

2023 **Tipoff** 2024
WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY
BASKETBALL PREVIEW

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ERA**

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WVU Women's
Basketball
Coach

Josh Eilert
WVU Men's
Basketball
Coach

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BLUE GATE

WVU begins new era for men's, women's hoops teams

Eilert, Kellogg are now in charge of the basketball programs

BY JUSTIN JACKSON

JJackson@DominionPost.com

No 500 word essay is needed for the WVU men's and women's basketball players on how their offseason went.

They can sum it up in just one word: Chaotic.

"It wasn't exactly what we wanted," said WVU women's guard Jayla Hemingway said. "You just get through it, and it makes you stronger."

Some of this stuff you couldn't make up with a creative writing team.

Like having a Hall-of-Fame coach resign after a DUI arrest, only to come back 24 days later and make a public statement that he never resigned and should still be employed by the school.

Or finding out your coach was leaving to take another job through social media



The Dominion Post photos

Mark Kellogg (left) and Josh Eilert (right) are first-year head coaches at the same time at WVU.

and text messages while you're riding the bus back from losing a game in the NCAA tournament.

"It wasn't the way I pictured things

when I came here," said men's forward Jesse Edwards, who transferred to WVU from Syracuse. "I have been impressed with how everyone has picked up the pieces."

There were certainly a lot of pieces to pick up in the aftermath that was Bob Huggins' resignation and Dawn Plitzuweit's sudden departure to Minnesota after just one season at WVU.

In their place is a new era at the school. Josh Eilert was signed in June as the men's interim head coach, and he will run the team for one season.

WVU athletic director Wren Baker said the school would conduct a national search for Huggins' full-time replacement following this season, in which Eilert would be a candidate.

Meanwhile, Baker also signed Mark Kellogg as Plitzuweit's full-time replacement back in April.

Kellogg, who spent the last eight years at Stephen F. Austin, is signed through the 2027-28 season.

It's the first time in school history both the men's and women's head coach will coach their first season at the same time.

"We have talked for sure," Kellogg said of his relationship with Eilert. "Josh's son and my son are the same age and on

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NEW

FROM PAGE I-2

the same golf team and the same basketball team. We see each other quite a bit, to be honest.”

Kellogg said the two families have bonded through similar circumstances.

“Like, basketball talk, there’s not a ton of that,” Kellogg said. “Life talk, being at West Virginia and taking over the programs, yeah, those conversations have happened quite often.”

There may be no situation in college basketball than what Eilert faces this season.

Not only is he coaching on a one-year tryout basis, he’s also following Huggins, a man loved and respected around the state after leading the Mountaineers to the 2010 Final Four.

On top of all of that, Eilert also dismissed high-scoring guard Jose Perez before the season started and is battling the NCAA over an eligibility waiver for guard RaeQuan Battle.

Senior forward Akok Akok collapsed to the floor and was rushed to the hospital in an exhibition game. He will not be in WVU lineup to start the season for medical reasons.



William Wotring/The Dominion Post

Bob Huggins resigned as WVU men’s basketball coach on June 17.

ical reasons.

And point guard Kerr Kriisa was suspended for the first nine games of the season after accepting illegal benefits while still enrolled at Arizona.

“Josh has seen his fair share of adversity, probably not like this before, but he’s

seen his fair share,” WVU assistant coach Da’Sean Butler said. “If there is anybody I’m not worried about leading the troops, it’s coach Eilert.”

Kellogg hasn’t faced the same amount of adversity as Eilert, and he actually picked up a win before the Mountaineers ever took the court.

It came in the form of keeping the core of last year’s team together and away from the transfer portal.

That included star junior guard J.J. Quinerly, an all-Big 12 first-teamer last season.

“There was never a discussion about her leaving, at least with me,” Kellogg said. “Of course, I was re-recruiting her, but that was all of them. I wanted to keep that core group together. To me, that was win No. 1 in keeping together those six.”

“That’s a good group, and it was four of the five starters. Of course, J.J. was a big piece of that.”

Both coaches were forced to rebuild a roster over the summer.

The WVU men’s team lost three potential starters and four players overall to the transfer portal after Huggins’ resignation.

He was able to keep both Kriisa and Jesse Edwards, who transferred to WVU

while Huggins was still the head coach.

He also used Butler’s international experience in Israel in signing freshman Ofri Naveh, as well as signing transfer Quinn Slazinski. Both have shown early signs of contributing right away.

“It was a balancing act,” Eilert said. “We were trying to build a foundation. We were backed up against a wall in a lot of ways, because we still had five or six spots to fill. We kind of had to get creative.”

Kellogg brought two players with him from Stephen F. Austin in Jordan Harrison and Zya Nugent and then signed an important piece in former all-Big 12 guard Lauren Fields.

Days and months have now passed. What was once weekly drama has now simply turned into basketball once again for both programs.

No, it wasn’t exactly a ho-hum off-season for anyone, in the end, though, it just may have made WVU’s players stronger.

“I think one thing to say about that is you should always be open to new experiences, new people and new changes,” WVU women’s forward Tavy Diggs said. “I didn’t have to go looking for a new coach, he came here. It’s really been a blessing.”

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Fifth Year
Tulalip, WA



Jeremiah Bembry
Guard 6'5"
185 lbs
Redshirt Freshman
Brooklyn, NY



Jesse Edwards
Center 6'11"
240 lbs
Fifth Year
Amsterdam, Netherlands



Noah Farrakhan
Guard 6'1"
170 lbs
Senior
Hillside, NJ



Josiah Harris
Forward 6'7"
215 lbs
Sophomore
Canton, OH



Kobe Johnson
Guard 6'3"
205 lbs
Junior
Canton, OH



Kerr Kriisa
Guard 6'3"
185 lbs
Senior
Tartu, Estonia



Ofri Naveh
Forward 6'6"
185 lbs
Freshman
Neot Golan, Israel



Ali Ragab
Center 7'0"
275 lbs
Junior
Cairo, Egypt



Quinn Slazinski
Forward 6'9"
230 lbs
Fifth Year
Houston, TX



Patrick Suemnick
Forward 6'8"
235 lbs
Senior
Green Bay, WI



Seth Wilson
Guard 6'2"
220 lbs
Junior
Lorain, OH

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Interim Head Coach



James Dickey
Senior Advisor



DeMarr Johnson
Assistant Coach



Da'Sean Butler
Assistant Coach



Alex Ruoff
Assistant Coach



Jordan McCabe
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Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

WVU point guard Kobe Johnson.



