Men's basketball summer notebook

Jason Jones ready to step back into a leadership role for 2012-13

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee men's basketball team concluded summer practices on Monday. The Blue Raiders capitalized on the new NCAA rule allowing a restricted number of summer practices, and the hard work showed in Monday's final session.

Senior guard Jason Jones sat down with GoBlueRaiders.com and discussed the practices, in addition to his mentality bouncing back from last year's injury.

How has summer been going?
There is a new rule allowing us more hours to work each week over the summer and our team has taken full advantage of it. The added time has helped out a lot with learning new things and bringing along new players. Now we just have to continue our work into August and September.

What is the importance of these summer practices in regards to incoming players getting acquainted to the system?
The practice time in the summer is crucial. Every new player is coming from a different system and they need the time to adjust to the tempo of the game at the collegiate level as well as our schemes. Getting everyone in here and working hard will help us out that much more when the season starts.

How has this summer been for you? Have you been more motivated this summer due to coming off the injury?
Last year was very frustrating for me. By staying around for the summer and putting in time in the weight room, I have prepared myself to be a leader on this team going into my senior year.

What personal goals are you trying to accomplish this year?
I want to be more of a leader and do whatever I can to help this team win. We had a successful year last season and I want to do my part to continue that success this season.

Do you feel like you should be more of a vocal leader, or a leader on the court?
Leadership happens everywhere. Off the court, on the court it doesn't matter. I've been talking with coach and he told me that I have been taking on a leadership role all summer. I just have to continue what I have been doing.

How is the chemistry with the new players joining the team?
It's great. We've bonded on and off the court. This group of guys works hard and just loves the game of basketball.

How important is it to keep up the level of focus you guys have had this summer once the semester starts up?
It's very important. A lot of players will go home and enjoy their families, but even when at home, we have to keep up the intensity. We don't want to return to campus and be back at point A again. We have a very hard early schedule, but if everyone continues to work and condition, like I know they will, we will handle it just fine.

This past season was arguably one of the best in program history. How important is maintaining that success this season?
It's very important. We had a good year, but we left a lot of game s on the table last season by not executing like we are capable of. This season we know what we have to do. We can't take any possessions off.

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