch him it is kind of a highlight reel.

Baker will transfer from Odessa College where he is a sophomore to join the Blue Raiders for the 2010-11 season. As a freshman, Baker averaged over seven points per game and five rebounds per game in the West Texas junior college league.

Baker was selected as one of the Top-120 junior college sophomores by the Mullens scouting service in the summer of 2009.

"Melvin, No. 1 plays for one of the best junior college coaches in the country in Dennis Helms and I have had some pretty good players who have played for Dennis and they have always been very well prepared and made quick adjustments to our level. Melvin is a very skilled 6-foot-7 forward, who has good length and shoots the ball extremely well and from the perimeter. He is off to a really good start at Odessa this year on a very good junior college team. He is just a rangy athletic player that I think fits very well into our system of forwards that can pop, shoot and drive it.

Jones, a senior at Hialeah High School, has improved his numbers in each of his three seasons. As a junior, Jones averaged 17 points per game and nine rebounds per game. Jones has been rated as one of the top players in the state of Florida by a number of recruiting services.

"We just think Shawn is a long athletic forward who is a really good shot blocker and runs the floor well. He has a really good skill level and can handle the ball. Shawn is a left-handed player who can shoot the ball from three and again a forward that really fits into how we play. We are really, really excited about Shawn and think he is one of the best kept secrets in Florida. We think he is going to have an unbelievable senior year," Davis said. "I am just really impressed with the job Coach Palmer has done with Shawn in his skill development and I think their team will be one of the surprise teams in the Broward- Dade County area."

"The class as a whole is very high in character and really has a good passion to play. They possess excellent athleticism and will have a chance to impact our team next year. With that being said this class will obviously be evaluated on their production and play at Middle Tennessee in the years to come," Davis said.

Middle Tennessee will open the 2009-10 regular season on Friday, Nov. 13 at 7 p.m. when it plays host to King College at Murphy Center on the campus of Middle Tennessee State University.



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