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College basketball season better than expected

The start of the 2018-19 college basketball season has been better than advertised thus far for me. With the Duke Blue Devils bringing in the top three recruits in the nation, the thought was they would run right through the season, but that hasn't been the case.

Zion Williamson, R.J. Barrett and Cam Reddish have been everything we expected from the talented trio from Duke, but the other teams in the nation don't seem to fear them. The Blue Devils are 14-2 on the year, at the time this article was written, and teams are not backing down from them which is making for a great conclusion to the regular season.

I am glad that the season has unfolded this way. Duke still has one of the best teams in the country, but there are several other teams that could bring home the 2019 championship. Virginia, Tennessee, Gonzaga, Michigan and Kansas are all top tier teams in the country that could win it all.

This is one of the best aspects of college basketball, the unknown. Unlike the NBA, where barring injury, the Golden State Warriors are the betting favorite to win it all, in college basketball it seems that anything is possible.

I was worried that this season would turn out to be a foregone conclusion with Duke going wire to wire, destroying everyone in their path. I just didn't give the other schools enough credit to think they would put up such a good fight.

Surprisingly enough, so far this season, the best team that I have had the pleasure of watching is not the Duke Blue Devils, but instead the Michigan Wolverines. Michigan has defeated Villanova, Indiana and UNC, so far. They look to be the most complete team in the nation that doesn't seem to have many weaknesses.

The non-conference part of a team's schedule is one part of a season, but everyone knows when conference play starts, that's when the real season begins. Things get a bit more unpredictable during conference play due to the familiarity of the teams and especially the head coaches.

Conference play always separates the pretenders from the contenders. We should have a clear idea of the four or five teams that are championship material by the time the conference tournaments begin.

As we have seen time and time again, the NCAA tournament is probably the most unpredictable sporting event we have

See Ramsey on B2

Aggies head coach speaks about first season at the helm

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

Replacing a successful coach is a hard thing to do on any level of sports. Sam Washington, first year head coach of North Carolina A&T State University, was tasked with just such a thing, as he was chosen to

record and yet another Celebration Bowl championship, their third in four years.

"Of course, it was gratifying and it's a lot of people that made that possible, it wasn't just me," said Washington about their Celebration Bowl victory. "From administration,

for us."

A&T came into this season ranked Number 14 in the nation on the FCS level. They also returned a lot of firepower from the year before, including 2017 MEAC Player of the Year, Lamar Raynard. The expectation level for the Aggies had been raised, so

It was good for the soul."

As the winners of three of the last four Celebration Bowls, many people around the program and beyond are floating around the dynasty term for A&T. Washington says he tries not to listen to the outside chatter concerning the success of the program, but

gambit for five years and just try to maintain our culture."

Before Broadway and his staff took over the program in 2011, the Aggies had not had a winning season in nine years. They immediately turned things around by going 7-4 in just their second year. The team continued to improve every year and Washington says he attributes most of that to the culture change and focus on academics they implemented as soon as they walked through the door.

"We just had to learn to do our best and the right thing, because we often say it takes the same amount of energy to do right as it does to do wrong, it's just the will of the man," Washington said. "We know it's not easy because of the temptations and trying to be cool with your buddies, but that's not what it's all about. Once you learn how to give your best every time, not just some time and let's see what happens and the kids bought into that."

The Aggies began this season right where they left off in 2017. For the third year in a row, the Aggies defeated an FBS school by beating East Carolina 28-23. They continued to roll against Gardner-Webb a

See Aggies on B2



Submitted photo

In his first year as head coach of North Carolina A&T State University, Sam Washington led the Aggies to yet another Celebration Bowl victory.

replace Rod Broadway upon his retirement.

Washington had been on staff at A&T as the defensive coordinator since 2011, so he was familiar with the staff and players. With the Aggies finishing the 2017 campaign with an unblemished record of 12-0, Washington had some big shoes to fill. He was up to the task, as he led the Aggies to a 10-2

to the coaching staff and then the players putting in that extra time and energy that it took to get us there and then prevail.

"One of the things I was most impressed with was when we lost, against FAMU [Florida A&M University] in particular, the fact we were able to remain positive and continue to work and not linger on that loss. That was huge

Washington was expected to keep the train moving, so to speak.

"You can call it pressure or whatever you like, but there was definitely some there and I thought we had the potential to do well. Potential is a figure of speech, to actually put it into action is what it's all about and I was happy we were able to get to the championship and to win.

instead just tries to focus his guys on "what they do and do it well."

"It sounds cliché, but we just have to keep everything simple and do what we do, so that's what we have to continue to do," he said. "We develop players, we do get a few transfers here and there, but we are going to hang our hat on development by bringing kids in and run the whole



Photos by Alphonso Abbott Jr.

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

On January 14, Carter G. Woodson's varsity basketball team matched up against

Triad Baptist Christian Academy. The Eagles outscored the Titans in every quarter except for the fourth, leading to their 61-46 victory.

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