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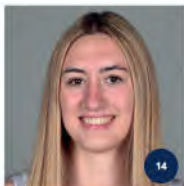





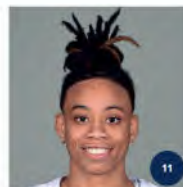
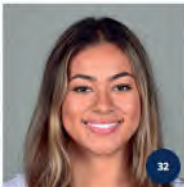
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2023-24 WVU WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

 Danelle Arigbabu Forward 6'4" Junior Berlin, Germany	 Kylee Blacksten Forward 6'3" Senior Colorado Springs, CO	 Tavy Diggs Forward 6'1" Fifth Year Plano, TX	 Lauren Fields Guard 5'9" Fifth Year Shawnee, OK	 Jordan Harrison Guard 5'6" Senior Oklahoma City, OK
 Jayla Hemingway Guard 5'11" Fifth Year Collierville, TN	 Ainhua Holzer Guard 5'9" Redshirt Freshman Martigny, Switzerland	 Messiah Hunter Forward 6'2" Redshirt Sophomore Hopewell, VA	 Tirzah Moore Guard 6'0" Junior Oklahoma City, OK	 Ashala Moseberry Guard 5'10" Junior Madison, WI
 Zya Nugent Guard 5'7" Senior Denison, TX	 JJ Quinerly Guard 5'8" Junior Norfolk, VA	 Kyah Watson Guard 5'10" Redshirt Junior Rapid City, SD		

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 Mark Kellogg Head Coach	 JC Carter Associate Head Coach	 Jessica Grayson Assistant Coach	 Erin Grant Assistant Coach
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Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

WVU forward Kylee Blacksten.

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WVU MEN'S PREVIEW

After busy offseason, Mountaineers ready to move on

New coach, players will embark on quite a journey

BY JUSTIN JACKSON

JJackson@DominionPost.com

Going strictly by the nicknames given to the players, the WVU men's basketball roster seems perfectly fit to form their own crime-fighting team.

Kerr Kriisa is known as "The Magician" and Josiah Harris is "The Genius."

Quinn Slazinski stars as the "The Philosopher," while Jesse Edwards is "The Alien."

Whether or not they can all come together on a basketball floor and put together a successful season, well, that's still up in the air.

The Mountaineers enter the 2023-24 season literally with a fresh start.

Interim head coach Josh Eilert is in his first season. Three of his assistant coaches are in their first season.

And the players? They've been around college basketball, sure, but never together in a WVU uniform playing against Big 12 competition.

In all, the Mountaineers will have eight scholarship players new to the team, none with Big 12 experience.

"You look at the timeline of some of the guys we brought in late, I still see it out there on the floor right now," Eilert said in describing WVU's on-court chemistry. "They just don't know how to read off each other, because they haven't played that much together. They all have strengths and weaknesses, but we got to get to the point where who is going to do what in certain situations. We're still learning a lot about each other."

WVU was picked ninth out of 14 teams in the Big 12 preseason poll, a year after

finishing eighth (when the Big 12 had just 10 teams), but still advanced to the NCAA tournament.

"I feel like everybody is overlooking us," said Kriisa, who played last season at Arizona before transferring. "I think we'll be playing with a chip on our shoulders."

With all that happened at WVU in the offseason, maybe there is a good reason this bunch is not expected to finish among the elite.

Eilert and the bulk of his staff is new only after longtime coach Bob Huggins resigned following a DUI arrest in June. Eilert was named a one-year interim and the school will search for a full-time replacement in March, with Eilert being a candidate.

Eilert was able to keep the top two transfers — Kriisa and Edwards — signed by Huggins on the roster, but then had to let guard Jose Perez go just as the pre-season practice was beginning, after Perez violated team rules.

The school is also waiting to hear on its appeal on guard RaeQuan Battle's eligibility waiver. He was denied a waiver by the NCAA.

Battle averaged 17.7 points at Montana State last season. He needs the waiver, because he has already played at two schools and has used his one-time free transfer.

"That's still ongoing," Eilert said. "It's in the NCAA's hands and there's been some communication back and forth to get the information they need on some follow-up issues."

Eilert has referred to Battle as "spe-

SEE BUSY, I-8



William Wotring/The Dominion Post


WVU guard Seth Wilson (right) will play a key role for the short-handed Mountaineers this season. He averaged 4.2 points per game and connected on 34 3-pointers as a sophomore last season.

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William Wotring/The Dominion Post

WVU sophomore Josiah Harris (right) is expected to move into the starting lineup for the Mountaineers this season.

BUSY

FROM PAGE I-7

cial” numerous times, meaning Battle’s immediate eligibility this season would weigh heavily on how the Mountaineers perform.

“It’s something I’m very concerned about,” Eilert said. “It would hurt our cause dramatically, because he is a special player.”

WVU will also be without Kriisa for the first nine games of the season. He was suspended by the NCAA for accepting improper benefits while at Arizona.

The rest is just basketball, which Eilert is using his one season as interim to overhaul the offense with an emphasis on spacing.

Eilert wants the offense to resemble more like what’s seen in the NBA.

“It will look different,” Eilert said. “In the past, coach Huggins had his offense, and, probably in my mind, it lacked a lot of spacing. Sometimes that’s good and sometimes that’s bad. If you look at it analytically, I want to get to the point where we’re getting a lot more open shots.

“A lot of ball screens and the corners will be filled, just a lot more spacing.”

It’s an offense Eilert and assistant coach Da’Sean Butler put together in the offseason.

Kriisa and Edwards, a transfer from Syracuse, may be perfectly fit for it, as far as a pick-and-roll tandem.

Kriisa led the Pac-12 in assists last season, while Edwards averaged a double-double with the Orangemen.

Returners Seth Wilson, Pat Suemnick, Kobe Johnson and Harris will play key roles, as will the 6-foot-9 Slazinski, a transfer from Iona, who also played at Louisville.

Eilert also added depth on the roster with transfers Jeremiah Bembry (Florida State) and Akok Akok (Georgetown), while also signing freshman Ofri Naveh from Israel.

