

Opinions

No. 2 is where you want to be in A-Sun

By Matt Tessnear

This is the perfect time to take a look at the 2007 Atlantic Sun Conference men's basketball season. While coaches can't comment on what they think will happen until the season plays out, now is a great time to examine what could happen over the next four months.

Who will win the regular season league championship? Who will the major players be? What team will hoist the title trophy and punch their ticket to the NCAA tourney on March 4, in Johnson City, Tenn.? Read on, and you'll find out.

First of all, forget about the impressive non-conference match ups that involve A-Sun teams in 2006-07. While they may bring eyes to some of the conference schools, they mean nothing when the conference schedule gets under way.

I'm sorry, Gardner-Webb fans. Our road games at N.C. State, North Carolina, Wake Forest and Wisconsin may make our schedule impressive, but they won't win us a conference championship and get us into the NCAA tournament. Anybody who pays attention knows that one A-Sun team will get a bid into the field of 65. If Belmont beats Michigan State and Illinois, or if Jacksonville knocks on defending champion Florida, neither will matter unless a conference tournament championship also appears on the resume.

So who will win the league and get that bid?

First of all, let's eliminate a few teams. Stetson must replace its top two scorers, E.J. Gordon and Anthony Register. Mercer must replace senior leaders Will Emerson and Jacob Skogen. Jacksonville has nothing positive to look forward to, besides the opportunity to enjoy a trip to Gainesville for that match up with Florida. Those three schools won't even come close to contending for the league title.

It's likely the champion of the league will have more regular season wins than all three of these teams combined.

Several other schools aren't likely to win the championship, but with a spark, they may contend. Kennesaw State won nine games in its first Division I season last year, and return its top four scorers from that squad. Senior guard Ronnell Wooten is a decent No. 1 scoring option, and the school may have enough to finish in the top half of the conference.

Like KSU, East Tennessee State University returns three out of its top five scorers. However, the Buccaneers face the task of replacing A-Sun scoring champion Tim Smith. The guard put up 22 points per game last year, and it's always tough to lose a scoring champion. With Smith, the Bucs posted a 12-8 record last year. They'll

be hard-pressed to win 12 this season, and likely can't win the A-Sun.

North Florida will rely on the inside-outside combination of Rashad Williams and Chris Timberlake. Those two returning starters were impressive in UNF's first Division I season, in which the Ospreys won three games, but it's unlikely they can win the conference this year. Regardless, I think North Florida may be the big riser in the league this year. I believe it can put together seven or eight conference wins.

Finally, I believe our Gardner-Webb Runnin' Bulldogs will have a tough season. The professional college basketball ratings magazines have GWU finishing between sixth place and last place in the 10-team league.

I'm optimistic that the Bulldogs can have a good year, but the cupboard is somewhat bare. Coach Scruggs kept GWU from having an anemic roster by bringing in the No. 49-ranked recruiting class in the country, but it's hard for any team to replace seven of its top 10 scorers. All-conference starters Brian Bender, Simon Conn and Tim Jennings are gone. Those two players put together 27 conference victories the past two seasons.

Chris Gash and Ricky McPhee will be called upon to step into vital scoring and leadership roles for GWU this season, but they have quite a few new faces to lead.

My prediction for the Bulldogs is nine conference wins. The talent is there, but the experience is not. I would say the win total would be lower, but the conference is weaker this year than it was the past few years.

So, three teams remain in the chase for the championship.

One of those is defending tournament champion Belmont. While the Bruins were slammed by eventual Final Four participant UCLA in last year's NCAA tournament, they put together a solid 15 wins in A-Sun play. Justin Hare will be a repeat all-conference selection this season, while Boomer Herndon will be the most dominant big man in the league. Add swingmen Andy Wicke and Josh Goodwin to that duo, and the Bruins will be strong enough to capture third place in the league this season.

Across the city of Nashville, Lipscomb University will bring back a trio of standouts that will lead it to second place in the regular season race this year. Seniors Trey Williams and Brian Fisk, and junior Eddie Ard, provide the best scoring tandem in the conference. All three are slashers, all three are extremely physical and all three showed me last season that they can win games when they count most

— except for that 22-point collapse in March in Porter Arena here in Boiling Springs. Add in Auburn transfer Ryan Daniel and the Bisons will have a tough squad.

Campbell won nine league games last year after winning a total of two the previous two seasons. That improvement may have rested on the broad shoulders of first team All-A-Sun forward Maurice Latham, who graduated. The Camels must find a replacement for him up front.

Sophomore Oladapo Fagbenle and junior college transfer Jonathan Rodriguez will be a start, but it may not be enough to avoid mismatches on the front line. Regardless of that issue, CU has a stick of dynamite waiting to explode in A-Sun arenas near and far.

The Camels return guards Ledell Eackles, Eric Smith, Ruell Pringle, Reggie Bishop and Jake Wohlfeil. Those five combined to lead the conference in three-point shooting last season, with Smith leading the conference with 3.82 three-point field goals made per game. The bottom line is that this group can light it up from behind the arc, and they will use that weapon as their roadmap to finding first place in the regular season race.

Johnson City will be the site for the conference tournament semifinals on March 3, 2007. No. 2 seed Lipscomb will defeat No. 3 seed Belmont that day, using the most of their dynamic scoring trio.

No. 1 seed Campbell will then defeat No. 5 seed Kennesaw State with an onslaught of 3-pointers and a furious offensive attack, setting up a No. 1 versus No. 2 match-up for the championship. If history is on my side, and on the side of the Lipscomb Bisons, No. 2 will defeat No. 1 again.

