Women's Basketball inks four to NLIs

MT welcomes three from Tennessee, one from Kentucky

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee women's basketball head coach Rick Insell announced four student-athletes inked National Letters of Intent on Wednesday.

Insell received NLIs with three from the state of Tennessee and one from Kentucky: China Dow (Louisville, Ky./Christian Academy of Louisville), Shy Copney (Johnson City, Tenn./Science Hill HS), Olivia Jones (Murfreesboro, Tenn./Riverdale HS) and Tyisha Petty (Murfreesboro, Tenn./Riverdale HS).

"We got who we wanted," said Insell. "Take those four young ladies and add them to what we have already. We feel real positive with where the Blue Raider basketball program is going. One of the things we said eight years ago was that we are going to look at the young ladies in the state of Tennessee and Kentucky and the other states right around us. We are excited to have local players because that helps with our fan base, but they also have pride representing our state."

Dow joins the Blue Raider program after a standout career through her junior campaign at the Christian Academy of Louisville. The forward is ranked as the 25th best guard in the Class of 2013 and the 10th best player in the state of Kentucky. She is regarded as the 90th top prospect by ESPN HoopGurlz. Scouts have graded Dow with 92 out of 100 points and lists her as a four star recruit. A three year starter, Dow averaged a state-leading 23.2 points and 11.1 rebounds last season to earn Louisville Courier All-State honors. Dow collected 3.1 steals and 2.8 assists per game, while reaching double-figures in every game played. The guard scored 25 or more points 16 times last season. Earlier in 2012, she earned a spot to the Kentucky Junior All-Star basketball team. She also played for the club team Kentucky Premier. The Louisville native is described by pundits as an explosive and powerful built guard that controls the ball and is able to make plays in one-on-one situations. Dow picked the Blue Raiders over Kentucky and 30 other NCAA Division I programs that offered her a scholarship. According to Rick Bolus, Dow is list as a top player nationally.

"People in our community are going to fall in her with her personality and her playing style," noted

Insell. "I think she is the top player in the Kentucky. We are excited about her. She plays the three and four position. She's a natural born leader and hard-nosed. She will fit in with all these young ladies we have signed."

Copney, a Science Hill product, inked her NLI on Wednesday. Copney helped the Lady Toppers to a 38-0 record and an appearance in the TSSAA AAA State Championship before missing the state championship game against Riverdale with an ACL injury. The guard tallied over 1,200 points in just three seasons at Science Hill. In March 2012, she was named the MVP of Region 1-AAA and earned a spot on the All-Tournament team. Copney earned a spot on the Tri-Cities All-Big 8 team in 2012.

"Shy Copney knows how to win," Insell said. "She won 38 games in a row and got hurt in the semifinals of the state tournament. She has a tremendous basketball IQ. Her dad was a tough player in college. She comes in just like him. She reads the floor well, can knock down the three, run the floor and post up."

Jones, a star from Riverdale, signed her NLI after three outstanding campaigns. She boasted 12.5 points last season en route to an AAA State Championship title. In 2010-11, she helped the Lady Warriors to a state title. Jones also is a state champion in track & field. She is a two time All-District selection, as well as three selections to the All-Region team. She has been honored as an All-State and All-Tournament selection the past two seasons. Scouting reports tout Jones as a shutdown defensive player with large amounts of intensity and is regarded as one of the nation's top players according to Rick Bolus. Jones signed on Wednesday with current Riverdale teammate Tyisha Petty.

"Olivia Jones committed to us a year ago," said Insell. "She was the very first one that had her paperwork in on the desk. She has won state championships. She has made three All-Tournament teams this summer in three of the biggest tournaments in the country. We feel like she is good as anyone out there. We are excited about her passion and she's hard-nosed. She's a winner."

Murfreesboro native Petty decided to stay in Murfreesboro with her NLI signature on Wednesday. She is a three-year starter for the Lady Warriors, who have won two Class AAA titles and finished runner-up in one of those seasons. In 2012, Petty was named the District 7-AAA regular-season MVP with an average of 14.1 points. She dished out 4.5 assists and collected 2.5 steals during that span. Petty has been a three-time All-State selection. The Riverdale high standout was ranked as the 48th best player in her position. She is known for her speed and quickness and ball-handling skills. Also is referred to as a strong point guard that strongly attacks the basket. EPSN HoopGurlz graded her an 88 out of 100 rating. Petty was also courted offers from UALR, Belmont, Chattanooga and Southeast Missouri. Was a valuable member of the Tennessee Flight. Rick Bolus lists Petty as one of the nation's standouts in 2013. Petty joins Oliva Jones from Riverdale as signee.

"Tyisha Petty is a different type of point guard," noted Insell. "She is one of those that controls the whole show and runs the team. She had all kinds of awards come her way since she's been at Riverdale. She has passion for the game and does all the things right. I think that sets us up right there in the guard position for the next four years. We are excited to have her."
The four signees are expected to play during the 2013-14 season.

Middle Tennessee Women's Basketball Class of 2013

Shy Copney (Guard/5-9/Johnson City, Tenn./Science Hill HS)

China Dow (Forward/5-9/Louisville, Ky./Christian Academy of Louisville)

Olivia Jones (Guard/5-7/Riverdale HS/Murfreesboro, Tenn.)

Tyisha Petty (Guard/5-6/Riverdale HS/Murfreesboro, Tenn.)

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