Noah Farrakhan was also signed by Eilert, but is sitting out this season due to

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Quinn Slazinski
WVU forward

NCAA transfer rules.

There are pieces in place to bring optimism, but can the Mountaineers come together through all of the offseason adversity and look like a team on the floor?

“Most importantly, when it comes to successful teams, it’s age. We have that,” is the way Slazinski answered that question. “It’s experience. It’s playing. You look at our five, and people have played in March. Jesse went to the Sweet 16, Kerr Kriisa was the starting point guard at Arizona who was No. 1 in the country.

“RaeQuan scored 27 points in the conference tournament to take his team to March Madness. I’m a two-time conference tournament winner being on the No. 1 team in the country. Guys have won games and that’s the recipe.”

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Josh Eilert

AGE: 42

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Eilert was named the interim head coach on June 24, after former head coach Bob Huggins resigned. Eilert spent 16 years on the WVU staff under Huggins, beginning as a video coordinator and working his way up to

assistant coach during the 2022-23 season.

CONTRACT: Will be paid \$1.5 million, plus incentives, for this season. His contract term ends on April 30, 2024.

THROUGH THE YEARS: Eilert played college basketball at Kansas State and was a graduate assistant there when Huggins took over the Wildcats' program in 2006. He was retained by Huggins and then came to WVU in 2007. Eilert has previously played major roles in creating the schedule for the Mountaineers.



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Jesse Edwards

Fifth year — Center — 6-11, 240

FROM: Amsterdam, Netherlands

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was a 3-star recruit coming out of IMG Academy (Bradenton, Fla.) and chose Syracuse over Georgia Tech.

ton, Fla.) and chose Syracuse over Georgia Tech.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Played four seasons at Syracuse and averaged 14.5 points and 10.3 rebounds per game last season. Transferred to WVU for his final season of eligibility in April. Chose WVU over Kansas and Gonzaga.

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Kerr Kriisa

Senior — Guard — 6-3, 185

FROM: Tartu, Estonia

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was a 4-star recruit in the 2020 class after playing the

2019-20 season in Lithuania before committing to Arizona.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Played three seasons at Arizona, where he led the Pac-12 in assists at 5.1 per game last season. Transferred to WVU in April and has two seasons of eligibility remaining. Chose WVU over Xavier, Ole Miss and Arkansas.

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RaeQuan Battle

Fifth year — Guard — 6-5, 195

FROM: Tulalip, Wash.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was a 4-star recruit in the 2019 class coming out of Marysville-Pilchuck (Wash.) High School. He was ranked No. 70 overall in the 2019 class. Chose the University of Washington, becoming the first member of the Tulalip tribe to earn a

Division I basketball scholarship.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Played two seasons at Washington and two seasons at Montana State. He averaged 17.7 points per game last season at Montana State. Was denied a waiver by the NCAA for eligibility this season, although WVU is currently appealing that decision.



Akoko Akoko

Fifth year — Forward — 6-10, 225

FROM: Manchester, N.H.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was a 4-star recruit in the 2018 class coming out of Putnam (Conn.) Science Academy, where he was a consensus top 30 recruit. Chose UConn over Pitt, Georgetown, Providence and Syracuse. Played three years at UConn, before trans-

ferring to Georgetown in 2022.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Averaged 6.5 points, 6.2 rebounds and 2.0 blocks per game at Georgetown last season. Transferred to WVU in August for his final season of eligibility. Is currently sitting out with a medical issue after collapsing to the floor and being rushed to the hospital during a WVU exhibition game.



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Seth Wilson

Junior — Guard — 6-2, 220

FROM: Lorain, Ohio

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was a 3-star recruit, who also had scholarship offers from Akron, Kent State and Ohio University. Began his high school career at Akron's St. Vincent-St. Mary,

the same high school LeBron James attended.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Has played in 54 games and has scored 179 points. He averaged 4.2 points per game last season and connected on 34 3-pointers. Scored a career-high 15 points against Texas Tech last season.



Kobe Johnson

Junior — Guard — 6-3, 205

FROM: Canton, Ohio

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was a 3-star recruit, who also had scholarship offers from Bowling Green, Akron and Duquesne. Named the Ohio Division I Player of the Year by the Ohio Prep

Sports Writers Association in 2021 and finished as the all-time leading scorer at Canton McKinley with 1,566 points.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Has played in 61 games with eight career starts with the Mountaineers. Has 106 points and 52 rebounds over his college career. His career high is seven points and he averaged 2.0 points per game last season.



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Josiah Harris

Sophomore — Forward — 6-7, 215

FROM: Canton, Ohio

RECRUITING PROFILE: A 3-star recruit who was ranked No. 137 overall nationally coming out of Richmond Heights (Cleveland) High. Also had scholarship offers from Cincinnati, Akron and Duquesne. Averaged 17.9 points and 11.1 rebounds per game as a junior.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Played in 17

games as a freshman, finishing with 30 points and 15 rebounds. Was 5 of 16 from 3-point range. Scored a career-high eight points against Texas last season. Has already earned his bachelor's degree in communication studies and is working on a master's degree in executive sport management.



Quinn Slazinski

Fifth year — Forward — 6-9, 230

FROM: Houston

RECRUITING PROFILE: A 3-star recruit who played his final two seasons of high school at Huntington Prep. Signed with Louisville over offers from Cal, Georgia Tech and Houston. Played last season at Iona under Rick Pitino, but was limited to just seven games due to

a foot injury.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Committed to WVU in July after briefly following Pitino to St. John's. Played in seven games at Iona last season and averaged 11.3 points and 5.7 rebounds. Hopes to receive a medical redshirt for last season, which would make him eligible to play at WVU next season.



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Pat Suemnick

Senior — Forward — 6-8, 235
FROM: Green Bay, Wis.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Originally signed with Robert Morris in 2020 coming out of high school. He averaged 2.4 points and 1.6 rebounds over 16 games with the Colonials, before moving on to junior college at Triton (Ill.)

College. Coming out of junior college, he also had offers from Texas A&M and Stephen F. Austin.
AT WEST VIRGINIA: Played in 21 games last season with the Mountaineers, averaging 1.4 points and 1.3 rebounds. Had a season-high seven points against Texas and also grabbed five rebounds in a game against Baylor.



