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# 'It's just a joy for me'

An alumnus' journey to  
shape education



Story on page 2



# An alumnus' journey to shape education

By Leo Bertucci

WKU has always been near and dear to the heart of Gary Houchens.

As a teenager from Scottsville, Houchens came to the Hill for middle and high school music festivals.

"The campus was just sort of a gathering place for a lot of different community activities," Houchens said. "Bowling Green and WKU were always sort of an important peripheral part of my life."

Houchens originally studied journalism at WKU and was a staff member at the College Heights Herald. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in philosophy, religion and history in 1993.

"My aspiration at the time was to be a college professor, although I imagined doing that in the field of religious studies and in ethics," Houchens said.

Houchens attended graduate school to study theology and religious ethics, but felt a calling towards a career in K-12 education. After becoming a certified social studies teacher, Houchens picked up his first teaching assignment at Drakes Creek Middle School in Bowling Green.

"Fairly early on, I had people telling me as a young teacher that I had the skills to be a good principal," Houchens said.

Houchens struggled envisioning

himself as a principal, but after he and his wife moved to Evansville, Indiana, he found a job as an assistant principal. Houchens would go on to climb the administrative ladder. He returned to Kentucky as a district administrator for Simpson County Schools, and during his seven-year tenure there received a doctorate in educational leadership and organizational development from the University of Louisville in 2008.

Houchens considered teaching education administration at the university level while pursuing his doctorate. After teaching education administration courses at WKU as a part-time instructor, he joined the Department of Education Administration, Leadership, and Research faculty full-time in 2010.

"It's just a joy for me to be a teacher and professor at my campus," Houchens said.

Houchens taught current Meade County Superintendent Mark Martin multiple times before Martin received his doctorate in 2019. He said Houchens is passionate about student success and equity.

"He wants all students, no matter their background or their ability levels, to have access to a great education and access to core instruction that gets students thinking," Martin said.

As an instructor, Houchens mo-

tivated his students without being demeaning to them, Martin said.

Sara Jennings, one of Houchens' current doctoral students, said Houchens wants his students to become effective school leaders.

"He just has so much respect for his students, and he really treats you like a professional," Jennings said. "I think his expectations are high, and his classes are rigorous so you actually really learn a lot in Dr. Houchens' courses."

From 2016 to 2019, Houchens was a member of the Kentucky Board of Education, which sets education policy for the state's public school districts.

"It was probably my highest professional honor to serve Kentucky's students in that capacity, and I'm very grateful for the good work we accomplished during my tenure," Houchens said.

Houchens is currently a member of the Conservative Education Reform Network, an organization within a Washington D.C.-based political think tank known as the American Enterprise Institute. Houchens said the network works together to articulate what modern conservative education policy should look like.

"I think there's a belief that conservatives in many cases have had too narrow a view of the education issue,"

Houchens said. "Conservatives have far more to offer on education issues and debates than just saying no to the federal government's involvement."

Houchens said conservatives have increasingly focused on changing curriculum standards at the state and local levels. Teachers have become increasingly frustrated by a lack of sufficient curriculum materials, so the internet has become a resource for finding materials, he said.

At WKU, conservative educators are allowed to openly share their views, Houchens said. When sharing his views with colleagues and university administrators, his experiences have "been nothing but positive."

Houchens believes conservative educators from other universities might face different circumstances. There have been instances when the perspectives of conservative-minded educators have been delegitimized by their progressive counterparts, he said.

"I see this in the education realm where it is suggested that if you believe in school choice, you must hate public schools," Houchens said. "Or if you believe in pension reform, you must be anti-teacher."

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# SGA prepares for another unusual semester

By Jacob Latimer

The Student Government Association had to adapt to a new medium of meeting after the COVID-19 pandemic began in March. The sudden change made it more difficult to connect with students and pass legislation.

"I know 2020 was different to say the least, but I am hopeful that it has provided many of us in SGA the motivation to address the problems facing students on campus," said Legislative Research Chair Dawson McCoun.

SGA's officers and senators are already planning legislation for the coming months despite COVID-19-related difficulties.

McCoun said it has been an honor to help the senators work on legislation, and he looks forward to passing bills in the coming months.

Diversity and Inclusion Chair Fatim Yaro hopes to "have some uncomfortable conversations pertaining to diversity, equity and inclusion on our campus."

