Inside the Huddle: MT women's basketball camp report

Q&A with Burkey; three players featured

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Each Monday leading up to the start of the season, GoBlueRaiders.com will have exclusive inside access to the Middle Tennessee women's basketball program. Each week a short Q&A will be included with a member of the coaching staff, along a few questions with selected players.

Week One Spotlight: Assistant Coach Lynn Burkey

Burkey was a friend, as well as an opponent, of Coach Rick Insell long before Insell asked Burkey to join his staff at Middle Tennessee prior to the start of the 2010-11 season. Burkey began coaching at the junior high level, then moved up to the high schools, first as an assistant then head coach at Oak Ridge. After winning three state championships at Oak Ridge, he then went back to his hometown of Greeneville, Tenn. He produced the first two state tournament teams in the school's history, making it to the State semifinals before falling to Insell's Shelbyville Central team. He would later replace Insell at Shelbyville when Insell came to MT six years ago. Last year, Insell hired Burkey at MT.

The following is an interview with Burkey:

Q. Trace your coaching career from junior high to Middle Tennessee.

I started coaching women's basketball when it was still six-on-six. I had a stint at Oak Ridge HS,

and was fortunate enough to win three state championships there. I left Oak Ridge to return to Greeneville, to try to elevate its program, which I was able to do.

Coach Insell and I have been friends and competitors for a long time, and when he left Shelbyville for MT, I wound up as the head coach there. It was five of the best years of my life. I had always admired the program there, and its tradition, and I could not resist the opportunity to coach there. I had already coached some of the girls there on The Flight and the Tennessee Stars travel teams.

The transition to college was more than what I had thought it would be. One of the biggest adjustments was, to use Coach Insell's phrase, "we run wide open here all the time." I have never had a day on this job that I could close my door at the end of the day and say "I am done." There is always more to do, always.

Q. How did the team do in preseason workouts?
Overall, I was pleased with what we did in the preseason. I like both their attitude and their work ethic. What we are trying to achieve can't be done without hard work and I thought they worked hard. I thought we accomplished a lot.

And credit coach Matt Riley, we came in stronger than we were a year ago from his strength and conditioning program. Overall, I was very pleased. One area of concern, however, has been our perimeter shooting. We graduated Anne Marie Lanning, who was our most consistent perimeter shooter and it has left a hole there. We have players who are working to fill that hole but nothing works like spending a lot of time in the gym shooting. Now that we have started practice, we have had some 6 a.m. shooting workouts and it is already helping us.

Are we where we need to be? For right now, I think we are.

Q. Where will the team leadership come from this season?
Right now, I don't have a real feel for it. Leadership has to evolve. I believe the ability to lead is God-given, it is something you are born with. You can encourage them to assert themselves more, but I don't think you can build a leader from scratch if they don't have it in them.

I think it will be more than one person who leads us this year and I don't think it will come down to age or what year you are in school. I think a lot of it will come from underclassmen. We've just got to see how it develops.

Q. Talk about the recruiting process.
It is a crucial element of the game and it is our life blood here. You are not going to win the Kentucky Derby on a plow horse, so we have to get out and find some race horses. Recruiting is a daily thing and I don't remember a single day since I got here that I haven't done something related to recruiting. One of the things that I try to do is to use the relationships that I have built up in my years of coaching, people I have known for 20 years or more. I try to use those to our benefit in our recruiting effort.

Molly McFadden is the only senior we have this year, so we are already looking for the two years after that when we lose four juniors and then five sophomores. This summer, I did nothing but look at underclassmen at camps, trying to identify some talented kids. We know that that is coming and we are planning ahead.

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR THE BLUE RAIDER PLAYERS.

This week we will feature Janay Brinkley, Lauren March and Stephanie Myers.

JANAY BRINKLEY

Why did you choose Middle Tennessee to continue your basketball career?

The main reason was Coach Insell. When I first met him, I just loved his personality, his drive and just what he stood for, how he had a big mindset for the program. I was attracted to that.

What one thing, off the court, can you do better than most?

I can write and draw and sing, but I guess the best things I do are eat and sleep.

If you could have a famous person follow you on Twitter, who would that be?

Derrick Rose, that's my favorite player.

The fans have really embraced the women's program here. How does it feel to have big crowds at home games and a good following on the road?

It feels great. Most schools do not have the support that we have. I think a big part of that is Coach Insell getting us out in the community and his networking. Our fans are really great.

What do you do before a game to get focused or fired up?

I pray and I talk to my brother. He helps me get focused and get my mindset right.

LAUREN MARCH

How would your best friends describe you?

Funny, crazy basically

How would you describe yourself in a job interview?

Serious, excited about the job, nice, friendly, motivated and loyal

Middle Tennessee only lost three players from last year's team. Is it reasonable to expect that the Blue Raiders will win more games this year? Why or why not?

I would say more games. We have a lot of players returning and we are all a year older and more experienced, so I think we can win more games.

What is the craziest thing you ever did in high school?

We have a school message board outside and my friends and I would change it to read something funny or different.

What two games on the schedule this year do you look forward to the most, and why?

Tennessee and Xavier because they are ranked schools and I just think we can win if we play our hardest, so I am looking forward to those two games.

STEPHANIE MYERS

What is your favorite food and where do you get it?

I like all food, but my favorite food is Cheerios, and I get it at the grocery store.

What do you do before a game to get focused and fired up?

I listen to my iPod. I like India.Arie and soulful music. It kind of clears my head and helps me focus

on the game.

How would your best friends describe you?
Outgoing, very tall, loving, very kind and energetic.

When your family comes to you games, do you play better?
I try to play my best game every game, no matter what. I can't just pick and choose because my parents are here.

What one thing, off the court, can you do better than most?
I can sing a little bit and I am very flexible. I can do the splits.

Stay tuned for next week's edition of Inside the Huddle exclusively on GoBlueRaiders.com.

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