Inside the Huddle: MT women's basketball camp report

Q&A with Brewton; 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 Three Spotlight: Assistant Coach Kim Brewton

It might surprise a lot of people to know that Blue Raider head basketball coach Rick Insell is not the most experienced collegiate coach on the floor at Middle Tennessee's practice sessions. That honor goes to Kim Brewton (formerly Clark), who already had six years as an assistant coach at Gardner-Webb before joining Insell's staff in July 2010. This will be her second year coaching the Blue Raider guards as well as assisting in coordinating the recruiting efforts. Brewton played basketball for Liberty for three years, during which it won three consecutive Big South Conference titles. The most impressive season was in 1998 when the Flames posted a perfect 28-0 regular season mark before falling to eventual National Champion Tennessee in the NCAA Tournament. She earned a bachelor's degree in sports management from Liberty in 2000, then got a master's degree in sports administration from Southern Miss in 2002. Brewton is recently married to a basketball official and has two daughters by a previous marriage.

The following is an interview with Brewton:

Q. Your college degrees would indicate that you were pursuing a career in administration. When did you decide to become a coach?

I knew all along that I wanted to be in coaching, but I didn't want to limit myself to just coaching if, later on, I wanted to be a senior woman's administrator or an athletic director. I wanted to have that opportunity to use my education background. But right now, in growing up with my father as a coach, I knew I wanted to be a coach. Right now, I don't have any plans to change, but you never know.

Q. Did you know Coach Insell before applying for this job?

I knew of him but I had never met him personally. He had met my father but I had never met him. I did know who he was and what he had done.

Q. Talk about the progress of the Blue Raider guards since the end of last season. Let's take them one at a time.
Janay Brinkley is definitely getting better at every practice. She didn't get to play a lot last year, but we look for her to get more this year. She's learning the system and learning how to play team basketball. She always played with the ball in her hands in high school and when she was growing up. Now, she is learning how to play without the ball in her hands and how to run the offense, and what we are looking for.

Jamila Ajanaku is, by far, the most athletic player we have on the team. She can do things that just amaze me athletically, but she has to use her head as well too. She has really come into the season focused, and trying to get better in that area of learning to take care of the ball, to value the ball, using her strengths. One of her strengths is putting the ball on the floor. We are working on improving her outside shooting, which is another one of her strengths, and that is something she is working on, trying to get more consistent. She is so amazingly athletic and we want her to use her God-given strengths to help this team.

Kortni Jones is definitely our most experienced perimeter player and she is trying to be a leader on the court. Without Anne Marie (Lanning), she is having to step up in that area.

Laken Leonard is learning every day. She's like Janay in that she didn't get a lot of playing time. She is going to have to step up this year. Laken is a good outside shooter and we want her to be able to use that to help our team. She works hard, and both she and Janay are coming along every day.

Shanice Cason is a freshman but I saw her play on a travel team this summer that won a national championship. She had a great team and she ran that team and she helped them win. She was the point guard. I think they went undefeated in all of their tournament games, and a big part of that was Shanice picking up that role when another player went to play with the national team. I've seen her play, and I knew she had it in her, and she's a proven winner because of her travel team championship. She is extremely coachable, she's eager, she works hard, she wants to learn, she is quick, she can push the ball and she just gives us a different dimension to our point guard position.

Q. What is being done to fill the void left by the graduation of Anne Marie Lanning last year?
You can't fill the void for the experience that she brought to this team last year when we had 11 freshmen and sophomores. This year, I think it will be a collective group that fills that void. It may not be any one, or any two, that will step up and do what Anne Marie did last year, but it will be a collective effort.

Q. You and your sister have followed your Dad into coaching. How has his influence impacted the way that you coach?
My dad is extremely passionate about the game of basketball and I think I have carried that over into how I coach. It's a part of my life and I don't know anything different. I grew up as a coach's kid. I've been in the gym with him at the Division I level for 30 years.

Q. You have the most collegiate coaching experience of anyone on the staff. How does that benefit you in your position?
I think I have a good understanding of the NCAA rules and compliance in that part because I have been in it for so long. I've been a part of, and seen, what goes on behind the scenes to help run a

successful Division I program. I think I can help bring that to the table with this staff. Coach Insell has been in this for seven years. So he's got some experience in the game and has recruited in Division I. Alex (Fuller) played college ball and Coach Burkey has coached a long time. But the fact that I have had to do all the paperwork and all the other stuff that goes on behind the scenes, they know they can count on me to help do all those types of things.

I appreciate them and they all work hard, and I think we each bring something different to the table, which makes us such a well-balanced staff.