Yaro and his committee plan to hold a large event regarding diversity on Feb. 24. They'll also introduce legislation that will implement specific consequences to student organizations for discrimination within the organization.

SGA's Chief of Staff Matt Barr is planning to continue work on the

"Go with the Flow" program, which will put vending machines with free menstrual products on campus.

SGA plans to begin meeting in person again during the semester. Senators will be socially distanced and masked during meetings, but they are looking forward to safely meeting in person again.

"Like [WKU] President [Timothy] Caboni mentioned at the beginning of the semester — while the vaccine is here, that's not a reason for us to become complacent," Barr said.

Student Body President Garrett Edmonds has already set specific goals for the coming semester.

"We will continue to push our scholarship, voucher, and Earn A Computer Program this semester," Edmonds said in a text. "We want to ensure that students have the proper assistance to succeed this semester."

Committees are currently working on getting legislation ready to be presented to the floor and will meet in person Tuesday.

"As the student body president, I hope students continue to persevere through this semester," Edmonds said. "I want students to know that we are a resource for them, and our doors are always open."

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"We want to ensure that students have the proper assistance to succeed this semester."

-Garrett Edmonds  
Student body president



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# Differing state and WKU quarantine guidelines are confusing, but it has to be done

By Herald Editorial Board

*The issue: WKU's quarantine timeline for close contacts to positive cases differs from what the state of Kentucky's requires, creating confusion between students.*

*Our stance: Differing messages from the state and WKU are frustrating, but we can't expect WKU to do anything differently.*

After the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new quarantine guidelines for those who come into contact with someone positive for COVID-19, the state of Kentucky and WKU similarly updated their policies.

A 14-day quarantine after exposure to a positive person is one of the safest steps to take, but the CDC's new recommendations, which the state of Kentucky ultimately followed, includes shorter options to increase the public's willingness to quarantine.

Without a test, the state of Kentucky recommends a 10-day quarantine following exposure. A shorter option is also outlined, where a contact can end their quarantine after seven days, as long as they have a negative test result, conducted the fifth day after exposure.

If that sounds confusing, that's because it is.

One of the few changes in WKU's Healthy on the Hill guidelines was the shift in quarantine

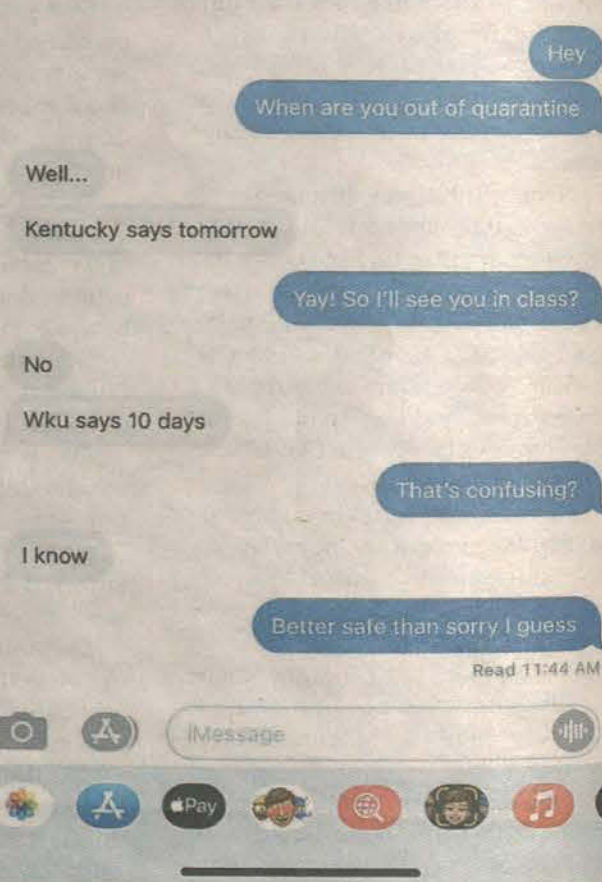
time from 14 days to 10 days. The university's COVID-19 task force made the decision to opt for the 10-day standard, said Bob Skipper, director of media relations.

"That aligns with the 10-day period for those with a positive test and still provides an adequate measure of public safety," Skipper said in an email. "We hope the reduction from 14 to 10 days, with the added negative test and absence of symptoms, will encourage more who are potential contacts to quarantine."

This leaves WKU students exposed to COVID caught in the intersection of state guidelines and WKU's policy. Per state recommendations, someone who tests negative one week after exposure is considered cleared and can reenter the Bowling Green community, but this same person cannot return to campus until three days later.

