Blue Raiders react at today's press conference

Quotes from student-athletes, administration

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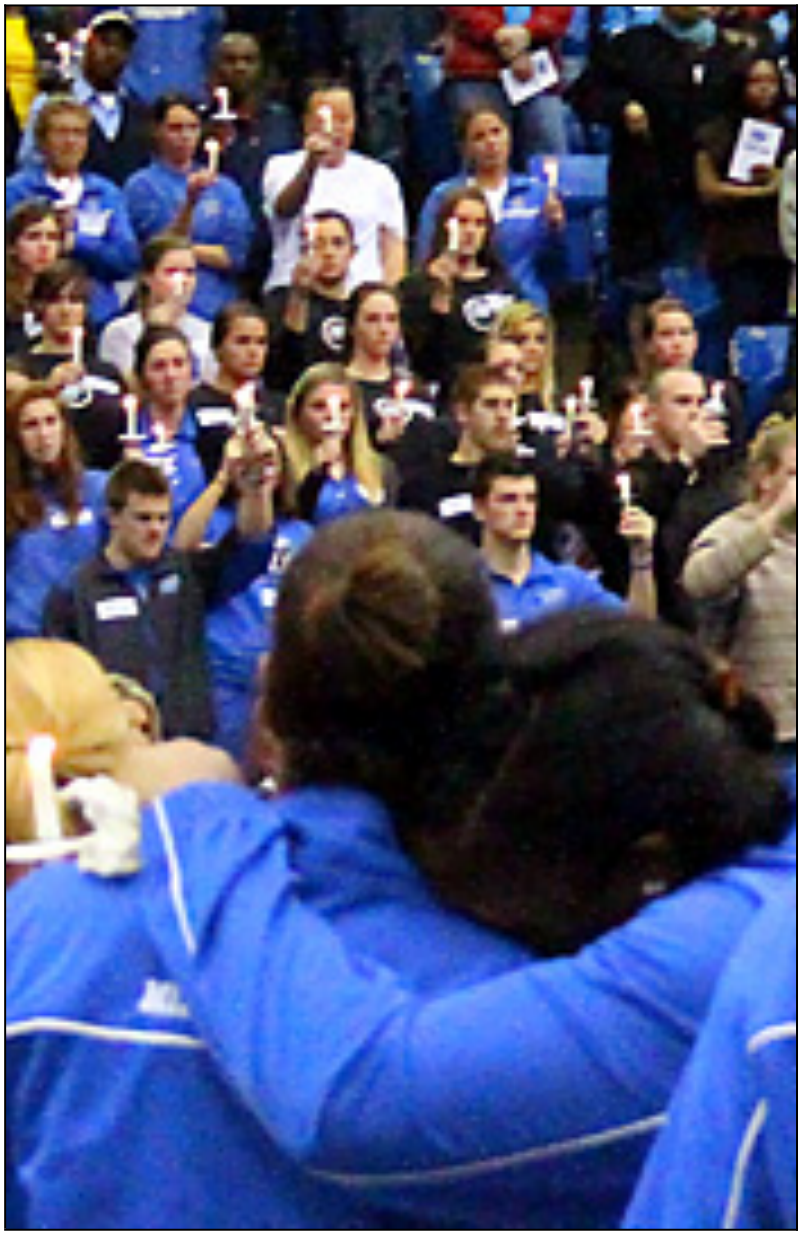

Head Coach Rick Insell
On deciding to play
That decision was left up to the players. Chris Massaro, Dr. McPhee and I had nothing to do with it. It was just decided a few minutes ago that they wanted to go to Hot Springs.

These are good kids. They are hard-nosed, they love each other, and they are all business. When they put their shoes on Sunday afternoon, they will give their fans, their parents, their school everything they've got.

Describe Tina as a person being her coach
Tina was hard-nosed. She was a team player. She sat on the bench most of her career. This year, she started 14 games and then got her place taken by a freshman. She never whimpered, she never said anything. She worked hard every day, and when she got the chance to go in, she gave us everything she's got. If you were at the WKU game last weekend, she is the reason we won. A freshman was shooting better. Tina was struggling a little with her shot. They were getting pretty much the same minutes off the bench, we were just able to use her is better situations. She had a dimension that the freshman didn't have. She was hard-nosed, she was a stopper on defense, and she made things happen. Sometimes they were good, and sometimes they were bad, but she made things happen. When you have a young team, that's what is exciting.

