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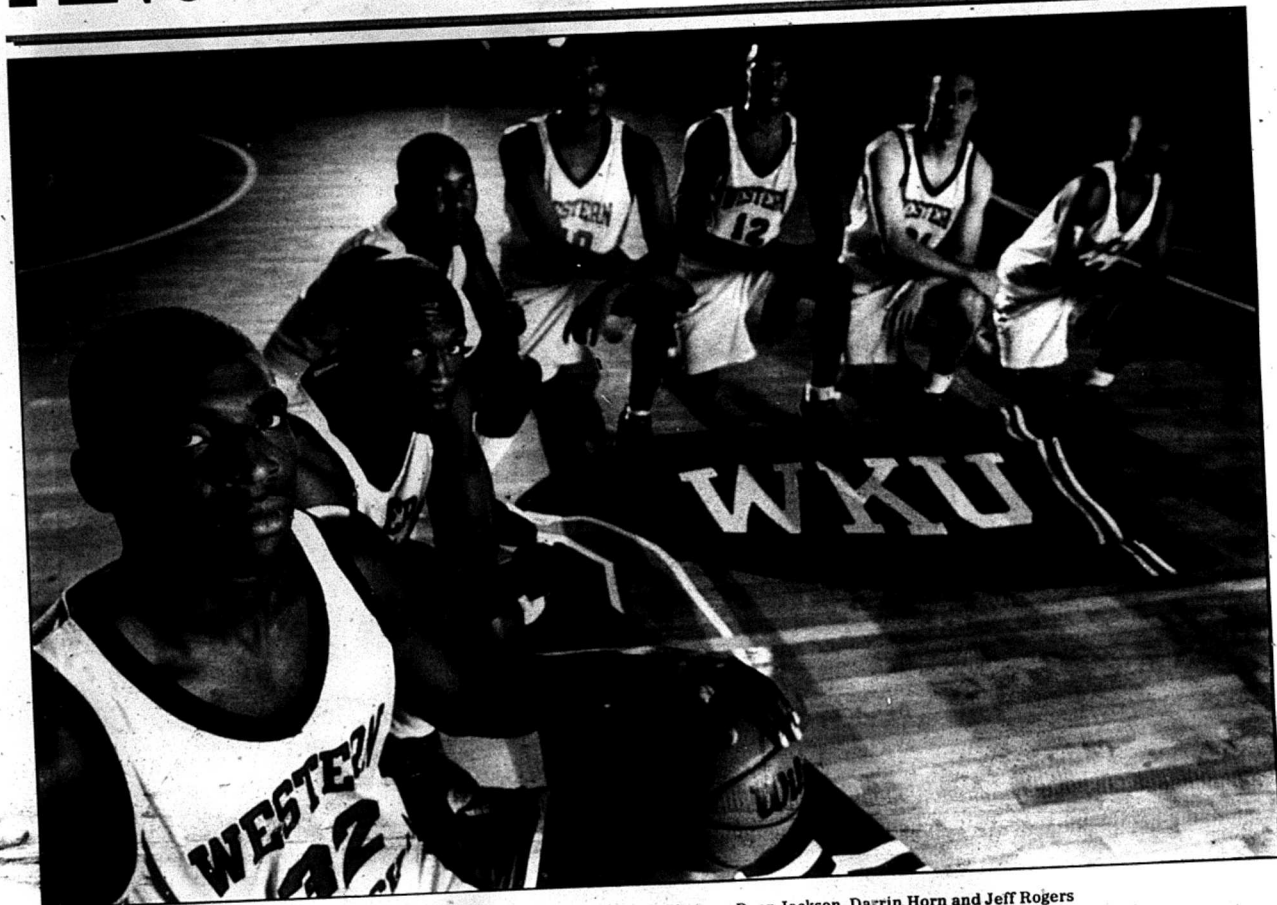
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ANOTHER NEW BEGINNING



Seniors Darius Hall, Steve Holley, Greg Glass, Derek Flowers, Deon Jackson, Darrin Horn and Jeff Rogers

Seven seniors lead team into first season with Kilcullen

There's a new coach, a new big man and a blue-chip recruit.

But fans who worry about changes in Western basketball can rest at ease. The style will be the same — there will just be more players getting in on the action.

"I don't know if you'll see much difference," new Hilltopper Coach Matt Kilcullen said. "You'll still see us press 94 feet, we'll want to get the ball up the court and we want to get the three-point shot.

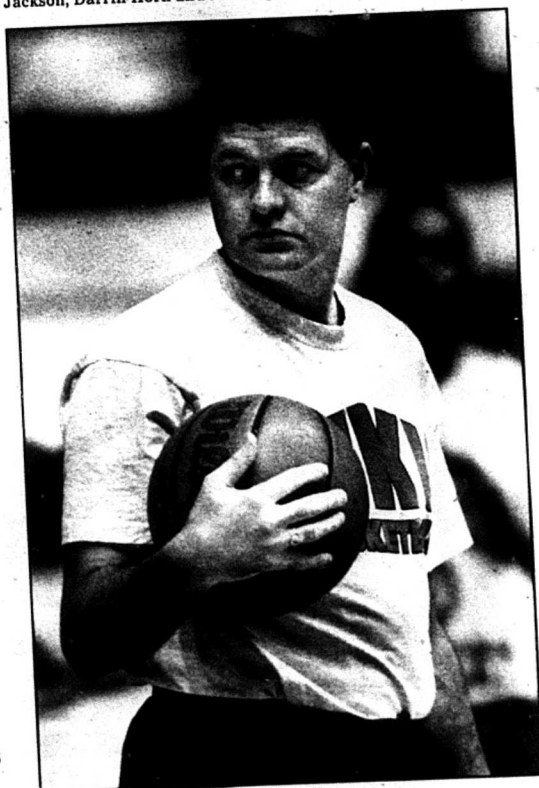
"From a personnel point of view, I think you may see more minutes out of Jeff Rogers, Andre Lewis, Steve Holley, Derek Flowers and Greg Glass."

That suggests the Toppers will have depth, a big advantage for Western this year, junior guard Michael Fraliex said.

"We're going to play everybody," he said of Western's bench. "We're going to be able to go deeper than most teams."

