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Clark tabbed First Team ESPN.com All-American First such honor for Blue Raider program

Athletic Communications

BRISTOL, Conn. - Middle Tennessee redshirt senior forward **Alysha Clark** continued to accumulate preseason accolades this week when she was listed as a First Team ESPN.com All-American and one of the website's top five small forwards. ESPN.com has run a different women's basketball preview story each day this week in preparation for season openers beginning tonight.

Her ESPN.com honor is a first for the Blue Raider program. Various national writers took notice of Clark and placed her on the team with Stanford's Jayne Appel, Connecticut's Tina Charles and Maya Moore and Virginia's Monica Wright.

Charlie Creme noted "Last season's leading scorer does it with an array of moves and shots around the basket - and often while outdueling bigger opponents."

"Middle Tennessee is no stranger to players with big numbers, but Clark is going places even Amber Holt and Chrissy Givens never dared to tread. Are 30 points and 10 rebounds reasonable averages? Maybe not, but she'll come closer than anyone should," commented Graham Hays.

Mechelle Voepel added "She has proven there really isn't a lot of defenses can do to slow her versatile attack."

Second Team All-Americans include LSU's Allison Hightower, Ohio State's Jantel Lavender, Kansas' Danielle McCray, Stanford's Kayla Pedersen and Oklahoma's Danielle Robinson.

Clark was listed as a small forward on ESPN.com because "... you have smaller players who can play "up." Middle Tennessee's 5-10 **Alysha Clark**, whom we picked as a wing player because -- as with Pedersen -- we're really not sure how to define her, is both strong on the low block and can face up," according to Voepel.

Voepel, along with Hays, Creme and Melanie Jackson, comprised the panel in determining the five-best players at each position entering 2009-10.

Connecticut's Maya Moore was named the top small forward, with Clark, Pedersen, Kansas' Danielle McCray and Tennessee's Shekinna Stricklen also listed among the top five.

Earlier in the week as part of his season preview, Hays tabbed Middle Tennessee as one of five teams to watch. He ranked the Blue Raiders at No. 12 and noted "while the team is ranked in the preseason for the first time, it seems a little peculiar that the ranking comes on the fringes of the Top 25...what makes the Blue Raiders so dangerous is how well the rest of the roster complements both Clark and Coach Insell's system."

Middle Tennessee, ranked No. 24 in the preseason AP poll, will open its season at 2 p.m. Sunday inside the Murphy Center against defending Conference USA champion UCF.



Alysha Clark earned First Team ESPN.com All-American accolades announced Friday by the website.

(Bradley Lambert) 

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