Ofri Naveh

Freshman — Forward — 6-6, 185
FROM: Neot Golan, Israel

RECRUITING PROFILE: Competed with Israel in the summer of 2023 in FIBA U18 European Championships, before enrolling at WVU. He averaged 11.0 points and 7.1 rebounds in that tour-

nament. Also played for the Maccabi Playtiki Tel Aviv under-18 team.
AT WEST VIRGINIA: Was the only freshman the Mountaineers signed in the 2023 recruiting class. WVU assistant Da'Sean Butler, who formerly played professionally in Israel, heard about Naveh through a former head coach of his.

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Jeremiah Bembry

Freshman — Guard — 6-5, 185

FROM: Brooklyn, N.Y.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was a 3-star recruit in the 2022 class coming out of Executive Education Academy (Allentown, Pa.). Was ranked the No. 11 recruit in Pennsylvania. Signed with

Florida State, but was injured and was redshirted.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Bembry entered the transfer portal after his one season with the Seminoles and committed to WVU in July. He's expected to play a role as a backup point guard. Still has four seasons of eligibility remaining.



Noah Farrakhan

Senior — Guard — 6-1, 170

FROM: Hillside, N.J.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was a 3-star recruit in the 2020 class coming out of The Patrick School in New Jersey. Originally signed with East Carolina, but transferred to Eastern Michigan after his freshman season. Began his high

school career at St. Benedict's Prep in Newark, where he was part of two state championships.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Will have to sit out the 2023-24 season at WVU due to NCAA transfer rules, but is expected to play a major role next season. Has played 69 games over his college career and has scored 844 points, while shooting 33.5% from 3-point range.



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BIG 12 MEN'S PREVIEW

Nothing will come easy for the Big 12 newcomers

Associated Press

Kelvin Sampson walked into a meeting of Big 12 coaches not long ago and looked around the room, and the thought that popped into the Houston coach's head was that it felt like walking into a dog park.

"You've got two dogs walk by each other, kind of side-eye, or little one starts yapping at the big one and they start sizing each other up," Sampson said. "I was sizing them all up. It used to be you could look at a few of those little dogs and go, 'I can get that one. I can get that one. I can get that one.' I ain't seen nobody in this conference like that."

Indeed, the Cougars — along with UCF, Cincinnati and BYU — are taking a big step up by joining the Big 12 this year. The first three are joining from the American Athletic and BYU from the West Coast conferences. All of them know that their programs are in for some growing pains as they take on what has statistically been the best league in the country.

"They're all German shepherds, man. Where's the Shih Tzus? Where's the Chihuahuas at?" Sampson said. "Oh, that's a Rottweiler. Oh my God, that's a pitbull. This is a tough dog park, man."

The top dog once again is expected to be Kansas, preseason No. 1 in the AP Top 25 poll.

The Jayhawks return a talented and experienced core led by Dajuan Harris, Kevin McCullar and K.J. Adams. The landed a highly regarded freshman class headlined by Elmarko Jackson. And they brought in a group of impact transfers that features Hunter Dickinson, the ex-Michigan center widely considered the best player to hit the portal this past offseason.

They also return Bill Self, who missed



AP photo

Hunter Dickinson is the Big 12 Preseason Player of the Year. He averaged 18.5 points and 9.0 rebounds at Michigan last season before transferring to Kansas.

the postseason after having a heart valve replaced. The Hall of Fame coach was taken to the hospital on the eve of the Big 12 Tournament, and top assistant Norm Roberts led the Jayhawks to a title game — losing there to Texas — and to the second round of the NCAA Tournament, where they were upset by Arkansas.

"I actually looked the other day because I didn't even know when we had been ranked preseason 1," Self said, "but in the years that we had, we've had good years but they haven't finished great. I'm

certainly hopeful that we can change that trend."

Familiar opposition

Transferring within a conference was once verboten, but that is no longer the case. Baylor lost LJ Cryer to Houston. West Virginia watched Joe Toussaint head to Texas Tech. Avery Johnson III departed Oklahoma State for TCU, which also picked up Ernest Udeh from Kansas. And Ithiel Horton bounced from UCF to Texas.

Preseason Player of the Year

Hunter Dickinson, Kansas

Preseason Newcomer of the Year

Hunter Dickinson, Kansas

Preseason Freshman of the Year

Ja'Kobe Walter, Baylor

Preseason All-Big 12 Team

- L.J. Cryer, Houston
- Hunter Dickinson, Kansas
- Dejuan Harris, Kansas
- Emanuel Miller, TCU
- Max Abmas, Texas

Welcome back

Plenty of new coaches in the league have Big 12 roots, beginning with Sampson, who spent a dozen years at Oklahoma and led the Sooners to the Final Four in 2002. Josh Eilert, a former Kansas State graduate assistant, was picked by West Virginia to replace Bob Huggins, who acrimoniously parted ways with the school after his drunken-driving arrest in June. Texas Tech's Grant McCasland, who played and coached at Baylor, was hired away from North Texas to replace Mark Adams.

Instant impact

Dickinson was the biggest prize of the portal, but several Big 12 schools landed high-profile transfers. Max Abmas departed Oral Roberts for Texas after finishing in the top 10 nationally in scoring each of the past three seasons.

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WVU WOMEN'S PREVIEW

WVU marks its 50th season with a fresh start

Program welcomes new coach, 4 starters

BY JUSTIN JACKSON

JJackson@DominionPost.com

In a very technical sense, the WVU women's basketball team looks prepared to build on its momentum created by making it to the NCAA tournament last season.

The Mountaineers return four starters from that 19-win team, including all-Big 12 first-team guard J.J. Quinerly, who averaged 14.5 points per game and led the team with 66 steals.

Yet the Mountaineers, who will be in their 50th year of existence, were only picked to finish eighth in the Big 12 pre-season coaches' poll, right in the middle of what is a 14-team league this season.

"We definitely saw that," Quinerly said. "I guess we have a lot to prove to people this season."

The reason for that is the rest of the story for WVU.

It was not a quiet offseason for the Mountaineers, who saw head coach Dawn Plitzuweit leave for Minnesota just hours after that 75-62 loss against Arizona in the first round of the NCAA tournament.

Enter head coach Mark Kellogg, who made a name for himself over the last eight years at Stephen F. Austin, where he won 78% of his games and took the school to two NCAA tournaments.