SEE SENIORS, PAGE 3

story by Michael Scott photos by Todd Stubing and Alex Jennings



Coach Matt Kilcullen

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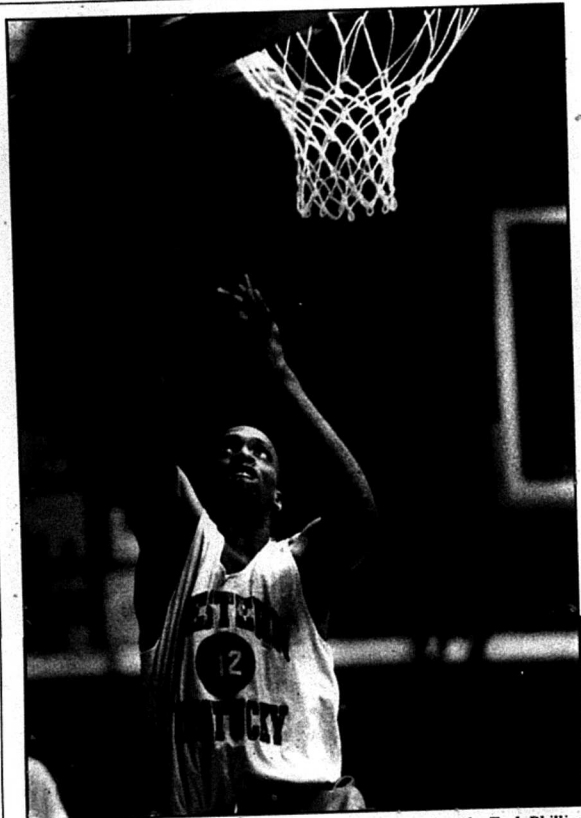


photo by Teak Phillips

Crib shot: Senior Deon Jackson took over the starting center position in the middle of the season last year. He is one of the team's three captains.



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HILLTOPPERS

◆ Western at a glance

◆ **Coach:** Matt Kilcullen, 66-98 in six years of coaching. This is his first year with the Toppers. He was named Sun Belt Coach of the Year last year after leading Jacksonville to a 17-11 record.

◆ **Last season:** 20-11 overall, 14-4 in the conference play. Finished first in the conference and second in the conference tournament. Received an at-large bid to the NCAA tournament, but lost to Texas in the first round.

◆ **Who's gone:** Cyphus Bunton (10.4 ppg, 6.6 rpg) was the only senior and starter lost. Danyell Macklin (5.4 ppg) transferred to Sullivan Junior College in Louisville before the season because of academic problems. Coach Ralph Willard — who led Western to two consecutive NCAA appearances — and his son, Kevin Willard — who walked on the team last season — both left for the University of Pittsburgh.

◆ **Who's back:** Junior forward Chris Robinson (14.7 ppg, 5.7 rpg), who is the Sun Belt's preseason Player of the Year, is the top returner. Three other starters are back, including junior guard Michael Fralix (12.7 ppg, 3.5 apg), senior forward Deon Jackson (6.5 ppg, 5.1 rpg) and senior guard Darrin Horn (9.4 ppg, 3.90 rpg). Six other letterwinners return as well.

◆ **Top newcomers:** Junior college transfer forward Isadore "Pop" Thornton and freshman forward Carl Thomas.

◆ **Strengths:** Western has seven seniors, so experience and leadership shouldn't be a problem. Two years of good postseason experience should also go a long way.

◆ **Weaknesses:** Lack of height continues to be a problem. The team's tallest player, Steve Holley, is expected to get more playing time this season, but the Toppers still don't have much size. The Toppers need to improve last year's 64.1 percent free throw shooting.

◆ **Key to season:** The Toppers must get solid contributions from their bench players. All 12 players are expected to contribute and must if the Toppers are to succeed in their run-and-gun style of play.

◆ **Outlook:** Western has the talent to repeat as league champions and advance to the NCAA Tournament. Depending on how much the bench players contribute and the starters improve, Western could go as far as the Sweet 16 team of two years ago.



photo by Teak Phillips

The Toppers get together at the end of practice last week. Western is the consensus pick to win the Sun Belt Conference regular season title after losing one starter from last year's team.

SENIORS: Experience an asset

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

The last two years have been successful for the Toppers. Two years ago, they won the Sun Belt Tournament and made it to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament.

Last season, the team finished second in the Sun Belt conference and lost to Texas in the first round of the NCAA tournament.

"You can never, ever deny the importance of experience," Kilcullen said. "It's easy to get your kids focused when they've experienced postseason success, which Western has had the last two years."

This season the Toppers look to improve on the past.

"We have high expectations," junior forward Chris Robinson said. "We want to get to the tournament and cause some damage, a lot of ruckus. I feel that if we stay on the same page, we can go a long way."

The senior class includes Glass, Darius Hall, Holley, Rogers, and tri-captains Flowers, Darrin Horn and Deon Jackson.

"I think all seven seniors have done a great job in one form or another in the area of leadership," Kilcullen said. "I'm very happy with the seven seniors as a group so far."

Western returns four starters from last year's 20-11 team, comprised of Horn, Jackson, Robinson and Fralix. That gives Western an advantage that a lot of teams don't have, Jackson said.

"It really gives us experience," Jackson said. "After last year, now we know how it is. We have to play good day in and day out."

Kilcullen was the Sun Belt Coach of the Year last season at Jacksonville. His last Dolphin team went 17-11, including a 22-point comeback win against the Toppers in Diddle Arena.

The backcourt

Robinson returns as everyone's preseason pick as Sun Belt Player of the Year. Last year's leading scorer with 14.7 points per game, he also grabbed 5.7 rebounds a game.

The 6-5 swingman will be expected to carry a big load again this season.

"He's one of our better scorers, so he's going to have to make some big baskets for us," Kilcullen said. "But he's also a team player. He understands the game; he knows when it's time to shoot and when to pass."

Kilcullen said that knowledge is also crucial in the point guard position. Fralix started at the point last year and averaged 12.8 points and led the team with 3.4 assists per game and in free throw shooting (83 percent).

Kilcullen said Fralix knows the game and that will help the team.

"His decision making has gotten better, and as a point guard who can shoot the ball, there's a fine line in when do you pass and when do you shoot," Kilcullen said. "I think he's done a very good job in making good decisions in when to pass and when to shoot the ball."

That doesn't necessarily mean that Fralix will start at point guard this season. Kilcullen said Rogers is also performing well in practice.

Rogers averaged five points and one assist per game last year in limited playing time. Kilcullen said his role will be bigger this season.

Fralix said, "Jeff and I challenge each other every day. If I'm not doing my job, he tells me, and vice versa."

Horn averaged 9.4 points a game last year and is the third-leading returning scorer. The 6-4 shooting guard was second in free throw shooting (81.8 percent).

Lewis, a sophomore, is expected to see more minutes this year. He averaged 1.6 points.

