Hoops signees land postseason awards; two Blue Raiders earn degrees

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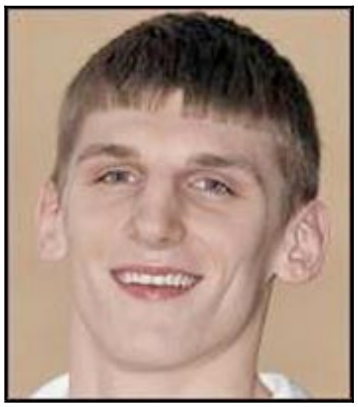
MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's three men's basketball signees all concluded outstanding seasons with a wealth of postseason awards.



Jay Ivey, a 6-foot-8, 225-pound center from Owensboro Catholic, has been named to the Kentucky All-Star basketball team. The Kentucky All-Star team is scheduled to play in the Anthem Kentucky/Indiana All-Star Classic in late June at Diddle Arena in Bowling Green, Ky. Ivey was also named to the Louisville Courier-Journal All-State basketball team following his outstanding career at Owensboro Catholic.

Ivey led the Aces (25-4) to a runner-up spot in the All "A" Classic and was named Third Region Player of the Year. He averaged 17.9 points, 8.1 rebounds, 3.1 blocks and 1.8 assists.

"Jay has had a really good year and the biggest thing is he wants to be (at Middle Tennessee) so bad," Middle Tennessee head men's basketball coach Kermit Davis said. "Being named to the Kentucky-Indiana All-Star Classic is a big deal. They will play two games, one in Bowling Green and another in Indianapolis. He had a great year to cap a great career and these honors represent what he has accomplished in a very good high school program."

Demetrius Green, a 6-4, 190 guard from Daytona Beach Community College, was named to the All-Region 8 basketball team after helping lead his squad to a 25-5 record in 2004-05. Green averaged 17.3 points and led the team with 135 assists. He averaged 5.1 rebounds and tallied 54 steals on the year. Green also earned a spot on the Mid-Florida Conference First Team.

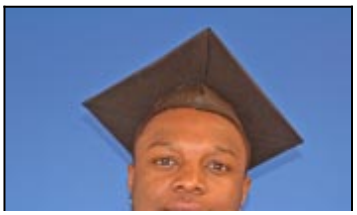
Green played prep basketball at Catholic High School in Lexington, Ky., and is the all-time leading scorer in the school's history.

"Demetrius had a fantastic year and we look forward to him being here at Middle Tennessee," Davis said. "He has some school work he has to finish this summer and then he will join us later in the summer."

Middle Tennessee's latest signee, 6-2, 185 guard Nigel Johnson, also finished a stellar season at Tallahassee Community College and was named honorable mention All-Panhandle Conference by the conference media.

Johnson, who prepped at Wooddale High School in Memphis, averaged 9.3 points, 4.5 rebounds and shot 81 percent from the free-throw line in his one season at Tallahassee. He will graduate this summer and have three years of eligibility remaining.

"Nigel Johnson is a guy I targeted since November and December," Davis said. "I just felt like he was a must-get for us because he can play all three (guard) positions. He's a junior college player but he's like a high school signee (with three years remaining), and I think he will really help us. I think all three (signees) have good character and will help our program."



EARNING THEIR DEGREE: Young and former guard Fats Cuyler took part in commencement ceremonies last week. Young, who has been named to All-Sun Belt academic teams six previous times, earned his degree in Business Administration. He will begin taking courses toward his M.B.A. this summer.
Cuyler and Young were among the more than 60 current and former Middle Tennessee athletes to receive their degree during commencement ceremonies this May.

MANY HAPPY RETURNS: Middle Tennessee went into the 2005-06 season as the youngest team in the Sun Belt with the fewest number of returning letterwinners or starters; however, that won't be the case in 2006-07.

While the Blue Raiders will still be a young squad overall with only four seniors on the roster, the returning players represent several minutes, starts and quality numbers from a year ago.

"I like where we are," Davis said. "I think we will be the youngest team in our league again next season, and it's a good thing. It's a young and talented team. I do think we have a nice solid base of good young players that want to be coached. I'm really looking forward to it. We have some guys coming back who had some success in our league, but so do other teams. We will have a very challenging schedule, but we did that for a reason."

Middle Tennessee, which has produced four straight winning seasons under Davis, will return 66 percent of its scoring, 71 percent of its rebounding, 66 percent of its assists and 69 percent of the minutes played in 2006-07.

Returning senior guard Adam Vogelsberg, who led the Blue Raiders in scoring (12.4) and was an All-Sun Belt selection last season, returns as one of the best free throw shooters not only in Middle Tennessee history, but also in the nation last year. Vogelsberg shot 90.8 percent (108-of-119) from the charity stripe, which established a new single-season record. He is the only player in program history to shoot 90 percent or better for a single season and his 90.8 percent clip also is tops on the career free throw percentage list. Former Oakland High School standout Nod Carter is second on the career list at 83.6 percent.

Vogelsberg also connected on 68 3-point attempts, which was second on the single-season list, and he is 19 shy of cracking the career Top 10 list.

Kyle Young also had one of the best single-seasons in school history, from a field goal percentage standpoint, in 2005-06 and he's among career leaders in that category entering his senior campaign. Young's 65.1 percent (108-of-166) clip was third-best for a single season in 2005-06, and only one other Blue Raider has ever had a better shooting percentage in a single season. Former standout Warren Kidd shot 70 percent from the field in 1990-91 and also shot 66.4 percent in 1992-93 to place first and second on the single-season list. Young enters his final season with a career field goal percentage of 56.7 percent, which is currently fifth on the career list.

Cuyler, who was a co-captain along with Young last season, earned his degree in Economics. Cuyler and Young each earned their degrees in four years.

NEW ADDITION: The newest member of the Blue Raider men's basketball family is Al Patton Pinkins, who goes by the name Patton.

No, Patton is not the most recent Middle Tennessee signee; however, he is the son of Al Pinkins, Blue Raider basketball assistant; and Kara Pinkins. Patton was born April 26 at Stonecrest Medical Center in Smyrna and weighed 5 pounds, 8 ounces.

As a side note, Patton shares the same birthday as Joyce Kanaskie, the mother of Blue Raider point guard Kevin Kanaskie. Patton is the first child for Al and Kara Pinkins.

"We are thrilled and on top of the world," coach Pinkins said. "He has brought so much joy to our family."

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