Men's basketball summer notebook

Catching up with former Blue Raider Desmond Yates

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - As the Middle Tennessee men's basketball team continues its summer workouts, a familiar face has returned to the program for the upcoming season. The Blue Raiders' all-time leading scorer and three-time All-Sun Belt First Team selection, Desmond "Boogie" Yates, has returned to his alma mater to assist the coaching staff with various tasks for the 2012-13 campaign. GoBlueRaiders.com sat down with Yates to discuss what he has been up to since graduation, his take on last year's success and his future goals, among other topics.

What have you been up to since you graduated?

"After I graduated, I played overseas for a year. Since then I've been trying to get back around this program. Now that I'm back, my goal is to become an assistant coach. I'm just working tirelessly studying with (assistant coach Win) Case. I know the program so well since I played under (head coach Kermit) Davis for so long. I know the ins and outs of everything. Now I'm just trying to work, and hopefully in a few years I'll have a permanent assistant coaching job."

What was your experience like overseas and how did your time at MT help prepare you for that?

"The experience in Germany was nice. I enjoyed myself. The country was good, the people were good and my teammates were great. I think the biggest thing that prepared me was Coach Davis instilling that mental toughness. It gave me thick skin, and that's probably the biggest thing that helped me out."

Did you want to come back to Murfreesboro?

"Yes. Murfreesboro is pretty much home to me. I wanted to come back. I've always wanted to be a coach. I talked to Coach Davis about this years ago. I didn't want to coach this early, but life happened, so Coach Davis gave me a great opportunity, and I plan on taking advantage of it."

What makes you want to be a coach?

"Being around the game. I can't play anymore, but I just love basketball. I watch it and talk about it all day. Being the competitor that I am, I just want to be around it. The biggest thing I miss not playing anymore is competing on a day-to-day basis. Going in the locker room, strapping 'em up and just going out and competing every day. So if I can't do that, at least I can go out here and help these other guys do it. It excites me to be around it every day."

What's it like being a part of the coaching staff instead of a player?

"It's different. Being around Coach Davis so long, I know him very well and he knows me very well. But as a player you don't know how much preparation goes into every day of a basketball program. As a player, all you have to do is show up to the gym, practice and go home. But being a part of the coaching staff, you have so many other things to worry about. It's been a learning experience and a fun experience because I know Coach Davis likes everything a particular way. It's long hours, but I've been given this opportunity so you'll never hear me complain about it because I'm actually do something that I love to do. I've always wanted to be a coach and now that I'm doing it. It's a transition, but I'm making it smoothly so far."

What's shaping your coaching philosophy and what have you passed on to guys on the current team?

"I was in their shoes a few years ago. Same locker room, same jersey. To some of the guys, especially the big guys, I tell them, 'You work every day like it's your last. Don't leave this floor ever saying 'Man, I should've done this.' Just play as hard as you can for as long as you can.' We have such great athletes and great attitudes. They really hold each other accountable. I know the coaches are going to hold the guys accountable, but I think what's going to make this team good is the way they hold each other accountable for everything that happens on and off the court. What's shaping me is just letting me know that I can relate to them. I can relate to them on every level from going to class, to being on the court, to Coach Davis jumping on you. I can tell them it's not personal, it's just going to make you a better person and make this team better. That will probably be the biggest thing I can contribute to this team."

You were around a lot last year during the historic season. What was that like for you?

"It was exciting for me to see the guys do that well. I remember coming to the first practice of last season. I talked to Coach Davis after practice, and I told him the team was different. It was just one practice I saw. The guys had bought in. They were tuned into the program and what Coach Davis wanted. It was a different feel and to be around it, to be a part of it, I got to know a lot of the guys. They are all great guys, every one of them. It was exciting to see this program get the recognition it deserved after so many years, especially Coach Davis because I know how hard he works, the long hours he works and the preparation he puts into every day. So to finally see that take form was a good feeling."

What was the most fun thing for you about your playing time here and what was the most fun

part of last season for you?

"Playing here, it was coming in and practicing every day. It was a lot of hard days and a lot of sleepless nights. I bought in my freshman year and after that, I just did what Coach Davis asked me to do. I never came in with an attitude. I just came in and tried to get better every day. Just competing every day. You compete with your teammates and you might leave hurt, but I enjoyed that while I was here.

"Last year, I liked the guys' demeanor. The team's demeanor as a whole. They were confident, but they weren't cocky. They were like, 'We know what we're going to do, and we're going to go out here and prove it.' It was fun to be around them, top to bottom. Even (LaRon) Dendy, who won player of the year, didn't put himself above anybody else. Every day they came in and competed, so that was the most enjoyable thing to watch about that team last year."

If you had to go up against one guy on the team, who would it be?

"Probably Bruce (Massey). Bruce and I played one-on-one the other day, all post-ups with no jump shots, and I beat him. Bruce is a competitor and on top of that he likes to talk. So I love it. I know he's going to compete whether we're in the gym by ourselves or in front of 50,000 people. And he's going to make it fun by just talking and being Bruce."

How do you think this program has already grown since you've been here?

"The program has grown so much. My senior year, we won a regular season championship and with only one year in between, we won another regular season championship and went to the NIT. It's a stepping stone. Every year you just want to make progress. This program has come a long way from when I got here in 2005 until now. I think with Coach Davis and his hard work, he's not going to let up and he's not going to let the guys let up. It's going to continue to grow as long as the guys continue to buy in. I think this is one of the most important years in our program history because we have to back up what happened last year. Being around the guys as much as I am now, in practice and the weight room, I believe they're more hungry now because of how the season ended last year without making it to the NCAA tournament. They're hungry to prove to everybody that they can do it again, that they can win big games again. It's come a long way and I'm happy to see it continue to grow."

You're MT's all-time leading scorer. What does that mean to you?

"It means a lot to me. I feel like I earned it as I look back on it. I never came here to be the all-time leading scorer. I wanted to be a better player, and I wanted to win. So throughout my years, it just kind of happened. I was just trying to get better to make this team better. As I sat down and thought about it not too long ago, I'm the only person that I know – and I know a lot of college and NBA players - that can say that I'm the all-time leading scorer of my school. Coach Davis and I worked tirelessly to get there. It was a blessing that I had the opportunity to get there. I never wanted it personally, but it's gratifying to be there. My goal was to win a championship, and we finally got that my senior year."