

SPORTS

Bishoops Rebound in 2018, Take First in Division

Quinn Tobias
Decree Staff Writer

The NC Wesleyan men's basketball team won its last 11 conference games to capture first place in its division and earn a number-one seeding in the conference tournament.

The Bishoops finished with a 13-3 record in the USA South, one year after compiling a 6-8 mark. The team was 15-10 overall, after losing its regular-season matchup to Pfeiffer, 132-76.

All season NCWC combined aggressive defense and balanced scoring as it went on its second-half streak. The first-place finish means the Bishoops will host rival Greensboro College in the first round of the conference tourney on February 20.

Staff writer Quinn Tobias filed the following reports on recent home contests: **NCWC 85, William and Peace 70**

The Bishoops defense stifled the Pacers and stole their way to an 85-70 victory as senior Adrian Moore led the way with an efficient 21 points.

Defensive pressure fueled the Wesleyan victory. The Bishoops generated easy baskets off the Pacers' 27 turnovers.

Leading the Bishoops in steals was Moore with six. According to Moore an aggressive mindset helped him lead the team in steals, points, rebounds and assists.

The Bishoops overcame a sloppy opening to the game when the Pacers' full-court trap forced three turnovers in the

first three possessions of the game. The Pacers held the Bishoops to two points in the first 6 minutes and started the game on a 14-4 run. Turnovers plagued both teams, but as the Pacers got away from the full-court press, the Bishoops began to enforce their will later in the first half.

Junior Chris Braswell and sophomore Ricardo Bullock infused the Bishoops with hustle plays that ignited a 25-12 run to end the first half. "I think we needed to find a fire and the team did that," Braswell said. "Basketball is a game of runs and it all starts with defense, because defense turns into offense."

After struggling from the field early in the half, easy transition baskets helped the Bishoops take a 29-26 lead into half time.

According to freshman Josh Covington, Coach Thompson was displeased with the team's performance in the first 13 minutes of the game, remarking that the team made history with how poorly it played.

The Bishoops came out of half time with a renewed defensive energy and executed their traps to perfection, forcing seven turnovers in the first five minutes. In the first half the Bishoops were cold from the field, shooting 31 percent, but the second half told a different story and they shot 51

percent from the field. During that time they extended their lead to 15, making the score 50-35. Two dunks by the Bishoops put an exclamation point on the run.



Adrian Moore was among the scoring leaders as the men's hoops team went on an 11-game conference win streak. SI photos

The Bishoops widened the margin to 23 in the second half and despite the Pacers' best efforts, they were unable to cut the lead below 15 for the remainder of the game. The Pacers dropped to 4-13 and the Bishoops improved to 9-8.

NCWC 101, Averett 88

Freshman Damon McDowell scored 18 of his 25 points in the second half to

ignite the Bishoops second-half scoring explosion as the team posted 59 points en route to a 101-88 victory over conference opponent Averett.

McDowell provided a spark off the bench shooting 55 percent from the field and 60 percent from beyond the arc. His performance earned him the USA South's Rookie of the Week honors. Besides leading the team in scoring, McDowell led in assists with six, and chipped in six rebounds in the winning effort.

Junior Robert Wilson played a pivotal role in the win scoring 21 points, going 75 percent from the field and hauling in eight rebounds. Wilson led the team in minutes with 32 and his hustle was vital to the team's success in the first half.

Averett relied on senior James Contreras, who carried the Cougars in the first half. Contreras scored 30 points going 9-19 from the field and 12-13 from the foul line. He also led his team in steals with two and played 32 minutes.

The two teams entered the game with different approaches. The Bishoops relied on moving the ball around to create open shots while Averett looked for Contreras to create plays in isolation. The Bishoops had more than twice as many assists as the Cougars.

The Bishoops jumped to a quick 5-0 lead before the two teams settled in to exchange baskets the remainder of the first half. Averett played aggressive defense, extending their pressure while Wesleyan prevented the Cougars from getting in the paint by blocking six Cougar shots. Averett held onto its advantage, leading the Bishoops at half-time, 44-42.

Tough defense stifled both teams and after five minutes in the second half both teams only had recorded eight points. The Bishoops' depth became a problem for the Cougars as the second half progressed. Capitalizing on Averett's fatigue, Wesleyan increased its defensive pressure and forced Cougar turnovers, which led to easy baskets during a 24-5 run midway through the second half.

The run put the game out of reach at 74-57. During the run the momentum shifted when Darin Kettner of Averett got hit with a technical foul.

The lead got as large as 20, but the Cougars trimmed the margin to 13 before the final buzzer. Ricardo Bullock put on exclamation mark on the end of the game with a slam dunk to increase the score to 100 in the closing minute.

The Bishoops improve to 11-9 overall and 9-3 in conference while the Cougars fall to 10-10 and 5-7 in conference.

NCWC 82, Berea 62

The Bishoops welcomed Berea College to Everett Gym with an 82-62 thumping as junior Robert Wilson scored a double-double in the win.

A new member of the USA South Conference, the Kentucky school was unable to keep pace with Wesleyan, which played aggressive defense and

Lacrosse Returns To NCWC Campus

By Quinn Tobias
Decree Staff Writer

On February 13th North Carolina Wesleyan reintroduced its women's lacrosse program after a three-year hiatus.

The team lost its opener, 20-3, at Barton, and then fell in its first USA South Conference match, 17-2, at Averett.