This process is frustrating for the students it affects, but ultimately, we can't expect WKU to do anything differently.

As WKU begins its own con-



tact tracing after the local health department stopped contacting close contacts for each positive case, it's easier and safer to apply a blanket 10 day policy to everyone, both positive cases and contacts.

In times as uncertain and seemingly never ending as this, everyone needs something that no institution can provide. In a once-every-hundred-years pandemic situation, "just to be safe" precautions from WKU are a necessity.

## FUN PAGE

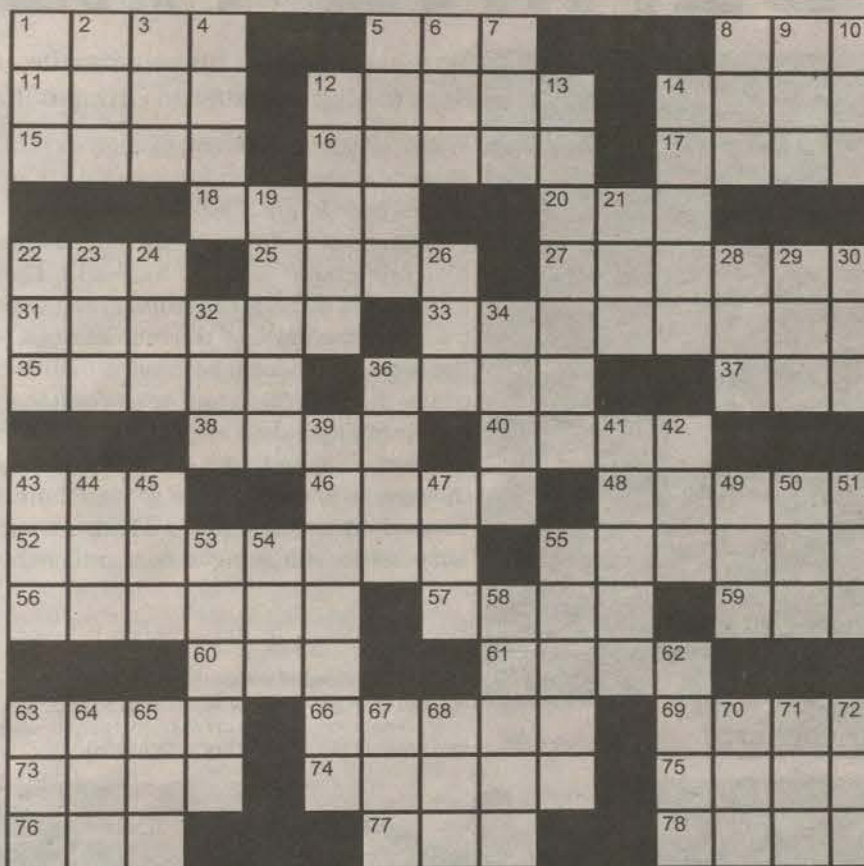
## College Heights Herald

## Across

- 1 Egg on  
5 Forest runner  
8 Toothed tool  
11 Choir attire  
12 Caper  
14 Foal's mother  
15 Mayberry sot  
16 Beat  
17 Highest point  
18 Like some threats  
20 Decide  
22 "A jealous mistress"; Emerson  
25 Boat propellers  
27 Up-to-the-minute  
31 Vandykes  
33 Brunch order  
35 Bit of parsley  
36 Watering holes  
37 Word of support  
38 Start of something big?

- 40 Military award  
43 Skater Babilonia  
46 Hazard  
48 Elbow  
52 Risky venture  
55 Expressing one's preference

- 56 Angel  
57 Requirement  
59 Domestic dog  
60 Abate  
61 No-win situations?  
63 Assist in wrongdoing  
66 Run \_\_\_ of (violate)  
69 Sinuous dance  
73 Corn bread  
74 Power suppliers  
75 Utah city  
76 Bunion's place



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- 77 Black and tan ingredient  
78 Genesis grandson

## Down

- 1 Maven  
2 Deteriorate  
3 \_\_\_-Wan Kenobi  
4 He loved Lucy  
5 Unkind look  
6 20's dispenser  
7 Lulu  
8 Small pouch  
9 Shirt part  
10 Diminutive  
12 World record?  
13 Most wonderful?  
14 Photo finish  
19 Artful move