While WVU did lose three players to the transfer portal after Plitzuweit's exit, Kellogg was able to keep the core of the team together.

"That was win No. 1," Kellogg said.

Quinerly decided to stay, as did starters Kyah Watson, Kylee Blacksten and Jayla Hemingway.

Forwards Tavy Diggs and Messiah Hunter also remained.

Everything else was Kellogg and his coaching staff piecing the roster together on the fly, creating a sense of the unknown and the lower-than-expected placement in the preseason poll.

"We were able to address some things through the portal," Kellogg said. "Did we address everything? Probably not as well as we would have liked. Rebounding will be an issue for us, but I believe we have a great group of players who are working hard and coming together pretty well."

Where the Mountaineers may lack in size and rebounding, Kellogg believes can be offset some through speed and creating turnovers.

That's where Kellogg's full-court pressing defensive style comes into play.

Unsure if he was going to be able to run it early on, Kellogg now sees the right pieces in place to attempt to create havoc on opposing teams.

"What we're able to do early on may only be about 60 or 70% of where we want to be later in the season," Kellogg said. "With that said, we have the capability of creating a lot of pressure with our defense. We have what we need to pressure teams full court like I want."

Kellogg's first recruiting class brought an important piece in guard Lauren Fields, a former all-Big 12 player at Oklahoma State, who played at Arizona last season.

Fields averaged 15.4 points during the 2021-22 season at OSU. She is in her final season of eligibility.

"She's a wing who can shoot the three and put it on the floor," Kellogg said.



William Wotring/The Dominion Post

WVU guard Kyah Watson (left) averaged 7.3 points and 5.1 rebounds last season.

"She's pretty good at the mid-range, too, which is kind of a lost art. She's a phenomenal defender. She is active, active, active on the defensive end. She's pretty complete right now."

From Stephen F. Austin, Kellogg signed guards Jordan Harrison and Zya Nugent. Harrison averaged 12.1 points and 5.0 assists last season as a freshman.

Nugent redshirted last season, but averaged 12.9 points and 5.7 rebounds in 2021-22 and was named the MVP of the 2022 WAC tournament.

"Certainly from a familiarity standpoint, Jordan and Zya know what to expect from me and how we're going to run things," Kellogg said. "They can help us in that area. Both are very

talented, but this is going to be a step up in competition for them. How will they adjust to that? From what we've seen early on, they are adjusting pretty well."

When it's all said and done, though, how much success WVU has in Kellogg's first season will depend on how well Quinerly plays and how the Mountaineers defend against larger teams.

WVU was ninth in the Big 12 in rebounding last season, finishing at a minus (-4) per game in the battle of the boards.

"We've talked a lot about rebounding," said the 6-foot-1 Diggs, who will be counted on heavily in that department this season. "That's something we know we have to get better at."



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Mark Kellogg

AGE: 47
AT WEST VIRGINIA: Enters his first season at WVU with a 445-120 career record. His 78.8% winning percentage makes him the sixth winningest active coach in the country in women's basketball.

CONTRACT: Signed a 5-year deal worth \$5 million, plus incentives. His salary will start at \$550,000 and will increase by \$25,000 annually.
NCAA BIDS: Led Stephen F. Austin to the 2021 and 2022 NCAA tournaments. Has also coached in seven Division II NCAA tournaments.
HIGHLIGHTS: Coached in the 2010 and 2014 Division II national championship games. His teams have finished lower than fourth in their conference just once.



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Quinerly's next step to take: Become more vocal

WVU guard being asked to show more leadership

BY JUSTIN JACKSON

JJackson@DominionPost.com

Mark Kellogg is walking out of the press conference area, having just wrapped up a session with the media and knowing J.J. Quinerly is about to come in for an interview.

"You guys make sure you get her to talk," Kellogg says with a smile.

For two seasons, Quinerly has let her play on the court do her talking for her, and it's said a lot.

The 5-foot-8 junior from Norfolk, Va., already has 712 points, 205 rebounds and 134 steals under her belt.

Yet this season, there are higher expectations for Quinerly. Sure, maybe some of that will be from her shooting stats, but more so from her leadership skills.

"We need J.J. to be a leader, which will be something new to her," Kellogg began. "She's a pretty quiet person, doesn't say a whole lot, but we need her to step up and become a vocal leader."

Quinerly has faced many challenges throughout her basketball career, some as recently as this offseason, when Kellogg became her third college coach in as many years.

She was recruited to WVU by former coach Mike Carey, who retired at the end of Quinerly's freshman season. That led to Dawn Plitzuweit last season, who then left WVU for Minnesota.

Through it all, Quinerly has remained committed to the Mountaineers.



William Wotring/The Dominion Post

WVU junior guard J.J. Quinerly was an all-Big 12 first-team selection last season after averaging 14.5 points and 4.2 rebounds per game.

"Me staying here, it was just a good place to be," she said. "I like the people here. I don't like change."

Like it or not, change is coming for Quinerly. No longer is she the young up-and-comer in the program.

Quinerly has become the face of it. With that responsibility comes the charge of developing into the team's leader.

"Yes, this is one of my biggest challenges," Quinerly said. "Outside of basketball, I'm a very introverted person. I really don't do too much talking."

"Now, I see a lot of my teammates are looking up to me. That puts more on me to where I need to talk. I need to show them that I can lead them through the season."

She battled an ankle injury in pre-season practice, one bad enough to keep Quinerly out of the team's two closed-door scrimmages.

She is expected to be ready to go by the time the season starts.

Once it does, Kellogg's full-court pressing system combined with Quinerly's defensive skills will seemingly mesh with little problems.

"Our press looks good," Quinerly said. "Defensively, we look good. We play hard and we play fast. We have a lot of players who get out there and just go."

"It may not be perfect at times, but we're out there flying around. We'll get steals and deflections. That press is going to be one of our big things this year."

She won't exactly be counted on to be a one-woman team. WVU also returns Jayla Hemingway, who has started 68 times in her three seasons at WVU. Hemingway was the team's leading rebounder last season.

WVU also returns starters Kyah Watson and Kylee Blacksten, as well as Tavy Diggs, who was the Mountaineers' top reserve a season ago.

Kellogg also signed transfer Lauren Fields, a former starter at Oklahoma State and Arizona who is in her final season of eligibility.