The frontcourt

With seven guys competing for playing time, Western's frontcourt players are working hard. Having no true center, there is a lot of competition for the power forward and center slots.

Robinson said the big men are Western's biggest strength.

"They've really been working hard," he said. "They're all coming along well, and I feel that's a real big bonus for us."

Jackson averaged 6.5 points and 5.1

rebounds a game last season. He began as a bench player, but took the starting center spot midway through the season.

Hall, who began the season at center last year, averaged seven points and 5.4 rebounds last season. He said practices have been a battle.

"Everyone is competing for minutes," he said. "The harder we play in practice, the tougher we're making for our opponents, whoever we play."

Flowers, Glass and Holley return to the frontcourt and are expected to get a lot more playing time. Kilcullen said the three have made marked improvement.



"It's easy to get your kids focused when they've experienced postseason success."

— Coach Matt Kilcullen

Newcomers

Junior Isadore "Pop" Thornton and freshman Carl Thomas are the new Hilltoppers this season. Thornton is an Angelino Junior College transfer, and Thomas is an honorable mention McDonald's All-American.

Thomas said he chose Western because he felt it was the best place for him and he really liked the style of play.

He will be the only freshman on the team this year, and said the whole team has been supportive.

"The conference is pretty good, and the program here is still evolving," Thomas said. "It's one of the better programs around."

Schedule

The Toppers start the season on the road at Sun Belt opponent Jacksonville on Dec. 3, and their first home game is Dec. 10 against Belmont.

The non-conference schedule includes Ball State, Massachusetts, Eastern Kentucky, Alabama-Birmingham, Tulsa and Oral Roberts.

Massachusetts is ranked in the top five of every preseason poll and the game will be on ESPN2.

"It's going to be exciting," Fralix said. "The fans will be right on top of us. When you're playing on the road, you have to be focused, and we just have to do what we do."

Now that the season is here, the Toppers are ready to get some use out of the experiences of the last two years, Fralix said.

"It's taught us all what it takes to win," he said. "We've played against the best. We know what it's like and we just want to go a little farther."

1994-95 Schedule

Nov. 20 Zadar-Yugoslavia (exh.) — 4:30 p.m.	28 at Lamar — 7 p.m.
26 Arkansas Express (exh.) — 7 p.m.	Feb. 2 at Texas-Pan American — 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 3 at Jacksonville — 6:05 p.m.	4 at Tulsa — 11 a.m. ***
6 at Ball State — 6 p.m.	9 Texas-Pan American — 7 p.m.
10 Belmont — 7 p.m.	11 Louisiana Tech — 7 p.m.
17 at Massachusetts — 4 p.m.*	13 New Orleans — 7 p.m.
21 at Eastern Kentucky — 6:30 p.m.	16 at Arkansas-Little Rock — 7:05 p.m.
28 Alabama-Birmingham — 8 p.m.	18 South Alabama — 4 p.m.**
Jan. 5 Arkansas State — 7 p.m.	20 at Oral Roberts — 7:35 p.m.
7 Southwestern Louisiana — 7 p.m.	23 Arkansas-Little Rock — 7 p.m.
11 at South Alabama — 7 p.m.**	25 Tennessee State — 1 p.m.***
13 at New Orleans — 9 p.m.*	27 at Arkansas State — 7 p.m.
16 Lamar — 7 p.m.	Mar. 3-5, 7 at Sun Belt Tournament in Little Rock
19 at Louisiana Tech — 7 p.m.	
21 at S.W. Louisiana — 7:05 p.m.	
26 Jacksonville — 7 p.m.	

* TV ESPN 2
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ROBINSON

Surgery hasn't held him back

BY MICHAEL SCOTT

Everyone has favorites — those players they want to emulate on the court. In high school, he looked up to players such as John Starks and David Robinson. "They came to play every night," he said. "They played relentlessly, no matter what the situation was."

It's that mindset Chris Robinson takes to the court.

Like most players, he follows a ritual to get ready for a game.

Before leaving his dorm room, Robinson rests with a 30-minute nap. Then he makes his way to the Hilltopper dressing room in Diddle Arena.

Once he dresses for the game, he likes to sit on the floor in front of his locker and think about what he has to do in the game.

The team always says a prayer, then Robinson finds a spot away from his teammates.

"I go by myself and say a prayer to my cousin that was killed in a shooting incident," he said. "He was killed my freshman year at Western. His family lived with mine — he was more like a little brother."

Shortly after that, the Toppers take the court, and Robinson is ready for the challenge.

The 6-5 forward faced a personal challenge early this fall when it was decided he would have to undergo surgery to remove torn cartilage from his hip.

He was a little worried because the doctors couldn't

guarantee a successful operation.

"They told me there was a 5 percent chance something might go wrong," he said.

The operation went well, however. Coach Matt Kilcullen said Robinson, who is practicing every day, should be back to 100 percent by Dec. 3, when Western opens the season at Jacksonville.

"It feels good to be back out there," Robinson said. "I feel like I'm more a part of the team. I like to get out and put out a hard effort with my teammates."

'Just have to get the job done'

Robinson led the Toppers with 14.7 points per game last season and again will be expected to play a big part in the team's success.

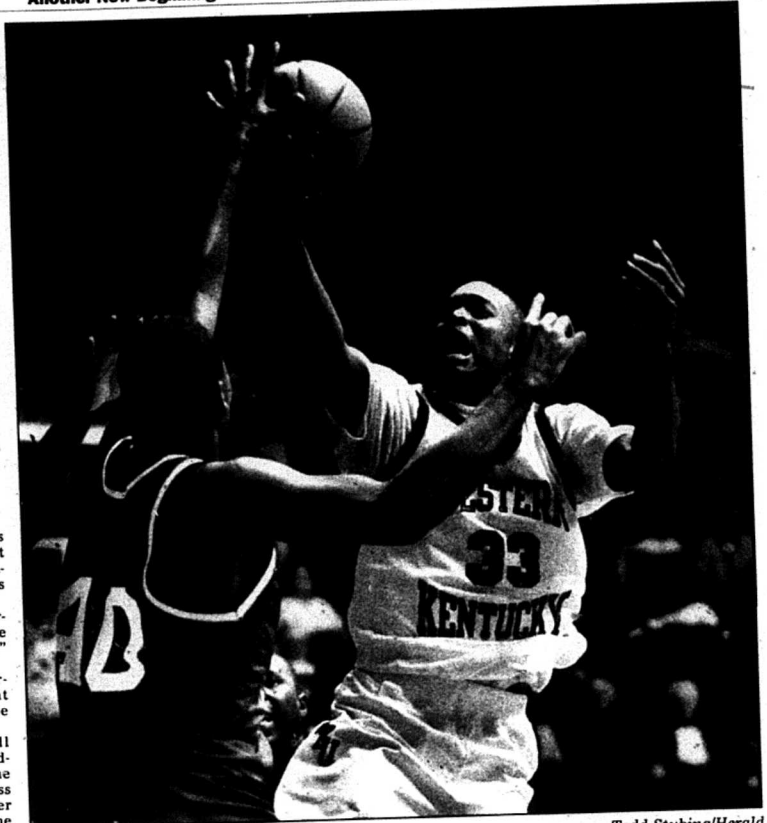
"He's one of our better scorers, so he's going to need to score some big baskets for us," Kilcullen said.