- 21 Lassie portrayer  
22 Tummy muscles  
23 Gym unit  
24 La Brea goo  
26 Drench  
28 Greek letter  
29 Shoat cote  
30 Informal wear  
32 Glass component  
34 Conceal  
36 Uttered  
39 Smorgasbord  
41 Battery part  
42 Groove  
43 Shamus  
44 Cigarette's end  
45 Rocks, to a bartender  
47 Cambodian coin  
49 Party bowlful

- 50 Animal with curved horns  
51 Pudding ingredient  
53 Sharp narrow ridge  
54 Tavern  
55 Head coverings  
58 Opus  
62 Loafer, e.g.  
63 Quick-witted  
64 Bleacher bum's shout  
65 Compass dir.  
67 Lobster \_\_\_  
Diavolo  
68 Painter's medium  
70 Samovar  
71 Sign of summer  
72 Morning hrs.

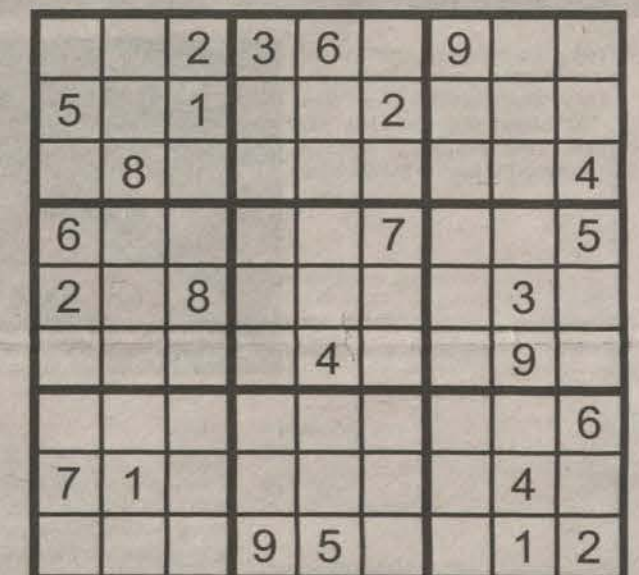
## Geography Odds and Ends

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- What are the oldest mountains in North America?  
(a) Appalachian (b) Rocky (c) Wasatch
- What Great Lake is the only one entirely in the U.S.?  
(a) Lake Huron (b) Lake Erie (c) Lake Michigan
- What is the "Queen City of The Mississippi"?  
(a) Baton Rouge (b) New Orleans (c) Memphis
- What is the smallest state in the midwest?  
(a) Iowa (b) Ohio (c) Indiana
- What is the northernmost state in the U.S. east of the Great Lakes?  
(a) Maine (b) Rhode Island (c) New Hampshire
- In what state does the Snake River originate?  
(a) Idaho (b) Wyoming (c) Colorado
- What is the second largest city in the U.S.?  
(a) Chicago (b) San Francisco (c) Los Angeles
- What is the largest port in the world?  
(a) New York (b) San Francisco (c) Baltimore
- How many islands make up the Hawaiian chain?  
(a) 103 (b) 130 (c) 30
- What freshwater lake has the largest surface area in the world?  
(a) Lake Tahoe (b) Caspian Sea (c) Lake Superior

0 0 1 1 5  
9 6 0 9  
8 8 9 1  
0 1 0 2  
9 9 8 1

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 1 to 9.



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Last week's crossword solution:



# THE MAN BEHIND THE TIE



Tyreon Clark finds his passion through working with the Boys to Men Leadership Group of Kentucky.

When 28-year-old Tyreon Clark walks into one of the many elementary schools in Bowling Green, he knows he is fulfilling his purpose in life. Clark was on the hunt for a job involving his passions and social work degree, leading him to finding Boys to Men Leadership Group of Kentucky. They gave him the opportunity to work directly with young men, ages 7 to 18, and instill good morals to the youth of Warren County. Clark also works through the flag football team he created to give children another outlet where they can learn and grow confidence under a guided hand. All Clark's long days are completed with the greater goal of producing young men who strive to learn and care about the world they live in and the people around them. Clark frames much of his work by saying, "You can look at what is wrong in the world, but what are you going to do about changing it?"

Clark drapes donated and thrifted ties around his neck before handing them out to all the students of Boys to Men at Lost River Elementary. Clark is always accepting tie donations to send home to the members of Boys to Men.

