

Commonwealth Women's Basketball
November 11, 2008

Messiah Favored in Commonweal Conference Women's Basketball Preseason Poll

ANNVILLE, Pa. – Messiah College has been chosen as the favorite to win the Commonwealth Conference crown during the 2008-09 women's basketball season by the conference coaches in the annual preseason poll. The Falcons (30-3, 10-0) received 43 points and six first place votes. After a season that featured the Falcons reaching the NCAA Division III National Championship game, the team looks to bounce back without Player of the Year Nikki Lobach. Lobach led the conference a year ago, scoring 17.9 points per game, notching 570 points in 33 games played. This year, seniors Ashley Brooks and Silalei. Shani (first team all conference) will lead the squad. Brooks finished ninth in the conference last season with 5.5 rebounds a game as Shani posted 9.6 points and 4.8 boards a contest.

Lebanon Valley (24-6, 6-4) places second in the poll with 36 points.

After finishing with their best record in program history and with the best turnaround in NCAA Division III history at 14 games, the Dutchmen under third year Head Coach Todd Gocłowski bring back their core players from a season ago after reaching the ECAC South Final. Leading the way will be sophomore guard Lori Lidlow, the Co-Rookie of the Year and first team all conference selection last year. She finished third in the conference with 13.9. Sophomore point guard Andrea Hoover and classmate Eryn Schultz will also return after sensational freshman campaigns. Hoover led the conference in 2007-08 with 4.50 steals a game while Schultz tallied 9.1 points per game while knocking down 45 three-pointers. Senior Megan Bish will add leadership to the group after recording 8.5 points and 4.8 rebounds off the bench.

Albright (20-7, 8-2) comes in third in the poll with 31 points and one first place vote.

After reaching their first NCAA postseason appearance last season and completing their best season in program history, the Lions take the court without Jackie Hardwick. For her career, she reached the 1,000-point plateau and became the 10th player in program history to reach this feat. This season, Albright will be led by senior Annie McMahan (first team all conference) and sophomore Jessica McGinness. McMahan finished fourth in the conference with 13.5 points per game as McGinness, the Co-Rookie of the Year and second team all conference selection, finished fourth in the conference with 13.5 points a game as a freshman. The senior guard was also first in the conference in steals (3.04/g) and seventh in the conference in rebounds (5.8/g).

Elizabethtown (11-14, 2-8) sits in the fourth seed in the poll with 25 points.

The Blue Jays will bring back a solid group of upperclassmen that looks to make a run at the conference playoffs. After losing Erin Walton (16.4 ppg) and Audrey Hitz (8.1 rpg) to graduation, Elizabethtown returns seniors Megan Quinn, Jenn Montague (second team all conference), and Megan Romano. Quinn finished fifth in the conference as a junior, finishing with 12.2 points per contest in addition to her 5.2 boards, good for a top 15 finish also in the conference. Montague will also be instrumental to the Blue Jays success, as she ranked in the top 15 as well in points and boards per game (9.0, 5.9). Romano finished third in the conference with 3.42 assists per game while chipping in with 6.2 points a game in 19 appearances.

Tied for fifth place in the poll is Lycoming with 24 points.

The Warriors retain four players that finished in the top 25 in conference scoring a year ago, including senior Andrea Cooper (first team all conference) and juniors Jessica Nabholz, Jessica Zerbee, and Rebecca Leid. Cooper ranked eighth in the conference with 11.0 points per game while Nabholz and Zerbee both finished with just under 8.0 points per contest. Zerbee dished out a second-best 3.74 assists and a fourth-best 2.00 steals per game in the conference. Leid was able to notch 6.8 points a game in 2007-08.

Also in the fifth spot in the poll is Widener with 24 points.

The Pride (11-15, 3-7) will be led in 2008-09 by captains senior Beth Dessart Mager and juniors Lindsey Isler and Becky Tyler (second team all conference). Senior Megan Sipple and junior Rayne Reber will also bring leadership and production to the lineup. Mager finished with 9.8 points and 5.4 rebounds per game, ranking her in the top 15 in the conference in both categories. Sipple came in seventh in the conference last season with 11.0 points per game with 2.58 steals per contest, good enough for second-best in the conference. Reber will also be a big

part of the offense this season, as she posted a conference-best .825 free-throw percentage (66-80) with 8.2 points per game.

Arcadia (8-17, 4-8) places seventh in the poll with 13 points.

Fourth year player Caitlin Sparks will lead the Knights this season as she led the squad a year ago with 13.2 points and 8.0 assists per game. A first team all conference selection and a D3hoops All-Mid-Atlantic second team selection, Sparks reached the 1,000-point plateau in 2007-08. Senior Shannon Bustin, junior Kim Milligan, and sophomores Kim Lomas and Corrine Geiger will also return for first-year Head Coach Crystal Gibson.

Commonwealth Conference Women's Basketball Preseason Poll

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| 1. Messiah | 43 points (6) |
| 2. Lebanon Valley | 36 points |
| 3. Albright | 31 points (1) |
| 4. Elizabethtown | 25 points |
| 5t. Lycoming | 24 points |
| 5t. Widener | 24 points |
| 7. Arcadia | 13 points |

(first place votes in parenthesis)