But it's Robinson's understanding of the game that improves his level of play, he said.

"Coming off a screen, he'll know that the defense is crowding him a little and that someone else is open, and he gets the pass to them," Kilcullen said. "Other times when he knows he's got the shot there, he takes the shot. I think that's what's going to make him a very good basketball player."

Robinson said basketball is

SEE ROBINSON, PAGE 5



Todd Stubing/Herald

Junior forward Chris Robinson said he came to Western two years ago because of the basketball environment and quiet atmosphere. Since then, he has emerged as the top player in the Sun Belt Conference, according to most preseason publications. He averaged 14.7 points last year.

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ROBINSON: Honors are a 'privilege'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

an important part of his life, and it has taught him a lot about responsibility. As a team leader, he's taking on more responsibility for the team's future.

"I feel that my first role is to be a leader on and off the court," he said. "And second, I just have to get the job done, whatever it takes on the court."

Robinson said successful athletes face problems others might not. Like Len Bias, the former University of Maryland basketball star who died of a drug overdose, players at a certain level will be approached by more people who try to get them to do wrong things, he said.

Robinson can't imagine that happening to himself.

"I think I've got my head on straight enough and strong enough," he said. "My mom taught me what is right. No athlete should make that decision when their life's going so well." That's part of why he came to Western.

"I decided this was the right environment for me. I didn't need the party atmosphere. It's laid-

back here."

'You don't ever give up'

He begins his third season at Western as the consensus pick for the Sun Belt Conference's preseason player of the year.

"I feel privileged," he said. "But I've just got to keep doing what I've been doing."

Kilcullen said the honors are nice, but Robinson knows the team is most important.

"I'm sure Chris would trade all those individual honors in for an NCAA Final Four appearance," he said.

That desire is one shared by his teammates as the Toppers look for more postseason magic.

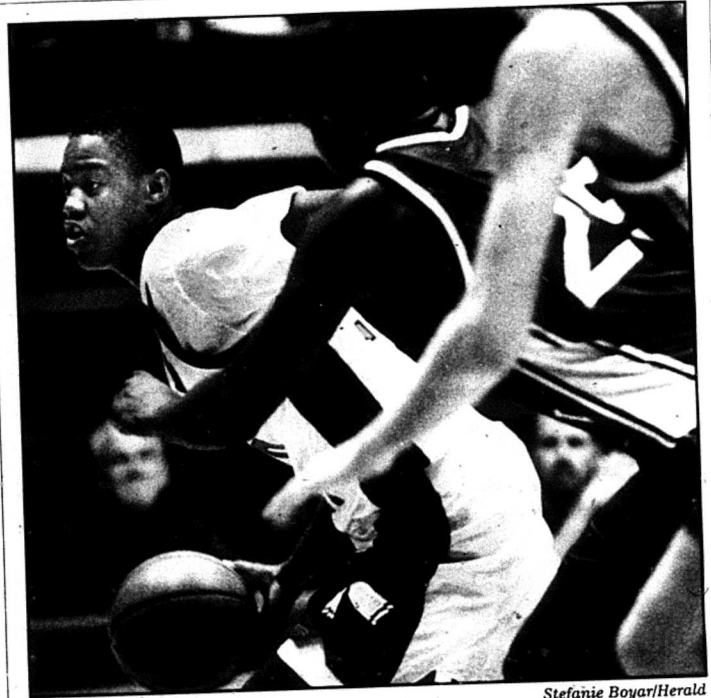
In Robinson's first two years on the Hill, Western has had a great deal of success. As a freshman, Robinson played against several future NBA players when the Toppers advanced to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament.

"It was one of the best experiences of my life, playing with the (Anfernee) Hardways, the (Terry) Deheres, the (Sam) Cassells," he said. "That makes me want to get back. I learned that you don't ever give up, always have confidence."



"I'm sure Chris would trade all those individual honors in for an NCAA Final Four appearance."

— Coach Matt Kilcullen



Stefanie Boyar/Herald

A step ahead: Freshman forward Carl Thomas was a McDonald's All-American honorable mention after his senior year of high school.

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SENIORS

Transition over, Rogers ready

Jeff Rogers came to Western last season with the weight of the world on his shoulders.

He had been picked by every pre-season publication as the conference's most promising newcomer, and his billing as a junior college All-American had most Western fans thinking he would be their savior at point guard.

It was a little too much for a person who had not yet played a second of Division I basketball. However, Rogers is not complaining about the pressures others put on him last year. Instead, he is trying to build on what he learned.

"It took me a long time to get adjusted to the system — a long time," he said. "The coaches told me that a lot of junior college players go through that. It really got me down. The structure of the game was different. Junior college was more freelance and one-on-one. Here, there's a lot more screening and

team play."

Hilltopper coach Matt Kilcullen said junior college transfers are a lot like freshmen.

"There's a year of transition that they've got to go through," he said. "Jeff's more familiar with the change and what his role is now. He'll add speed, quickness and defensive anticipation."

While his role last year was one of a backup point guard, Rogers did show signs of why he was the fourth leading scorer in the junior college ranks his sophomore season at Kaskaskia (Ill.) College.

In a 24-point comeback victory over South Alabama last season, Rogers scored a career-high 22 points in 19 minutes of play.

It's that kind of performance Kilcullen would like every night out from Rogers, who will split time at point guard with junior Michael

Frallex.

"I don't think there's a top-notch team in the country who goes through with only one point guard," Kilcullen said. "Michael is probably the better shooter, and Jeff is probably the better penetrator."

Shooting was one of Rogers' weaknesses last season. He shot only 42.5 percent from the field. However, he and Kilcullen said he has improved.

"I worked on my shot a lot this summer," Rogers said. "I have a lot of confidence in my jump shot now."

With that confidence, Rogers said he is ready to contribute on a consistent basis this season.