Last season, Belmont was the benefactor of the No. 2 slot. Two years ago, two seed Central Florida knocked off regular season champion Gardner-Webb. This season, No. 2 Lipscomb will bring Campbell's run to an end, and punch their ticket to Brackettville.

So, there it is. I've laid my prognosticating life out on the line to give you the inside track on this season's Atlantic Sun Conference men's basketball race. My e-mail address appears in each edition of The Pilot. You can e-mail me on March 4 to either laugh at me, or congratulate me on my predictions. My inbox waits with 121 days to go.

1. Campbell
 2. Lipscomb
 3. Belmont
 4. Kennesaw St.
 5. ETSU
 6. North Florida
 7. Gardner-Webb
 8. Jacksonville
 9. Mercer
 10. Stetson
- Tournament Champion: Lipscomb



Tessnear



Jake and Jack



Debate the Issues

Let's be sensible about tradition of toilet-papering

By Jacob Conley

Many colleges have traditions on game day to help their respective football teams win. Clemson has Howard's Rock and Notre Dame slaps the "Play like a champion" sign in its locker room.

Gardner-Webb has a tradition, too, though it is not weekly as with the other schools. We students toilet-paper the campus on Homecoming Friday.

To some people this may seem extreme and destructive, while others think the mayhem should include maple-syrup-filled balloons, shaving cream (in balloons and sprayed) and stuffing a Lake Hollifield goose in a trashcan.

Toilet-papering the cam-

pus is harmless fun that is now sanctioned by the university. There was a time when this was not the case.

In 2002, my freshman year, toilet-papering the campus was strictly prohibited. As is human nature, students did just enough to break the rules. Now that toilet papering has been legalized, students push further and further to achieve that elusive rush of rebelliousness.

Along with the goose and the trashcan incident, someone has shot off a potato gun filled with Skittles.

What's next? Will students try to shoot the goose out of the potato gun? I ask this question in an attempt to act as a moderator between those in favor of and those opposed to toilet-papering privileges.

Toilet-papering the campus is harmless fun and is also a tradition that other schools have as well.

For example, Auburn University toilet-papers the campus every year if it beats Alabama University, with the mayor and the university president throwing the first rolls and yelling "War Eagle!"

Therefore, not only does the school endorse it, but local government officials do also. If Auburn, Ala., does it, why not Boiling Springs, N.C.?

On the other hand, students need to understand that putting a goose in a trash can goes far beyond fun and into the realm of animal cruelty. If caught, you could be prosecuted.

As for the syrup and shaving cream, the physical staff here at GWU has enough to do just cleaning up the toilet paper. Anything else used for fun during Homecoming is just something else for that staff to clean up.

Therefore, I would encourage all those opposed to any form of toilet-papering to let pro-rolling students have their fun, and for students to use common sense when Homecoming rolls around next year.

Then, all could enjoy this great tradition.

Don't let approval flush toilet paper tradition away

By Jack Naish

The day is Oct. 27, and I have just been informed that tonight's Homecoming tradition of rolling the campus has been postponed due to inclement weather. Am I the only one who feels that's just a little bit, shall I say, missing the point?

To my knowledge, this is the first year that rolling the campus has been "sanctioned" by the administration. Being told not to spread toilet paper around indicates an expectation of it on the administration's part, taking the fun out of the event.

It is important that we delve into the true essence, the heart perhaps, of toilet paper vandalism. It is not something to be yearned for if it is completely allowed.

For example, in my hometown of Lincolnton, every year the high school band students toilet paper the band director's home. The director and his parents laugh and take pictures of the delighted children having a good time.

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WISDOM ON WHEELS: Political correctness sometimes goes too far

By Jacob Conley

I know I can't speak for everyone on this issue, but to me, most aspects of political correctness are so ridiculous that they are laughable.

A few weeks ago someone called me "actively challenged," in reference to my disability. I responded by pointing out that I am involved with tons of extracurricular activities on campus, so the term "actively challenged" in no way applied to me.

I know this person was trying not to offend me by using the latest politically correct terms, but, honestly, I was more offended by that term than if someone had called me a "cripple."

In fact, it's not an uncommon occurrence for one of my close friends to see me on the quad, flash me the infamous gang symbol and yell, "What's up Crip?"

To me, this is not a derogatory term. It demonstrates that the person is comfortable around my disability, even to the point of poking fun at it and me.

In my mind, that is the

ultimate complement.

I am in no way advocating the abolishment of political correctness.

I'm just asking that people use common sense when interacting with someone, instead of robotically repeating what society says is the right thing to say. Society can be, and in most cases is, wrong in this area.

For example, I was watching old "Bugs Bunny" cartoons on Turner Classic Movies the other day and noticed that the program was rated for mature audiences.

What!? This is "Bugs Bunny," not "South Park."

Evidently, the reasoning behind the rating was political incorrectness and references to drugs.

I only saw two instances that could have warranted such a rating: Bugs smoked a cigar and Yosemite Sam wore a turban in the desert while looking for oil.

If that's not the essence of evil, I don't know what is! Give me a break.

What ever happened to the good ole days when George Jefferson could call

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after year.

The administration believes that watching a movie and eating cookies are an adequate substitute for rolling the campus. As students, we should not be so easily pacified! Rolling is our legacy. It is our tradition.

Let us not be so easily snuffed out.

I am certain there are patriots of tradition who, boldly defending the legacy of rolling the campus for Homecoming, are prepared to do whatever they see fit sometime this evening. I salute them.

That way students can have fun doing what we aren't supposed to do, year