The Bishoops entered the season with a young roster, hoping chemistry will carry them to the post season.

Coach Bridget Walker was appointed to restart the program in June 2016 and since then she's been hard at work rounding out a roster and preparing the new team. During the fall of 2017 the team participated in "Fall Ball Play Day" where it played three abbreviated games.

Coach Walker has been impressed by her team's early efforts. "The new kids figured out the game," she said. "All the players are coachable and everyone is all in."

Sophomore Ashlee Johnson has stood out to the coaches and her teammates. She will serve as the primary goalie and team captain. Johnson has five years of experience as a goalie and wants to bring her knowledge of the game to a roster that includes many newcomers to the sport. "I want to build a bond with my teammates and hopefully generate interest that leads to a good foundation for the program," Johnson said. She was one of 11 athletes recruited by Walker.

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Women's Basketball Team Falls in Second Round

Greensboro—The NC Wesleyan women's basketball team saw its 2017-18 season come to an end on Saturday with a 70-54 loss to Greensboro College in the USA South Tournament quarterfinal round.

The top-seeded Pride forged an 11-point lead at intermission and out-scored the 4th-seeded Bishoops 34-29 in the second half to seal the win.

Deep, Experienced Softball Team Eyes Conference Title

By Johnathan Pickler
Decree Staff Writer

Projected to finish sixth in the USA South by the coaches in the conference, the Bishoops are looking forward to proving the pundits wrong and coming out as champions.

The Bishoops are returning many players and have a "big recruiting class that is loaded with potential," according to Head Coach John Brackett, whose team finished 13-9 in conference last season (18-20 overall).

"I feel good about our preparation so far, the weather has caused a few problems but overall our practices have gone well," said Coach Brackett. "Our intra-squad scrimmages have been very competitive."

Coach Brackett stated that the Bishoops' strengths will be their depth as well as their experience. They only had four players who graduated last season, three of them starters. "We also have some impact players in the freshmen class who will challenge for a spot in the starting line-up," stated Coach Brackett.

The team is returning two previously awarded all-conference pitchers, Shelby Godwin and Logan Lowery. Godwin started and appeared in 18 games for the Bishoops last season and finished with a record of 8-8. Lowery started 15 games last season but appeared in 19 games. She finished the season with a record of 9-8 with one save. The Bishoops also have "a number of freshmen pitchers who had plenty of success in high school," according to Coach Brackett.

The Bishoops will play against the defending national champions this season as well as some other nationally ranked teams. "I'm not overly concerned about our schedule because I feel as if our team is up for the challenge," Coach Brackett said. "Our tough out-of-conference schedule will prepare us for the USA South, which is always very strong and balanced."

In the USA South preseason poll, Meredith College was first, Averett University was second, and Ferrum College was third. "Meredith won the regular season championship last season and has a lot of returners," Coach Brackett said. "Averett won

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Junior Nadiya Holley paced the Bishoops with a team-high 11 points off the bench, and she completed her first career double-double with 10 rebounds. Freshman Javana Jones joined her in double-figures with 10 points. Playing her final collegiate game, senior KeChae Parker wrapped up her solid career with five points and eight rebounds.

As a team, the Bishoops out-rebounded the Pride 53-46 on the day. But Greensboro shot a little better than 37 percent from the floor while holding Wesleyan to just 29 percent accuracy. Shaniah Haynes led four Pride players in double-figures with a game-high 15 points.

Wesleyan ends the season with a 13-14 overall record, which included a 9-7 mark in USA South play. With a young roster that included just one senior, the Bishoops will now begin preparing for the 2018-19 campaign.

(Article courtesy of Sports Information)

Baseball Team Features Lethal Offense, Young Pitching Staff

By Quinn Tobias
Decree Staff Writer

The Bishoops baseball team returns to the diamond in 2018 with plans to improve on last year's performance, relying on a lethal offense and a young pitching staff to catapult them to a conference championship.

The 2017 campaign fell short of the Bishoops goals. After a strong regular season performance (24-16 and 11-7 in the USA South), the team lost to top-seeded LaGrange and 8th-seeded Piedmont in the semi-finals of the conference tournament.

Entering the 2018 season the USA South pre-season coaches poll predicted Wesleyan will finish 5th out of 12 playoff-eligible teams. The Bishoops lost 10 players to graduation last year including their top two pitchers, Ryan Grant and TJ Wilkie, who combined for 112 innings pitched and nine wins.

Coach Charlie Long acknowledges some of the challenges his ball club faces in the upcoming season. "Young pitching scares me," he said. "The keys to success will be young players. This is the first year in a long time we're entering the season unsure of the three starters because we have an abundance of talent. I think that's a good thing."

Despite the middle-of-the-pack prediction, Long believes the Bishoops can dethrone LaGrange as the conference champion. "We have a really good team," he said. "On paper we have a chance to win the conference. As always it comes down to pitching and our defense."

The Bishoop defense should be a strength, since the team returns both double-play partners, Brad Pennington at 2nd base and Alec Titmus at shortstop. The pair ranked second in the nation last year in double plays turned.

Long feels confident that this season will be a success in large part due to a dominating offense. "We're as deep offensively as we've been in a long time," Long said. "Some people that should be playing will be watching." Long believes the offense can keep them in any game and will help make a push to break the 30-win plateau.



Senior KeChae Parker paced her team with a 12.6 scoring average.