Clark's flag football league has only been growing since he created it in 2019. "Flag football was one of the first things I played as a kid," said Clark. "I was really surprised to see the response the league got after only one year."



"It will take us two, three hours just to finish something that would be done in 30 minutes in the classroom," Clark said after helping his son Jordan figure out what assignment he must complete next. The second 'stay at home' order issued in Kentucky caused Clark to completely rewrite his plans for the next month and a half.



Many of the boys Clark coaches in his league participate in the Boys to Men program. Often, Clark finds correlations between sport involvement and lessons he can instill within the young boys.



Clark does not see Boys to Men as a mere opportunity to give young men new khakis and ties. For Clark, it is a chance to meet young boys where they are at in life and offer them a support system which encourages them to develop leadership skills and become involved in the Bowling Green community.



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## Hilltoppers series against Old Dominion postponed

By Kaden Gaylord

After WKU swept Middle Tennessee this past weekend, the Hilltoppers were supposed to return home to face Old Dominion this Friday and Saturday, but according to CBS Sports' College Basketball Insider Jon Rothstein, this weekend's matchup between the Hilltoppers and Monarchs has been canceled due to COVID-19.

ODU has not played a game in two weeks because its home series against North Texas was postponed due to positive COVID-19 tests within both the ODU men's and women's basketball programs. With the addition of this weekend's matchup, ODU has now had six games either postponed or canceled this season.

After Sunday's game against Middle Tennessee, interim head coach Phil Cunningham addressed the possibility of not playing Old Dominion.

"We've played the full limit of non-conference games, so I think that would be a conference decision," Cunningham said. "We would play if we had the opportunity — we would go play anybody anywhere."

Players also voiced their desire to be able to play against the Monarchs this weekend.

"I would like to go ahead and play the games, stay in shape, and stay in this rhythm," redshirt senior Kenny Cooper said. "I feel like our team is playing pretty well right now, and we're kind of in a good flow, so I would like to keep that going."

It is important to note there is an open week at the end of the season that holds the purpose of making up games that were postponed.

WKU has played its full slate of non-conference matchups, so it is unlikely that it can play a team outside of Conference USA but it is possible a team that isn't scheduled to play this week can step in the place of the Monarchs.

WKU (13-4), (6-2, C-USA) swept Middle Tennessee (3-10), (1-6, C-USA)

this past weekend to further its lead in the East division of C-USA without head coach Rick Stansbury present for the games.

"Going into these last few weeks, coach Stansbury has really been on our team about being more player driven," associate head coach Phil Cunningham said postgame Saturday. "There's so much senior leadership out there, and it's just a really good win under the circumstances."

According to a press release from WKU Athletics, Stansbury had a fever prior to the MTSU series and did not coach the two games out of precaution. He took three COVID-19 tests and tested negative in all of them. Stansbury has been talking about the team being "player driven" and it was on full display this past weekend.

In the first game, five players scored in double figures for WKU. Junior Charles Bassey led with 16 points and 12 rebounds while grabbing his tenth double-double of the season. Redshirt senior Carson Williams and senior Taveion Hollingsworth both followed with 15 points each, while junior transfer Luke Frampton had 14 with four three pointers.

In game two, the win gave WKU its best start to a season since the 2001-02 campaign. Bassey earned his 11th double-double of the season, scoring 23 points and 14 rebounds against MTSU, which is tied for the most in the nation. Sophomore Kofi Cockburn from Illinois also has 11 double-doubles on the season.

WKU could still play this weekend, however, if they do not their next series is on Feb. 5-6 at Florida Atlantic.

Men's basketball beat reporter Kaden Gaylord can be reached at [kaden.gaylord559@topper.wku.edu](mailto:kaden.gaylord559@topper.wku.edu). Follow Kaden on Twitter at @KLG3.

