

November 11, 2009

Blue Raiders sign four to National Letters of Intent

No. 24 Middle Tennessee stockpiles talent for 2010-11

Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Head coach Rick Insell and the Middle Tennessee women's basketball program introduced four signees Wednesday as members of the 2010 class after each member of the quartet inked her name to a National Letter of Intent on the first day of the signing period. The Blue Raiders acquired three players from Tennessee and one from neighboring Kentucky to join the team beginning in the 2010-11 campaign.

"This class was important because they have to come in and play immediately," head coach Rick Insell said. "Our class last year, which are our freshmen this year, did not because they have a bunch of seniors ahead of them. Just about all of these four will have to give us some help immediately. They will have to step in and blend with our returners next year from the get-go. All of the young ladies we signed have good family support. It should be an exciting bunch to watch."

Laken Leonard is a 5-10 guard hailing from Whitleyville, Tenn. She has played high school ball for coach Jim Brown at Jackson County and was coached on the AAU circuit by Tom Insell on the Tennessee Flight Silver squad. She was selected as the Class A Miss Basketball award winner and as a Tennessee Sports Writers Association all-state performer last season after being a finalist the previous year. She averaged 22.3 ppg and 8.0 rpg, including season-bests of 37 and 15 against Pickett County and was tabbed a All-Midstate Second Team honoree by the Tennessean. It was one of six double-doubles she registered throughout the year. In 2006, she earned Jackson County MVP honors. The Lady Blue Devils captured the state championship her sophomore season in 2008 with a 33-4 record after advancing to their third consecutive state tournament. She was tabbed as a Second 12 honoree on Rick Bolus' list for Tennessee players.

"Laken was the type of player we wondered early on how she would be able to handle and react to tough competition. She did not disappoint. We had been recruiting her all along but really started to take a hard look at her back in April. She is very hard-nosed, basketball-savvy and comes from a well-coached high school program. She handles the ball, guards on the perimeter and shoots the three. She does it all, including being a great passer. She is a team player and is a me-first individual next."

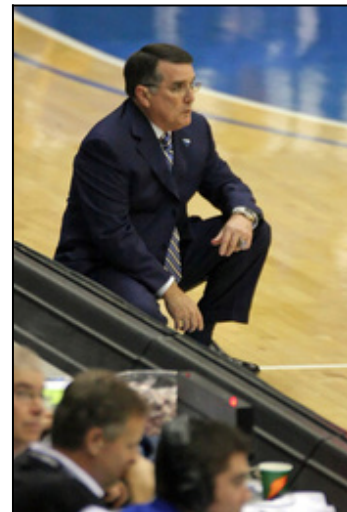
Jordyn Luffman joins the Blue Raiders as a 6-0 combo guard/small forward from coach Wendy Scott's program at Lawrence County High in Lawrenceburg, Tenn. Luffman also was mentored by Tom Insell on the Tennessee Flight Silver AAU team. She has tallied 1,164 points and 726 rebounds in her three-year high school career-to-date. She raised her averages from freshman marks of 7.9 ppg and 6.8 rpg to 17.2 ppg and 8.9 rpg her junior campaign. Luffman capped her junior year by being picked as the AAA District 8 MVP. She enters her final year as the Top Sleeper on Rick Bolus' Top Prospect list for Tennessee.

"Jordyn was one we felt early on was one we had to have. She has tremendous IQ, is hard-nosed and comes from a well-coached program. Her high school coach is very fundamental. We watched Jordyn play against some of the toughest competition the last two years and she was able to handle herself. She can knock down 3s, handle the basketball and can play any of the guard positions. We felt like going in, we had to have her. She can compliment Anne Marie (Lanning) and Emily (Queen) and to take over for Jackie (Pickel)."

The tallest player to ever sign with Middle Tennessee, **Stephanie Myers**, also joins the Blue Raiders next fall. The 6-5 center from La Vergne, Tenn., and coach Keith Dean's La Vergne High program rounds out a trio of signees off Tom Insell's Tennessee Flight Silver AAU squad. She has been graded as high as a 78 and among the top 100 players nationally by Dan Olson's Collegiate Girls Basketball Report.

"We were looking for some size and athleticism and Stephanie gave us both. She has been coming to our camps the last three, four years putting her on our radar the whole time. Her upside is tremendous. She is someone that wants to be at Middle Tennessee and is an exciting-type player with a great personality. That fits in with what we do here. I really think she will end up being a great player for us."

The final signee, **Ebony Rowe**, hails from Lexington, Ky., and coach Mike Sowers' Paul Dunbar High program. She is a 6-0 small forward who saw action on the Blue Chip AAU team for coach Jim Underwood, the same team for which current Blue Raiders [Chelsia Lymon](#) and [Emily Queen](#) also played. Rowe is her school's all-time leader for rebounds and blocked shots through only three years and is the first member of the 1,000-point and 1,000-rebound club. She has tallied 13 games with at least 20 rebounds and her 76 blocks as a junior rank as a school standard. She was selected as a First Team All-Kentucky player by the Lexington



Head coach Rick Insell and the Blue Raider women's basketball team will welcome four newcomers to the floor in 2010-11. (Bradley Lambert)

Herald-Leader and the Louisville Courier-Journal at the conclusion of her junior campaign in which she averaged 20.3 ppg and 15.9 rpg. The Associated Press tabbed her as a Second Team pick in 2009 and Honorable Mention in 2007 and 2008. She also is a two-time member of the state All-Academic Team.

"We feel real fortunate getting in on Ebony late and being able to get her. She comes from a successful high school program. She is very aggressive and goes to the boards hard in addition to being able to defend on the perimeter. She is a tough, hard-nosed player who can handle the ball in the open court. She is the type of player we like to have in our program. She may be an undersized small forward, but she will not let that interfere with any of her play. We are very, very excited about getting her."

The No. 24 Blue Raiders will open regular-season action at 2 p.m. Sunday against UCF inside the Murphy Center. Tickets for the game, and all other Middle Tennessee home contests, are available by calling 1-888-YES-MTSU.

Middle Tennessee Women's Basketball Signees:

Laken Leonard, 5-10, G, Whitleyville, Tenn./Jackson County HS

Jordyn Luffman, 6-0, G/F, Lawrenceburg, Tenn./Lawrence County HS

Stephanie Myers, 6-5, C, La Vergne, Tenn./La Vergne HS

Ebony Rowe, 6-0, F, Lexington, Ky./Dunbar HS

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