"My role will be just running the team and trying to keep under control," he said. "The year of experience is a big key. Now that I'm a senior, I'm ready to have a big year."

JEFF ROGERS



10
SENIOR
GUARD

93-94 season
Pts: 4.8
Reb: 1.5
Ast: 0.9

TOPS ONE ON ONE

PROFILES BY MICHAEL SCOTT, JASON FRAKES, KAREN BROWN AND JEFF NATIONS

LAST YEAR'S CONFERENCE LEADERS

◆ **Scoring** — Michael Allen, USL, 22.7; Jeff Clifton, ASU, 21.3; Barry Brown, JU, 20.8; Derrick Hall, UALR, 19.4; Greg Guy, UTPA, 19.2; Byron Starks, USL, 17.9; Melvin Simons, UNO, 16.3; Atim Browne, UTPA, 16.3; Bobby Allen, UTPA, 16.3; Artemus McClary, JU, 15.8.

◆ **Rebounds** — Melvin Simon, UNO, 11.8; Neville Dyson, Lamar, 11.0; Jeff Clifton, ASU, 10.0; Bryan Collins, USL, 9.4; Artemus McClary, JU, 8.6; Earnest Jackson, USA, 8.3; Ryan Bond, Tech, 7.5; Michael McDonald, UNO, 6.9; Muntrelle Dobbins, UALR, 6.8; Reggy Scott, UTPA, 6.7.

◆ **Assists** — Greg Black, UTPA, 7.2; Michael Allen, USL, 4.9; Jeremy Livingston, JU, 4.8; Atim Browne, Lamar, 4.0; LaMont King, Tech, 3.9; Arthur Agee, ASU, 3.9; Derek Fisher, UALR, 3.64; Quincy Dockins, Lamar, 3.55; Michael Frallex, WKU, 3.5; Kip Stone, JU, 3.4.

◆ **Field Goal Percentage** — Bobby Allen, UTPA, 55.7 percent; John Blake, USA, 54.4; Artemus McClary, JU, 53.8; Neville Dyson, Lamar, 52.1; Melvin Simon, UNO, 49.9.

◆ **Three-point field goal percentage** — Nate Burrell, JU, 47.0 percent; Atim Browne, Lamar, 43.7; Detric Willoughby, UNO, 40.0; Tony Moore, USL, 38.9; Greg Guy, UTPA, 37.7.

◆ **Free-throw percentage** — Michael Allen, USL, 87.1 percent; Atim Browne, Lamar, 81.9; Greg Guy, UTPA, 78.6; Quincy Dockins, Lamar, 78.5; Tony Madison, UNO, 78.3.

◆ **Blocks** — Kelvin Cato, USA, 3.5; Michael McDonald, UNO, 3.2; Jeff Clifton, ASU, 1.8; Cyphus Buntin, WKU, 1.7; Frank Wilson, USA, 1.6.

◆ **Steals** — Shawn Griggs, USL, 4.0; Greg Black, UTPA, 2.9; Jeff Clifton, ASU, 2.3; LaMont King, Tech, 2.11; Quincy Dockins, Lamar, 2.07.

◆ **Three-point field goals per game** — Greg Guy, UTPA, 2.8; Michael Allen, USL, 2.7; Derrick Hall, UALR, 2.5; Nate Burrell, JU, 2.33; Keith Veney, Lamar, 2.29.

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Perfection isn't Horn's priority anymore

In his first three years on the Hill, Darrin Horn has played in every game but one.

And in each of those games, Horn admits, he probably put too much pressure on himself to perform perfectly.

But in his final season at Western, the senior guard says he is ready to settle down.

"I don't know if it's because it's my senior year or what, but I'm just trying to enjoy myself a little more this season," Horn said. "I'm still going to put pressure on myself to perform well every night, but I'm going to try to have more fun this year also."

Hilltopper coach Matt Kilcullen said Horn must relax

a little more to perform to his expectations.

"He puts pressure on himself to play perfect every night out," Kilcullen said. "There's not a player around who can play perfect all the time."

The high expectations Horn puts on himself are a result of his determination, but they also caused him to try to do too much last season.

On some nights, he was able to stay within himself and have good games. On others,

turnovers and cold shooting hampered him.

In his three years at Western, he only has six more assists than he has turnovers (222-216). Last season, his shooting percentage

dropped to 42.1 percent, compared to 48.2 percent his sophomore season.

However, Kilcullen said Horn shows signs of getting over

such problems.

"He's shooting the ball very well and making good decisions with the ball," Kilcullen said. "He's working hard on both the offensive and defensive ends of the court."

Horn says improving over last season is only a matter of going into the games with the right frame of mind.

"I can't go in trying to make the perfect play every time," he said. "I have to try and play team basketball."

That has never been a prob-

lem for Horn, who has started every game for Western the last two years. He probably will be asked to do the same this season.

But now he is not worried about that. Instead, he is setting goals for what he wants to do in his last season at Western.

"My role is to help us win," he said. "Some nights I might be called on to score a lot, and other nights I'll be expected to get the ball to whoever's hot. Hopefully, I'll be able to put forth a great effort every night."

Street & Smith's Preseason Top 10

- 1 Arkansas
- 2 Massachusetts
- 3 UCLA
- 4 North Carolina
- 5 Kentucky
- 6 Virginia
- 7 Wisconsin
- 8 Cincinnati
- 9 Arizona
- 10 Florida

DARRIN HORN

21

SENIOR
GUARD

93-94 season
Pts: 9.4
Reb: 3.9
Ast: 2.8

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Glass finds 'easier' system to his liking

Greg Glass can shoot. Always could.

In his senior season at Todd County Central, Glass made All-District, All-Region and All-State and made the finals in the annual Kentucky-Indiana All-Star Shootout.

But he's the first to admit he could improve his outside touch, along with the rest of his game. His goal this season — his last — is to see minutes of the non-garbage variety.

"Right now, I just want to come out and play hard and play aggressive defense," Glass said. "I've tried to work on ball handling over the summer, and I played a lot of pickup games over the summer."

Assistant coach Jim Christian said Glass has improved his game significantly from last season.

"Obviously his strength is his ability to shoot the basketball," Christian said. "He's been working hard defensively and on his conditioning. Greg's going to contribute for us this season."

It was that shooting touch that attracted scouts to little Elkton, and that deadly accuracy got him a scholarship to Alabama and the chance to play

for the Crimson Tide's plaid-clad coach, Wimp Sanderson.

That was in 1990. Now Glass is at Western, Sanderson is at Arkansas-Little Rock and a personal rivalry is in the works.