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<b>Fresh Food Company</b> Mon. - Fri. 7am - 8pm Sat. 10:30am - 7pm Sun. 10:30am - 8pm Located at Downing Student Union	<b>Einstein Bros. Bagels NEW!</b> Mon. - Thurs. 7:30am - 2pm Fri. - Sun. Closed Located at Mass Media Technology Hall
<b>RedZone NEW!</b> Mon. - Thurs. 11am - 9pm Fri. 11am - 8pm Sat. Closed Sun. 4pm - 10pm Located behind DSU Foot Court	<b>The Den by Denny's @ Tower</b> Mon. - Thurs. 11am - 11pm Fri. 11am - 3pm Sat. Closed Sun. 4pm - 11pm Located at Tower Court Next to PPT
<b>DSU Food Court</b> Mon. - Thurs. 10:30am - 11pm Fri. 10:30am - 10pm Sat. 10:30am - 10pm Sun. Noon - 11pm** Located at Downing Student Union *Chick-fil-A closes at 9pm **Chick-fil-A closed on Sunday	<b>The Pit Stop Convenience Store</b> Mon. - Thurs. 10am - 10pm Fri. 10am - 6pm Sat. Closed Sun. 5pm - 10pm Located at Tower Court Next to PPT
<b>Burrito Bowl</b> Mon. - Thurs. 10:30am - 8pm Fri. 10:30am - 2:30pm Sat. - Sun. Closed Located at Downing Student Union	<b>Java City NEW!</b> Mon. - Thurs. 7:30am - 2pm Fri. - Sun. Closed Located in Garrett Conference Center Lobby
<b>Starbucks NEW!</b> Mon. - Thurs. 7:30am - 8pm Fri. 7:30am - 4pm Sat. 8am - 2pm Sun. 10am - 5pm Located at Downing Student Union	<b>Garrett Food Court NEW!</b> Mon. - Thurs. 7:30am - 3pm Fri. 7:30am - 2pm Sat. - Sun. Closed Located at Garrett Conference Center (Page John's closed on Fri.) *Grille Works opens at 7:00am. All other studios open at 10am
<b>Subway @ Bates NEW!</b> Mon. - Thurs. 8:30am - 11pm Fri. 8:30am - 8pm Sat. 10am - 8pm Sun. 10am - 11pm Located at Bates-Runner Hall	<b>Panda Express</b> Mon. - Thurs. 10:30am - 8pm Fri. 10:30am - 2:30pm Sat. - Sun. Closed Located at Garrett Conference Center
<b>PO.D. Market @ Bates</b> Mon. - Thurs. 7:30am - 11pm Fri. 7:30am - 10pm Sat. 3pm - 9pm Sun. 3pm - 10pm Located at Bates-Runner Hall	<b>DaVinci's NEW!</b> Mon. - Thurs. 7:30am - 2pm Fri. - Sun. Closed Located at Smith Hall
<b>Hilltopper Hub NEW!</b> Mon. - Fri. 7:30am - 8pm Sat. - Sun. 5pm - 8pm Located at Hilltopper Hall	

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# Kicking it again, Lady Topper soccer is back

By Sean Snyder

WKU women's soccer is back and "hungry" for the sought-after Conference USA Championship trophy following the unprecedented cancelation of its spring 2020 season.

"We finally have the schedule set, and we're excited about the season," head coach Jason Neidell said. "These players are hungry. These are gonna be the players to go all the way and leave a legacy behind."

The season unofficially began in Louisville Saturday with an exhibition match against Bellarmine University, where the Lady Toppers previewed their strong defense ending the game in a 0-0 draw. The Lady Toppers' offense came in just as hot, outshooting 6-4 against the Knights.

Following a second exhibition against Lipscomb on Feb. 2, the season will kick off down south where the Lady Toppers take on North Alabama. This will be their first official match following an unprece-

dent 463 days without playing an official game, and the first time in WKU soccer's 20-year history the two teams will meet on the field.

WKU will head back home for a three-game stretch where they'll have highly anticipated official rematches with both Bellarmine and Lipscomb. They will then take on Xavier for the first time since 2012, where the Lady Toppers lived up to their name edging out a 2-1 victory.

Another landmark for the Lady Toppers is their first match against Louisville in nearly 15 years, when the Cardinals last managed a victory of 2-1. Louisville is coming off an explosive 2019 season leading 5-3-2 in conference play and 13-5-2 overall. The home game is slated for March 27.

"Our kids are so excited for that instate rivalry against Louisville," Neidell said. "Louisville went to the second round of the NCAA Atlantic Sun in 2019, making them a pretty good opponent. Other than the issue of limited capacity, the opportunity to

have them as a home game is fantastic."

The C-USA portion of the spring will begin away from the Hill against Middle Tennessee State University on Feb. 26.

Fans will be excited to see the return of longtime C-USA rival Florida International on March 4. The two teams have gone toe-to-toe in 17 matches with WKU going 9-5-3 against the Panthers since 2004.

The Panthers are coming off a less-than-successful 2019 season, only managing 2-15 overall and 0-10 in conference compared to the Lady Toppers 10-7-1 and 6-4.