I never had any problems with her. She came every day, laced'em up and did what she had to do. She came from a successful team in Memphis. I do not think she was heavily recruited, but I saw a

toughness in her that we needed here at Middle Tennessee. I did not know I would be getting the smile, the personality, the leadership and other great things. There is no doubt she would have been our Anne Marie Lanning next year.

She had her best practice ever yesterday. Anne Marie Lanning was at the hospital because her sister was having baby. Tina was the only upperclassman on the floor. I challenged her and said this is your opportunity to lead this team. She started a little slow and I challenged her again. From that point on, she was the best player on the floor offensively and defensively. She did some things that we didn't know she could do as a coaching staff.

Director of Athletics Chris Massaro
It is why you are in the profession. You listen to those young people talk, and it gives you a lot of hope. You deal with these tragedies. Unfortunately, this is as big as it gets as far as this situation. These are some great young people. I believe in college athletics, I believe what it does for people. We will all get through it together.

There is no preparation for a situation like this. What we are trying to do is keep the focus on the kids. The primary responsibility is our men's and women's basketball teams, and their welfare. If we keep that as our focus all the way through our decision making, I am hopeful we will make good decisions. There is no script or preparation. The athletic directors of UConn, Miami (Ohio) and FIU called and gave us advice because they had dealt with student-athlete deaths at their schools recently. It makes you appreciate college athletics, and the fact that people are in it for the right reasons. I am very grateful for that.

On how different this trip will be for the team
We are going to talk to the girls before they go. Dr. McPhee has been very gracious in offering counseling. We are going to sit down and talk about the different situations as far as traveling, some of the things they can expect. It is going to be hard. Pre-game meal is going to be hard. The bus trip, and where Tina sat on the bus, is going to be hard. Once they get on the court, I believe that will be their easiest time because there will be some normalcy. Everywhere else will not be normal for them.

We have not decided on an insignia or anything yet. We have to talk to the players about how they want to properly honor her.

Middle Tennessee Guard James Washington
Opening Comment
I want to thank everyone for their support of Tina Stewart and the Blue Raider family. I've known Tina for two years. I met her last year and anyone would tell you she was beautiful, well-spoken, and fun to be around. I got to know her through my girlfriend Kortni Jones, her teammate. They were best friends on and off the court.

On the relationship between the men's and women's team's
We are separate on the court, but off the court we consider ourselves brothers and sisters. Around campus she was there hanging out and making people laugh. She would just brighten your day.

Middle Tennessee forward Jason Jones
Opening Comment
I've known Tina since sixth grade. She was like a sister to me. I knew she was coming here to play

for Coach (Rick) Insell. She wanted me to come here, but I chose to play somewhere else. I changed my mind and came back to Middle Tennessee. She had a great smile and loved the game of basketball. I'm sorry for what happened. We stand behind the women's basketball team. We wish them the very best.

On their relationship prior to Middle Tennessee

She started playing in middle school. We are both from Memphis, which is how we knew each other. I met her after a middle school game when she played really well against our school. I talked to her after the game and have stayed in touch ever since.

Middle Tennessee forward KC Anuna

Opening Comment

I met Tina when we came here four years ago and we started dating. Everybody said she lightens up everyone's day. She was a hard-worker and tough player. She never let anyone get under her skin. She just puts her smile on and goes. I want everyone to know she would want the women's basketball team to go out and win the tournament because she loved basketball. She always pushed me on and off the court. Please keep her family in your prayers.

On Tina before her death

She was doing the right thing during her death. She was not trying to be involved with anything. She was just trying to make sure the situation was clear. I feel like the person who did this was way out of control.

On getting support

I have a lot of support from Blue Raider fans, men's and women's fans, from Murfreesboro, Memphis and the southeast. I do not know if I will go to the tournament. It all depends when they have the funeral.

On their plans after graduation

After to school, we had talked about getting her degree in exercise science. We had considered opening a gym.

Middle Tennessee Guard Anne-Marie Lanning

Opening Comment

Tina is fun-loving. Her smile could light up a room. She will be greatly missed. I pray we can all stay strong and support Tina's family. I just know Tina is going to be missed greatly.

On her experience with last night's situation

I found out last night about seven o'clock. I was at the hospital because my sister was there. I called my teammates and said they needed to check on Tina. I got multiple phone calls, saying Tina was in the emergency room. Last night we were all in the emergency room and they took us to the consolation room and grieved. We have been trying to stay together. We are a really strong team. We have the men and women together.

On going to play in the tournament

Tina would want us to go out there and play. We talked about it and agreed that all of us want to do it. We wanted it to be a collective decision. We are going to play for Tina and give it our all. Our focus right now is about Tina. We are not talking about the game.

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