Glass was redshirted his first year at Alabama, and after watching his team win the Southeastern Conference


Tournament and advance to the NCAA Sweet Sixteen, he transferred to Western.

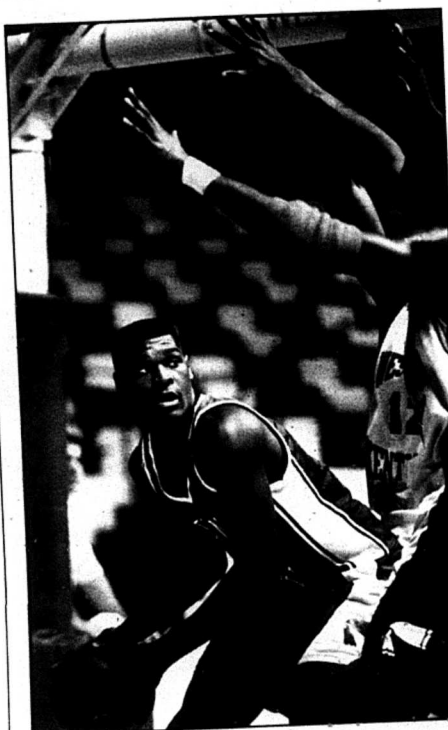
Glass said it wasn't anything personal, but he may work a little harder when Arkansas-Little Rock comes to town.

"I'm going to love it," he said. "I don't have any grudges against him or anything, but I feel like I may have something to prove."

First, Glass has to prove himself with the third coach of his college career. After struggling at times to learn former Coach Ralph Willard's motion offense, Glass said he is having an easier time picking up Coach Matt Kileullen's system.

"Coach Kileullen and the rest of the staff are a lot looser, so it's not so serious around here all the time," he said. "It's a lot easier that everybody's learning together, but at the same time it's not a hard system."

GREG GLASS	
	25 SENIOR FORWARD
93-94 season	
Pts: 2.6	Reb: 0.7
Ast: 0.3	




Stefanie Boyar/Herald

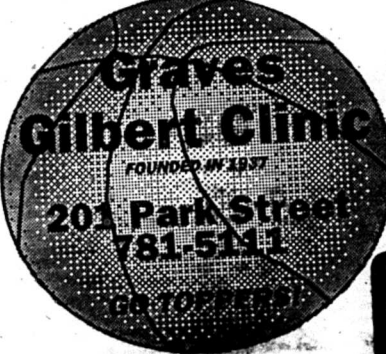
No way out:

Junior transfer forward Isadore "Pop" Thornton is expected to provide Western with some muscle under the goal. At Angelino Junior College, he averaged 14.5 rebounds per game.

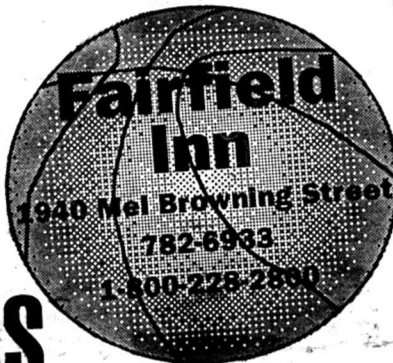
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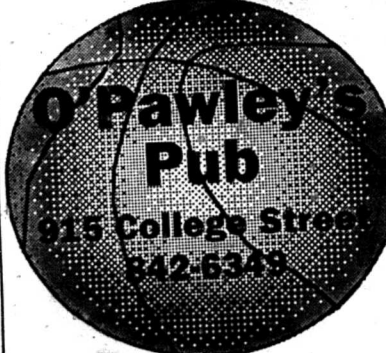


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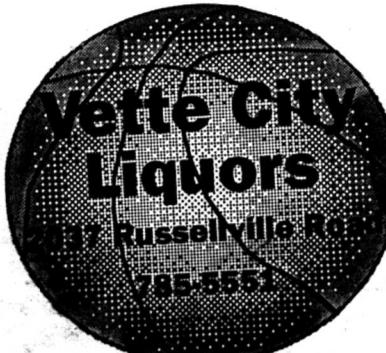


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November 15, 1994

'Loud mouth' gets Jackson his way

Deon Jackson's baritone voice commands attention.

His rebounding skills demand respect.

But it wasn't always that way for the senior center. Last season he was a newcomer, not knowing his place on the team.

"During preseason and the first part of the season, it was rough," Jackson said. "I was down and ready to go home, but (former) Coach Ralph Willard told me to keep working hard."

Jackson did just that. "I kept working hard, and finally I got a shot," he said.

His shot came when senior forward/center Darius Hall went into a midseason slump. Jackson took advantage of the opportunity and started the rest of the season.

Jackson averaged 5.1 rebounds and 6.5 points in the last 17 games.

Jackson said he has found his place this season.

"I'm just there to pick everyone up and keep everyone together," he said.

SUN BELT BRIEFS

◆ The Sun Belt Conference begins its 19th year of basketball action in 1994-95, as well as its fourth season after the league merged with the American South Conference. Since the merger, the Sun Belt has made its mark among Division I conferences over the last three seasons, with five NCAA Tournament teams, three NIT invites, two nationally-ranked teams, five NBA draft choices and a national scoring leader.

◆ The 1994-95 Sun Belt Conference Tournament will be played March 3-5 and 7, 1995, at Barton Coliseum (8,303) in Little Rock, Ark. Arkansas-Little Rock is the host institution. All 10 teams will compete in the event, and the tourney winner will receive the Sun Belt's automatic berth into the NCAA Tournament. Southwestern Louisiana is the defending tournament champion.

◆ Five Sun Belt teams will have new coaches this season, the biggest overhaul of its kind in league history. While the league lost the likes of Tim Floyd and Ralph Willard, the Sun Belt gained such coaches as Wimp Sanderson and Jim Wooldridge.

Fellow senior Greg Glass said Jackson is an excellent rebounder and leads by example. His other role is getting the team hyped up for games.

"If you know Deon, he's got a real loud mouth — his voice carries," Glass said. "He talks trash to you and hits on you. He has his own way of getting you going."

Coach Matt Kilcullen said Jackson can get the team going another way, by scoring consistently and rebounding. If he does, Jackson's goal for the team could become reality.

"I want us to go a little bit further in the NCAA tournament and win the Sun Belt Conference Tournament," he said. "I just want to win."