The team has managed to hold onto senior and team captain Avery Jacobsen, who's played a major role in WKU's defense, holding opponents to 19 goals — the ninth fewest in program history. Junior Ambere Barnett also begins her third season with 14 career assists, being tied in sixth place in Lady Topper history.

Although the season has been pushed back to spring versus the usual fall start date, the Lady Toppers have wasted no

time conditioning their upcoming team. Having an extra semester has not only allowed for the team's eight freshmen to have more training, but also become better acclimated to college and their fellow Lady Toppers.

"We've been doing little activities where one day we did yoga, one day we did fun games, but it was just us over Zoom," Barnett said. "It was nice to be able to see each other without physically seeing each other. We can only be together during practice, so it was nice to have that bonding time."

The Lady Toppers 15-game season will conclude on April 9 in the WKU Soccer Complex against C-USA foe Charlotte, who last pulled out a victory of 2-1 back in 2019.

Soccer beat reporter Sean Snyder can be reached at [sean.snyder887@topper.wku.edu](mailto:sean.snyder887@topper.wku.edu). Follow him on Twitter @seanwsnyder

## Views: Bassey continues to bulk resume for NBA

By Nick Kieser

Everyone likes a good comeback story. Junior Charles Bassey is no exception.

Last season, 10 games into his second year on the Hill, Bassey suffered a broken leg against Arkansas on Dec. 7, 2019. No one was certain he'd be the same again.

Associate head coach Phil Cunningham said after the Middle Tennessee series ended that Bassey is the core of WKU's defense.

Bassey's numbers alone this season speak for how he handled himself getting back into game shape. On Sunday, Bassey picked up his 11th double-double in 17 games while being one of — if not the most — dominant player the Hilltoppers have this season.

"None of us knew 100% when he'd be back from his injury," head coach Rick Stansbury said. "I think the biggest change is he sat watching for a year. Where his game has changed more than anything is he's playing at another level energy wise."

On the road over the weekend, I kept an eye on Bassey's energy level. I saw what I believe is raw, unmatched talent. Each time

he takes the court against an opponent, it's like a switch is flipped on and no one can turn him off.

"Right now we're just feeding off of his energy," senior Josh Anderson said. "Game in and game out he's given us 110%. I feel like all of us feed off his energy."

As the first game of the weekend series began against MTSU, Bassey rose out of the tunnel ahead of the pack of players. As the ball went up for tipoff, he carried that swagger and won the tipoff, freshman Dayvion McKnight grabbed the ball.

The dominant mantra of this 6-foot-11 NBA prospect is invaluable. As he continues to rise to prominence, it's evident if he continues to do well we will see him in the pros this fall.

It's one thing to see Bassey in action on TV, but witnessing him make numerous big plays each game in person gets you amped for where his God-given talent could take him.

"He makes the game a lot easier, let's be honest," redshirt senior Kenny Cooper said. "His presence inside, offensively and defensively. He's blocking shots, alternating shots, he's a constant force inside if you

feed him on the block. If you take a shot, we're confident he'll get the rebound."

The Lipscomb transfer continued to say Bassey has a dynamic approach to his game, and the way he plays cannot be matched in Conference USA.

Cooper is right. Following the weekend, Bassey reclaimed his lead for most blocks in the NCAA with 55 and second in the nation with 11 double-doubles. He's also leading the nation with 195 total rebounds.

So, where does Bassey go when it comes to this offseason? The 2021 NBA draft is where, according to NBA Draft.Net, Bassey is predicted to go 12th overall to the Oklahoma City Thunder this summer.

Additionally, Bassey is also ranked No. 20 out of 60 listed college basketball players on USA Today's For The Win article. I've also heard he could be a lottery pick.

Right now, WKU isn't done squeezing his college experience out of him yet. Regardless of how the Hilltoppers finish this season, Bassey isn't so likely to stay, but why would you if you had the talent to go pro?

Patience is a virtue, but after Bassey's rehabilitation process and seeing him play

the way he has this year, there is no doubt this big man is going to be under the lights of an NBA arena this fall.

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JACK DOBBS

WKU cwriter Charles Bassey (23) wins the tip-off against Rhode Island Center Makhel Mitchell (22). The Hilltoppers played the Rhode Island Rams on Sunday, Dec. 13, with Western narrowly beating Rhode Island 68-65.