"I'll tell you, it's much better being on her team than going up against her," Fields said of Quinerly. "She's so quick. She just goes by you."

That's been the type of player Quinerly has generally been. Now, she's just got to add vocal leadership to that.

"I really have no choice. I have to become a vocal leader," Quinerly said. "Just based off how I've played and how (Kellogg) wants to use me in the system, I have to be more vocal. I'm trying. I've been working on that."



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J.J. Quinerly

Junior — Guard — 5-8

FROM: Norfolk, Va.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Ranked as a 3-star recruit and the No. 20 overall point guard nationally in the 2021 recruiting class coming out of Lake Taylor High, which

won the Class AAAA state title during the 2018-19 season. She averaged 17.4 points and 9.0 assists for her prep career.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Was an all-Big 12 first-team selection last season after averaging 14.5 points and 4.2 rebounds per game. Led the team with 66 steals. Scored a career-high 28 points last season against Oklahoma. Had a double-double with 16 points and 10 rebounds against Texas Tech.

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Jayla Hemingway

Fifth Year — Guard — 5-11

FROM: Collierville, Tenn.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Ranked as a 4-star recruit and No. 89 overall nationally coming out of Houston (Tenn.) High School, which went 31-3 and finished as the

state's runner-up her senior year. Was named the 2019 Gatorade Player of the Year in Tennessee. Originally played at Mississippi State before transferring to WVU in 2020.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Has played in 83 games and scored 534 points in her three seasons at WVU. Led the team with 5.9 rebounds per game last season. Scored a career-high 20 points against Kansas State last season.



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Kyah Watson

Junior — Guard — 5-10

FROM: Rapid City, S.D.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was not ranked coming out of Rapid City Stevens High, where she was a three-sport standout and also ran track and played volleyball. Set

the school record with 240 career assists and scored 956 points in her prep career. Originally signed with South Dakota.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Played in 31 games last season and averaged 7.3 and 5.1 rebounds per game. Was third on the team with 62 assists. Scored a career-high of 16 points last season against Robert Morris and finished with two double-doubles.





Kylee Blacksten

Senior — Forward — 6-3

FROM: Colorado Springs, Colo.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was not ranked coming out of Air Academy High, which is located on the campus of the Air Force Academy. Was an all-conference player in each of her four seasons and averaged 16.0 points and 5.3 rebounds as a senior. Originally signed

with Colorado.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Played in 30 games in her first season at WVU in 2022-23. Averaged 6.0 points and 3.1 rebounds per game, while also connecting on nine 3-pointers. Scored in double figures four times last season, including 20 against Kansas State. Also had 10 rebounds against Oklahoma.



Tavy Diggs

Fifth year — Forward — 6-1

FROM: Plano, Texas

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was a 3-star recruit and ranked the No. 18 wing player nationally in the 2019 recruiting class coming out of Plano East. Averaged 14.8 points and 7.9 rebounds per game as a senior. Originally signed

with TCU.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Played in 31 games last season, averaging 2.2 points and 2.5 rebounds per game. Scored a season-high 12 points against Miami (Ohio) and had 10 rebounds against Georgia. Majoring in Media Solutions and Innovation.



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Lauren Fields

Fifth year — Guard — 5-9

FROM: Shawnee, Okla.

RECRUITING PROFILE: A 3-star recruit in the 2019 class out of Shawnee High School, where she averaged 15.4 points, 4.3 rebounds and 3.2 assists per game as a senior. Named to the USA TODAY High School Sports' All-USA Oklahoma girls' team and represented the United States as a mem-

ber of the 2018 Adidas Girls USA Select Team in Italy. Originally signed with Oklahoma State.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: The former all-Big 12 second-team selection played last season at Arizona, before transferring to WVU in April as one of Mark Kellogg's first recruits. WVU assistant coach Jessican Grayson coached her at Oklahoma State and WVU assistant Erin Grant coached her at Arizona.



Jordan Harrison

Sophomore — Guard — 5-6

FROM: Oklahoma City, Okla.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Harrison was not ranked in the 2022 class, but did set the Oklahoma girls' prep record with 74 points in one game. She hit 14 3-pointers in that game. Originally signed at Stephen F. Austin, where she

was the WAC Freshman of the Year last season.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Transferred to WVU after Mark Kellogg was hired away from Stephen F. Austin. She averaged 12.1 points and 5.0 assists per game as a freshman. Her career highs are 28 points and 12 assists in college. Has three years of eligibility remaining.