DEON JACKSON



12
SENIOR
CENTER

93-94 season
Pts: 6.5
Reb: 5.1
Ast: 0.8



Alex Jennings/Herald

This way, that way: Senior guard Jeff Rogers looks to pass in practice last week. He was being guarded by junior guard Michael Fralix. Both are competing for the starting point guard position that Fralix held last season. A junior college All-American two years ago, Rogers came to Western with high expectations, and he will try to live up to those this season after seeing limited action last year.

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Hall brings enthusiasm to new heights

Western is on a fast break, with senior forward Darius Hall leading the way.

After Chris Robinson pulls down a defensive rebound, he throws it to Michael Fralix, who sees Hall open at the top of the key. Fralix passes it to Hall, and the 6-7 center slams it home and kisses the rim.

Hall lands on his feet, throws his arms in the air and motions the crowd to get up and cheer. They respond by waving their red towels wildly.

Hall struts downcourt, bumping chests with the rest of the team.

That is the type of energy Hall has generated for the Hilltoppers since he was a freshman.

"Ever since I was a child, I've always been enthusiastic and personable," he said. "I guess that's noticeable on the court."

Hall's mother, Deborah, said her son gets enthusiastic about anything and goes at it wholeheartedly.

"I always knew when Darius was sick — he wasn't moving," she said.

Deborah Hall said Darius doesn't necessarily have to be the center of attention, as long as he is around it.

Since Hall is a senior, he realizes he is in a leadership role, assistant coach Glynn

Cyprien said. "His energy carries over to the other guys; it's definitely needed on the team."

"Even if he's not making the play, his enthusiasm and desire is a positive thing for us," senior guard Darrin Horn said.

Horn remembers Hall showing his hunger for the game.

"It was when we beat Louisville our sophomore year, and I had just hit a shot," Horn said. "He was pressing all over the ball. He didn't celebrate, and I was caught up with the celebration and forgot about defense. That sticks out in my

mind about Darius."

However, even Hall has down moments, which was apparent during a slump last season.


"I let a lot of personal things get in the way of playing," he said.

But he hopes to change that this season.

"This year I have learned to separate them," Hall said.

"When I'm on the court, I'll deal with the aspects of winning. I've got my priorities straight, and I know when it's time for business."

DARIUS HALL



32

SENIOR FORWARD

93-94 season
Pts: 7.0
Reb: 5.4
Ast: 0.8

Hilltopper Roster

No.	Name	Pos.	Hgt.	Yr.	Hometown	Pts.	Reb.	Ast.
10	Jeff Rogers	G	6-1	Sr.	Cincinnati	4.8	1.5	0.9
12	Deon Jackson	F-C	6-6	Sr.	South River, N.J.	6.5	5.1	0.8
14	Michael Fralix	G	6-1	Jr.	Fredonia	12.7	2.8	3.5
20	Carl Thomas	F	6-6	Fr.	Tampa, Fla.	N/A	N/A	N/A
21	Darrin Horn	G	6-4	Sr.	Lexington	9.4	3.9	2.8
22	Andre Lewis	G	6-6	So.	Albany, Ga.	1.6	0.6	0.3
25	Greg Glass	G-F	6-7	Sr.	Elkton	2.6	0.7	0.3
32	Darius Hall	F-C	6-7	Sr.	Detroit	7.0	5.4	0.8
33	Chris Robinson	G-F	6-5	Jr.	Macon, Ga.	14.7	5.7	2.0
40	Derek Flowers	F-C	6-7	Sr.	Dothan, Ala.	1.3	1.5	0.1
42	Isadore "Pop" Thornton	F	6-7	Jr.	Baton Rouge, La.	N/A	N/A	N/A
44	Steve Holley	F	6-8	Sr.	Washington, N.C.	1.7	0.8	0.1

Dick Vitale's Preseason Top 10

- 1 Arkansas
- 2 Massachusetts
- 3 Kentucky
- 4 North Carolina
- 5 UCLA
- 6 Virginia
- 7 Syracuse
- 8 Arizona
- 9 Kansas
- 10 Indiana

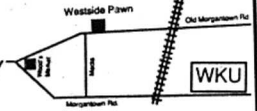
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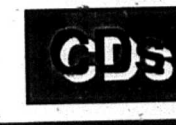
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Holley 'more at ease' after transfer year


Steve Holley found that coming to an established basketball program was harder than expected.

"There was a new system and new coaching. It was just like starting all over," he said. "In the game of basketball, you have to learn to adjust."

But the senior forward showed Western what he was made of at Midnight Mania, which marked the beginning of the basketball season last month. "I feel I can help the team more, and I feel I will be given the chance to help the team," Holley said.

Coach Matt Kilcullen thinks it has to do with confidence, and Holley agrees. "Confidence has changed me in my game," Holley said. "Coach gave that to me."

STEVE HOLLEY



44
SENIOR
FORWARD

93-94 season
Pts: 1.7
Reb: 0.8
Ast: 0.1

Holley said Kilcullen communicates with him and respects him.

"He doesn't get mad over mistakes that you make on offense as long as you make up for them on defense," Holley said. "In a way it takes the pressure off, but the team still strives for perfection."

Holley praised Kilcullen's two-point philosophy of teaching and relating.

"The two go hand-in-hand," Kilcullen said. "Individually, tell them what they are doing right and then give it to them positively."

Holley said the combination of him and Kilcullen will benefit him and the team.

"I think he feels more at ease this year," senior guard Darrin Horn said. "You can't say enough about Steve because he's a great guy. You want 13 guys like him on a team."

Flowers wants to match big voice with big stats

If Matt Kilcullen ever decides to create an official cheerleading position on his team, **Derek Flowers** could fit the bill.

Flowers, a senior forward/center for the Toppers, can be heard at any Western practice encouraging or berating his teammates, depending on the situation.

It's all part of being a senior, Flowers said. "I try to lead by example, by doing things right," he said. "Like when guys might skip study hall, I try to talk them out of it. I try to give positive feedback to the freshmen when they make mistakes because I've been there."

Flower's enthusiasm brings a new level of intensity to the Toppers' practices, said team-

mate and fellow senior Greg Glass.

"Derek's really vocal in practice and he talks to the younger players," Glass said. "That's what seniors are supposed to do — provide leadership."

But Flowers hasn't abandoned working on his own game. At 6-7 and 220 pounds, Flowers is able to add muscle to Western's lineup and hit the boards.

This year, his offense might make more of an impact, Western assistant coach Jim Christian said.

"He's been doing very well in practice," Christian said. "I think he has worked hard on his perimeter game. He's really been knocking down those little


12-footers in practice."

Flowers had his best offensive game last year in the second game of the season, when he scored 10 points against North Florida in 17 minutes. He's hoping to turn in more double-digit scoring games this season.

