Blue Raiders ready for regular season to open

Will host Tennessee Temple Friday night

November 11, 2010 · MT Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Winning the Sun Belt regular season title, setting a new scoring record and reaching the postseason for the first time in 21-years highlighted the 2009-10 season for the Blue Raiders who are looking to do more of the same this season.

Middle Tennessee's title came after an impressive 13-5 Sun Belt season which included a sweep of rival Western Kentucky and this year's team would like to do it all again. Seniors Rod Emanuel, Trevor Ottley and James Washington were integral parts of last season's successes and will have to lead again this season with the losses of Desmond "Boogie" Yates, Calvin O'Neil and Montarrio Haddock.

"Obviously three key parts of last year's team are gone with Desmond, Calvin and Montarrio and every year is new and different. We do have to rely on six core returning guys who were part of the regular season title, which in my opinion to fans is not the most important that's the conference tournament, but it's the toughest and shows the durability of a team so I am very proud of that," head coach Kermit Davis said. "With those losses to our team our goals are still the same and I think we will be very competitive in the Sun Belt Conference race. Over the last three years counting the conference tournament we have 37 Sun Belt Conference wins so it shows you we have lost players and been able to keep rebuilding and replenishing new players to help us."

Yates, the school's all-time scoring leader and All-Sun Belt performer, will be tough to replace as will O'Neil, a do it all relentless perimeter defender, but Middle Tennessee hopes new additions and top play from returners will fill the holes left by the duo.

"You're replacing two totally different players because Calvin, who had some great offensive games the last half of the year, was by far I thought the best perimeter defensive player in our conference.

Guys like James Gallman, Jimmy Oden and Jason Jones are three guys who come to mind who could have some toughness to try to emulate Calvin's ability to stop the other team's best perimeter player," Davis stated. "In Desmond we lost a prolific scorer and trying to find a guy who can score like that will be hard for one guy to do and I think it will be a collection of guys at the 4 spot to try and accomplish that task."

GUARDS

The Blue Raiders return Washington, Emanuel and sophomores James Gallman and David Murray who will anchor the guards this season. Joining the group will be r-junior Jimmy Oden and r-sophomore Jason Jones who will have a leg up on most newcomers. Oden and Jones had to sit last season due to the NCAA transfer rule but were able to practice and lift weights with the team which will help them transition faster this season.

Washington started 29 games last season averaging 11.8 points per game and 3.8 assists per game. He was a very vocal floor leader and will look to do most of the same this season. Emanuel and Gallman each played in all 33 games last season with Emanuel starting 17. Emanuel averaged 5.9 points and 2.9 rebounds per game while Gallman averaged 7.7 points and 1.2 assists per game.

"James Washington, Rod and James Gallman played a ton of minutes together. We played them together at the same time during big parts of our championship run so that experience will really, really help. They have all three improved very much and David Murray is a much improved player. David is a much better conditioned athlete and much more prepared for basketball than he was as an incoming freshman, which happens. I think Jimmy and Jason Jones will both bring great Division I experience to our team and both enjoyed outstanding redshirt years," Davis stated.

FORWARDS

Ottley and sophomore J.T. Sulton are the only returning front court players but Murray and Jones can shift to assist there as well.

"Trevor and J.T. will give us great leadership on the front court. They both had a lot of quality starts and were very instrumental in our really good play in the Sun Belt regular season. They have both gained weight, J.T. is up to about 216-217 and Trevor is right at 215 which is a big improvement," Davis noted.

Ottley averaged 15.8 minutes per game as a junior with 3.6 points and 4.2 rebounds. Ottley scored 10 points against Howard and grabbed a career high 12 rebounds. Ottley also led Middle Tennessee with 42 blocks, ranking sixth in the Sun Belt Conference in the category.

Sulton averaged 4.8 points and 3.9 rebounds per game and 15.7 minutes per game with 12 starts. Against Troy, Sulton grabbed a career high 11 rebounds and scored 14 points in each of his first two collegiate games.

NEWCOMERS

Head coach Kermit Davis is very excited about what his new players bring to the table. Trevor Charles, a transfer from West Texas Junior College, Kyle Hunt, a transfer from Snead State, Shawn Jones a freshman out of Hialeah, Fla., and Kerry Hammonds, a Murfreesboro native, are a very talented group who will add depth to an already talented squad.

"Our frontline newcomers are by far the most athletic collection of newcomers with Shawn Jones

who is 6-8 almost 230, Kyle Hunt who is 6-9 220 and Trevor Charles who 6-8 225. They are fast and athletic, and getting in much better condition right now so it's going to be by far the most depth and best collection of athletes we have had around the goal," Davis said.

"For a freshman, Shawn Jones has a very great physical presence, a really good motor and is a great kid. He is powerful around the goal, very athletic."

"Trevor Charles has a chance to be a really good defensive player in our league, he blocks shots, rebounds, and his skill-level is improving and Kyle Hunt is very skilled, can score and drive the ball. They are all three very different which I think is very good for us."

"Kerry has made tremendous strides coming off his injury as a senior in high school. He has lost about 14-15 pounds and is about 198 pounds and is slowly but surely gaining his athleticism back. Kerry is an outstanding shooter but like all freshmen is adapting to the physicality and fast tempos of the Division I level."

Middle Tennessee will begin the 2010-11 season on Friday, Nov. 12 when it plays host to Tennessee Temple at 7 p.m. Tickets are $10 at the door and are part of the November Triple Play package. The November Triple Play gives fans the option to purchase a men's basketball ticket for $10 and receive a voucher to one football game and one women's basketball game in the month of November. For more information contact the MT Ticket office at 1-888-YES-MTSU or visit goblueraiders.com.

Printed on June 20, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/49264