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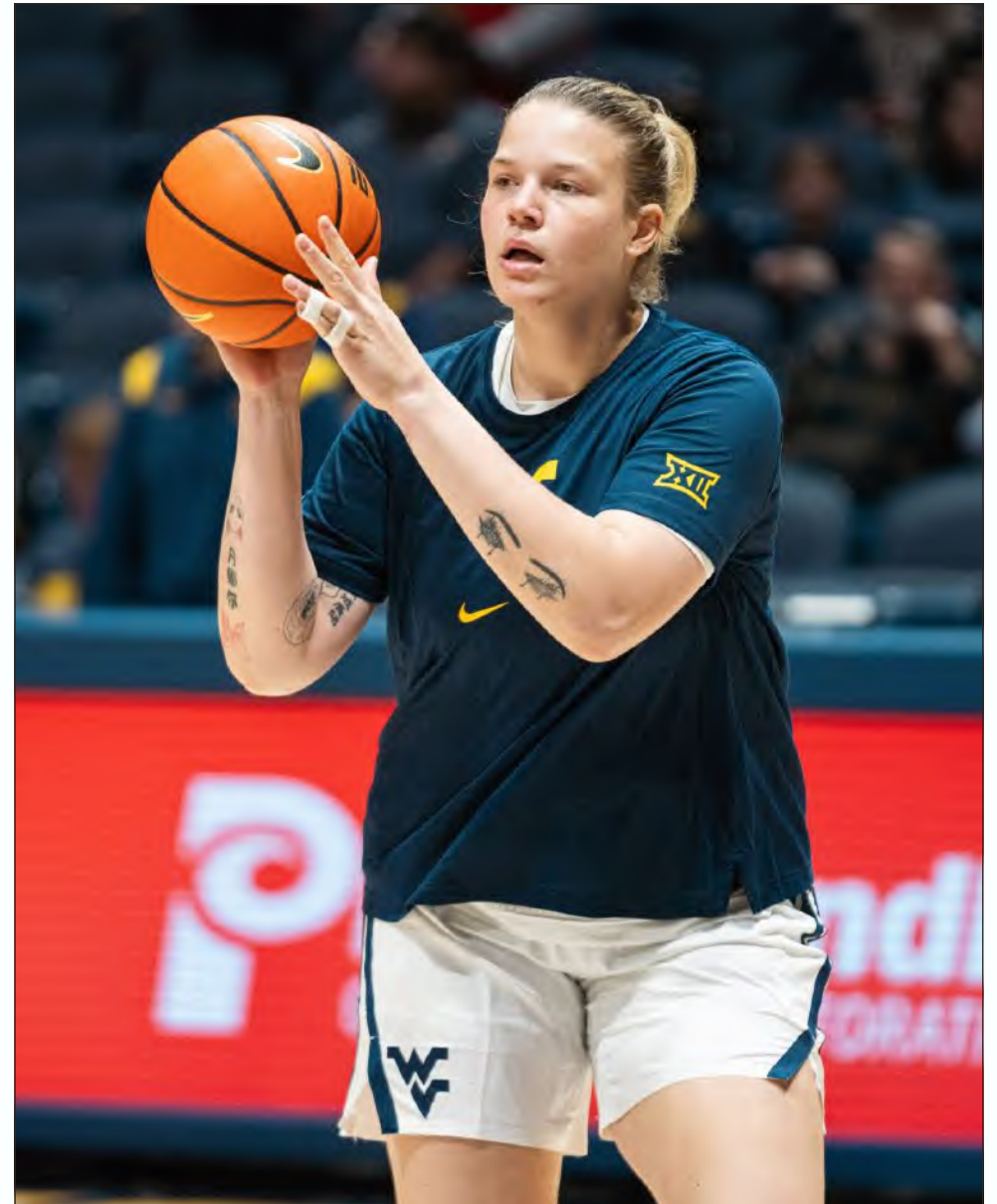
Sophomore — Forward — 6-2

FROM: Hopewell, Va.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was ranked a 3-star prospect and No. 81 nationally overall in the 2021 recruiting class coming out of TPLS Christian Academy (Woodlake, Va.). Averaged 17.7 points,

8.4 rebounds and 2.4 blocks per game as a senior.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Played in 14 games last season after being red-shirted during the 2021-22 season. Had four points and three rebounds against North Carolina Central. Majoring in Exercise Physiology.



Danelle Arigbabu

Junior — Forward — 6-4

FROM: Berlin, Germany

RECRUITING PROFILE: Compete on the under-17 German junior national team and won the under-17 German Championship in 2014 in Berlin. Originally

signed with Long Beach State before enrolling at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College the last two years.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Averaged 8.0 points and 5.1 rebounds in her final season of JUCO ball and signed with WVU in May.

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Ashala Moseberry

Junior — Guard — 5-10

FROM: Madison, Wisc.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was the conference player of the year as a high school senior at Madison East after averaging 18.2 points and shooting 44% from 3-point range as a senior. Originally signed with BYU, but then opted out to go to junior college at

South Plains (Levelland, Texas). Averaged 11.1 points and 5.6 rebounds in her sophomore season.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Moseberry is currently awaiting a waiver from the NCAA for eligibility this season for WVU. If she does not get the waiver, she'll have to sit out. Has two years of eligibility remaining. Majoring in Integrated Studies.



Tirzah Moore

Junior — Guard — 6-0

FROM: Oklahoma City, Okla.

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was ranked as a top-10 recruit from the state of Oklahoma in the 2021 recruiting class coming out of Jones High School. Originally signed at Oral Roberts, where she was named Summit League's Freshman of the Year in 2022. She averaged a dou-

ble-double at ORU last season with 12.9 points and 10.1 as a sophomore.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Transferred to WVU in May, but is currently sitting out with an injury. Led the Summit League in rebounding last season at 10.1 boards per game and was named to the league's first team. Also blocked 42 shots last season.



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Zya Nugent

Senior — Guard — 5-7
FROM: Denison, Texas

RECRUITING PROFILE: Was an all-state and all-region player coming out of Denison High School, where she averaged 25.5 points, 7.1 rebounds, 4.1 steals and 3.8 assists per game as a junior. Was chosen as the District 5A Offensive Player of the Year that season. As a senior, led team to a 31-5 record. Signed with Stephen F. Austin.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: The second former Stephen F. Austin player to follow coach Mark Kellogg to WVU. Is currently sitting out with an injury and was redshirted last season with a knee injury. Averaged 12.9 points, 2.5 assists and 5.1 rebounds as a junior and was named the MVP of the 2022 WAC tournament. Had 26 points and five rebounds against North Carolina in the first round of the 2022 NCAA tournament.



Ainhua Holzer

Freshman — Guard — 5-9
FROM: Martigny, Switzerland

RECRUITING PROFILE: Named to the Swiss national team in 2021 and represented Switzerland at the under-16 European Championships in 2018. Named the 2021 Rising Star of the Year by the Swiss Basketball League

and the 2022 Swiss Basketball League Sixth Woman of the Year and Most Improved Player. Originally signed with Purdue.

AT WEST VIRGINIA: Sat out last season at Purdue with an injury and was redshirted. Is currently sitting out and needs an eligibility waiver from the NCAA in order to compete this season.



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BIG 12 WOMEN’S PREVIEW

League looks to regain its national recognition

Associated Press

Krista Gerlich played back when the Big 12 was one of the top women’s basketball conferences in the country, leading Texas Tech to the national championship a few years before the Southwest Conference dissolved and it was absorbed by the league.

The Lady Raiders were back in the Elite Eight in 2000 and 2003, the same year that Texas made it to the Final Four. That was about the time that Sherri Coale had turned Oklahoma into a mainstay, making the national semifinals three out of four years and taking the Sooners to the championship game in 2002, and Iowa State was making deep March runs.

Then there was Baylor. After five years of building, Kim Mulkey coached the Lady Bears to the national championship, then won titles again in 2012 and 2019 before leaving three seasons ago for LSU, where she just won another title.

That was then. These days, the Big 12 is fighting for a bit of relevance.