Q. As a mom of two young daughters, how do you balance your time with them while maintaining a rigorous coaching schedule?
It's different for me. My time management has to be on point because I have to plan for road trips and Grace is in school, so I have to account for that. When I go home, I make sure I have time for them and my family, and when they go to bed, it's recruiting calls. There's no down time, which is fine. It keeps me balanced because I know what needs to be done and that I have this amount of time to do it.

They love Middle Tennessee and they love the team. They think they have 12 big sisters and the players are wonderful with them. If you make your family part of what you do, they take ownership of it as well. Grace will tell me what she thought about the game and she loves being a ball girl. I think I live with a bunch of coaches. Coach Insell does the same with his family too. You make them a part of it and that's what makes it work.

Q. What is the outlook for the team this season?
The fans are going to see some new faces out there this year, some players at different positions. We are going to be more athletic and be able to get after it defensively, that's been a focus for us. We have more athleticism in our backcourt and we hope to be able to use that to help this team this year.

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR THE LADY RAIDERS:
This week, we will feature Kortni Jones, Dymon Raynor and Laken Leonard

KORTNI JONES

Why did you choose Middle Tennessee to continue your basketball career?
When I was about 13, Coach Insell and his son asked my mom if it was okay for me to play on their Flight AAU travel squad. At the time, I needed an AAU team because my team had just broken up, so I went ahead and accepted the invitation. I started to come to Shelbyville more often, and wound up playing for his son because Coach Insell came here to Middle Tennessee about the time I got to Shelbyville. It was one of those things that I knew how he took care of the girls on his AAU team and that I knew by coming to Middle Tennessee, I would have a coach that would take care of me and a coach that sincerely cared about me. That was the main reason I came because I had a lot of respect for Coach Insell and what his family had helped me become.

How would your classroom professors describe you?
Probably quiet. I introduce myself the first day, let them know that I am on the basketball team and that I would be missing some classes because we are traveling. After that, I really don't say much unless I am answering a question.

If you had a free weekend, and enough money, where would you go?
I would probably go to Los Angeles. I'm really kind of a shopaholic and I'd take that weekend to go shopping just because everything is so different out there.

What do you do before a game to get focused and fired up?
If I get too focused or quiet or zoned in, I tend to get unfocused. I like to listen to my ipod, and then just before a game, I like to go over my scouting report and all the things Coach Insell said, or what Coach Kim has said. I like to wait until the last minute to get focused.

What one thing, off the court, can you do better than most?
I am kinda artistic in a way. I like to draw. I like to draw everybody's names on the team. My freshman year, I made Jamila a sign, and then Alysha Clark saw it and wanted one, so off the court, I like to doodle and do my own thing. I'm kind of an artsy person and design is the field I am going to take later on in life.

DYMON RAYNOR

What is your favorite place to eat locally?
This place called Jeff's. My roommate Lauren and I went there and it is amazing. Good home-cooked food. My favorites are the turnip greens and the macaroni and cheese.

What two games on the schedule do you look forward to the most, and why?
The Tennessee game up there because I want to see how we match up with the top teams and Western Kentucky because it is our rival school.

Where is the toughest place to play in the Sun Belt Conference and why?
Western Kentucky. First of all, their teams are really good, and second, their fans are really tough on you.

If you could have a famous athlete follow you on Twitter, who would it be?
Maya Moore

What part of your game has improved the most since you came to Middle Tennessee?
I would say that my defense has improved a lot, trying to keep the ball from coming in to the post and doing help-side. I didn't do that in high school so that has been an area of improvement.

LAKEN LEONARD

How would your classroom professors describe you?
I would say hard-working. I usually sit on the front row. I'm kind a perfectionist; I'm going to keep doing it until I get it right.

If you had a free weekend, and enough money, where would you go?
I'd probably go on a mission trip. I've always wanted to do that. One of my best friends went to Africa and I think that would be really neat.

The fans have really embraced the Lady Raiders the last few years. How does it feel to have big crowds for home games and good fan support on the road?
It gives us all of the momentum we could possibly need. It reminds me of home games at our high

school. I came from a small town and basketball is pretty much all there is. The whole community gets involved. You come to MT and you feel the same thing. I think it is really unique because at most colleges it is not like that. We have by far the best support in the Sun Belt.

If you could have a famous athlete follow you on Twitter, who would that be?
Kevin Garnett. I've liked him since he played for the Timberwolves and now I am a big Celtics fan. A bunch of the other girls are Laker fans, so we have a big rivalry when they play.

What do you do before a game to get focused and fired up?
I try to get somewhere and have my quiet time and think about my assignment for the game, and what I will be responsible for. I just try to get prepared and know that I have to give it all I've got every second that I'm in there.

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