The league hasn’t had a team reach the Final Four since the Lady Bears’ last national title. Six qualified for the NCAA Tournament last spring, none was seeded better than fourth and none made it out of the opening weekend. Fifth-seeded Iowa State was upset by No. 12 seed Toledo, which was promptly beaten 94-47 by Tennessee in the next round.

“There is such great women’s basketball in our conference,” countered Gerlich, whose Lady Raiders won 20 games and went to the WNIT last season. “Really elite coaches — high-level coaches, and I think it’s important to be a part of a conference that can showcase women’s basketball. Texas Tech has a rich history in women’s basketball and



AP photo

Texas guard Rori Harmon averaged 11.2 points, 7.4 rebounds and 5.3 assists per game last season.

we want to showcase that.”

Making some new history would be even better.

The Big 12 will have to come from off the radar to do it. The Pac-12 landed six schools in the preseason AP Top 25, including fourth-ranked UCLA and No. 5 Utah. The SEC had five, headlined by the reigning champion Tigers at No. 1. So did the Big Ten, with national runner-up Iowa at No. 3, and the ACC, which has Virginia

Tech and Notre Dame in the top 10.

The Big 12 managed only two in the poll: No. 13 Texas and No. 19 Baylor.

Welcome back

Kansas State forward Ayoka Lee is back after missing last season with a knee injury. Two years ago, the 6-foot-6 Lee set the women’s Division I record for points in a single game with 61, and finished with 22 points and 10.3 rebounds per game.

Preseason Player of the Year

Rori Harmon, Texas

Preseason Newcomer of the Year

Jada Walker, Baylor

Preseason Freshman of the Year

Madison Booker, Texas

Preseason All-Big 12 Team

- Rori Harmon, Texas
- DeYona Gaston, Texas
- J.J. Quinerly, West Virginia
- Sarah Andrews, Baylor
- Darianna Littlepage-Buggs, Baylor

- Emily Ryan, Iowa State
- Zakiyah Franklin, Kansas
- Taiyanna Jackson, Kansas
- Gabby Gregory, Kansas State
- Ayoka Lee, Kansas State
- Skylar Vann, Oklahoma

Rich get richer

Not only is Texas favored to win the league, led by preseason player of the year Rori Harmon, the Longhorns also have the preseason freshman of the year in Madison Booker, who won gold with the U.S. at the FIBA under-19 World Cup last summer.

Fond farewell

This will be the final season in the Big 12 for the Sooners and Longhorns, two of its most successful programs. Both depart for the SEC next season.

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WEST VIRGINIA MEN'S BASKETBALL 2023-24 SCHEDULE

NOV. 6	7 PM	MISSOURI STATE
NOV. 10	7 PM	MONMOUTH
NOV. 14	7 PM	JACKSONVILLE STATE
NOV. 20	8:30 PM	vs. SMU ¹
NOV. 22	6/8:30 PM	vs. VIRGINIA OR WISCONSIN ¹
NOV. 26	5 PM	BELLARMINE
DEC. 1	7 PM	ST. JOHNS ²
DEC. 6	9PM	PITT
DEC. 9	4 PM	DREXEL
DEC. 16	6:30 PM	vs. MASSACHUSETTS ³
DEC. 20	7 PM	RADFORD
DEC. 23	1 PM	TOLEDO
DEC. 30	7 PM	vs OHIO STATE ⁴
JAN. 6	2 PM	at HOUSTON
JAN. 9	7 PM	KANSAS STATE
JAN. 13	6 PM	TEXAS
JAN. 17	8 PM	at OKLAHOMA
JAN. 20	4 PM	KANSAS
JAN. 23	7 PM	at UCF
JAN. 27	2 PM	at OKLAHOMA STATE
JAN. 31	7 PM	CINCINNATI
FEB. 3	6 PM	BYU
FEB. 10	3 PM	at TEXAS
FEB. 12	8 PM	at TCU
FEB. 17	6 PM	BAYLOR
FEB. 20	7 PM	UCF
FEB. 24	2 PM	at IOWA STATE
FEB. 26	7 PM	at KANSAS STATE
MAR. 2	6 PM	TEXAS TECH
MAR. 6	9 PM	TCU
MAR. 9	2 PM	at CINCINNATI
MAR. 12-16	TBD	BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIP ⁵

¹FORT MYERS TIP-OFF — FORT MYERS, FL ²BIG 12/BIG EAST BATTLE ³BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME CLASSIC, SPRINGFIELD, MA — ⁴CLEVELAND, OH
⁵T-MOBILE CENTER — KANSAS CITY, MO

HOME AWAY

WEST VIRGINIA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL 2023-24 SCHEDULE

NOV. 7	7 PM	LOYOLA MARYLAND
NOV. 11	2 PM	at PITT
NOV. 19	4 PM	YOUNGSTOWN STATE
NOV. 23	1:30 PM	vs GEORGE WASHINGTON ¹
NOV. 24	11 AM	vs CHARLOTTE ¹
NOV. 25	11 AM	vs SOUTHERN ILLINOIS ¹
DEC. 2	2 PM	ST. BONAVENTURE
DEC. 4	6 PM	PENN STATE
DEC. 10	2 PM	DELAWARE STATE
DEC. 18	10 AM	WRIGHT STATE
DEC. 21	2PM	NIAGARA
DEC. 30	TBA	at KANSAS
JAN. 3	7 PM	CINCINNATI
JAN. 6	2 PM	TEXAS
JAN. 10	TBA	at IOWA STATE
JAN. 13	TBA	at UCF
JAN. 17	7 PM	HOUSTON
JAN. 20	TBA	at CINCINNATI
JAN. 27	2 PM	IOWA STATE
JAN. 30	7 PM	UCF
FEB. 3	TBA	at BYU
FEB. 6	7 PM	TEXAS TECH
FEB. 10	TBA	at BAYLOR
FEB. 13	TBA	at TCU
FEB. 17	2 PM	OKLAHOMA
FEB. 21	TBA	at KANSAS STATE
FEB. 24	1 PM	BAYLOR
FEB. 27	TBA	at OKLAHOMA STATE
MAR. 2	1 PM	TCU
MAR. 7-12	TBA	BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIP ²

¹SAN JUAN SHOOTOUT — SAN JUAN, P.R. ²T-MOBILE CENTER — KANSAS CITY, MO

HOME AWAY



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*Per the U.S. News and World Report Hospital Data Insights.