But as one of Western's "big men," Flowers knows his first responsibility will be rebounding. He hopes to break his personal high of eight rebounds in a game, which he got last season against Lamar and Southwestern Louisiana.

"I just want to contribute," he said. "I want to increase my playing time significantly and do more of the positive things and less of the negative."

DEREK FLOWERS



40
SENIOR
CENTER

93-94 season
Pts: 1.3
Reb: 1.5
Ast: 0.1

KILCULLEN FACTS ...

Matt Kilcullen begins his first season as Western Kentucky's head coach, after serving the last three years in the Sun Belt Conference as Jacksonville's head coach.

Kilcullen engineered one of college basketball's biggest turnarounds last season, taking Jacksonville from a 5-22 finish two years ago to a 17-11 mark in 1993-94.

Prior to coaching at Jacksonville, Kilcullen spent six seasons as an assistant to Digger Phelps at Notre Dame. While he was on the coaching staff, the Fighting Irish went to the NCAA Tournament five of six years.

He has also served as an assistant at Siena (1982-85), as head coach at Castleton State (1979-82), and as an assistant at Delaware Valley (1978-79).

Kilcullen led Castleton State to a best-ever 14 wins in 1981-82, after the Spartans won only 23 games over the previous six seasons.

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JUNIORS

Thornton putting some 'Pop' in the Tops

He remembered Isadore "Pop" Thornton as a big, tall kid with size 18 feet.

Being from the New Orleans neighborhood Thornton grew up in, assistant coach Glynn Cyprien knew the Thornton family. He said his relationship with Thornton goes back a long way. When Cyprien followed Coach Matt Kilcullen to Western in the spring, he remembered that Thornton would be graduating from Angelino Junior College in

Lefkin, Texas. Cyprien felt that Western would

give Thornton the exposure he was looking for and could be a home for him as well.

"These days, players go to schools because they feel comfortable with the coaches recruiting them," he said.

The only

problem was that Thornton had committed elsewhere.

"I had already made a verbal commitment to Texas," Thornton said. "Then Coach Cyprien started recruiting me, and I knew he would make me better and work me harder than any coach that was recruiting me."

He agreed to visit the Hill, and that was all it took. "I had a wonderful time and decided on Western," Thornton said. "I also liked the winning tradition Western has."


After Thornton decided on the Toppers, Western lost to Texas in the first round of the NCAA Tournament. But that didn't create

second thoughts, Thornton said. "I knew that Texas was losing more players than Western," Thornton said. "Western had a better team coming back."

Thornton joined the Toppers with impressive numbers. The 6-7 power forward averaged 21.9 points and 14.5 rebounds a game at

SEE POP, PAGE 14

"POP" THORNTON



21
JUNIOR
FORWARD

JC Stats
Pts: 21.9
Reb: 14.5

New-look Fraliex more vocal

When fans see Michael Fraliex this season, a couple of changes will be noticeable.

The junior point guard is working on being more vocal on the court, something he said he wasn't always comfortable with last season.

"There were times last year when I didn't do that — I'm kind of bashful," he said. "I'm working on keeping everybody up. My job is to kind of keep things in order."

Another difference is that

Frailix bulked up a bit during the off-season. Coach Matt Kilcullen said that will improve his overall game.

"He's gotten bigger and stronger through strength and conditioning," Kilcullen said. "He's got a great stroke (shooting style) and a great release, and now he's gotten stronger, and it's only going to help him."

As the court leader, Fraliex

said it's his job to get things going.


"Everyone feeds off me," he said. "My job is to get the ball where it's supposed to be. I feel very comfortable with it."

Frailix also will play shooting

guard this season, and he said the job is a lot

SEE FRALIX, PAGE 14

MICHAEL FRALIX



14
JUNIOR
GUARD

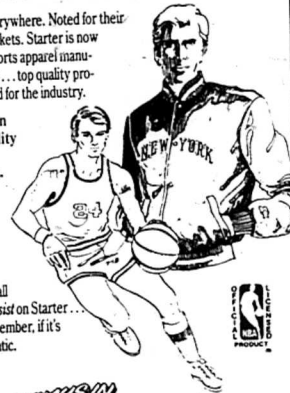
93-94 season
Pts: 12.7
Reb: 2.8
Ast: 3.5

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SOPHOMORES

Lewis wants to contribute more

The first thing that comes to mind about Andre Lewis is his hands punishing a basketball on a dunk.

The sophomore guard said dunking was the thing to do as a freshman, but in his second year as a Hilltopper he sees the game in a different light.

"Last year, being a freshman I wanted to come in and get some props by dunking," Lewis said. "As long as I got a dunk I was satisfied, but there's more to that in a game."

He said he wants to contribute more to the team this year with more assists and rebounds.

Lewis said he was recruited to play point guard, but Coach Matt Kilcullen said Lewis needs to establish his own role.

"He is a wing player, and he needs to concentrate on the things to be in that position," Kilcullen said. "His shot has gotten better, and he can penetrate inside the paint from the wing."

Lewis has showed his shooting range already this season by hitting three three-pointers in the Red-White scrimmage a couple of weeks ago. He scored 13 points.

Along with gaining some maturity after his first season, Lewis said he recognizes his weaknesses.

"My weak areas are concen-

tration and mental attitude on the court," he said. "Coach encourages me in practice and criticizes in a positive way to help me."


"When I mess up, he takes the time to explain what I should do to do it right," he said.

Lewis said he still will look to get a few dunks during games.

His roommate, junior forward Chris Robinson, described Lewis' dunks as exciting and unexpected "because you never know what he's going to do."

"Dunks get the crowd in the game and bring more enthusiasm to the team," Lewis said.

ANDRE LEWIS



22

SOPHOMORE

GUARD

93-94 season

Pts: 1.6

Reb: 0.6

Ast: 0.3

FRESHMEN

Second visit, Kilcullen were the differences for Thomas

Carl Thomas had a hard decision to make on where he wanted to play basketball.

At first, the freshman forward thought he might like Jacksonville, but he didn't like the facilities and said the student population was too small.

Next on the list was the College of Charleston, to which he made an oral commitment.

But the addition of Coach Matt Kilcullen at Western made Thomas reconsider.

"I owed it to myself to take another visit to Western," he said.

Thomas said when he came to visit Western everyone was nice, there was a variety of things to do socially and Western was a Sun Belt Conference school.

"I liked it, so I told the coach at Charleston I was picking Western."

Thomas said Kilcullen reminds him a lot of his high school coach. He said his new coach has taught him better defense and how to play smart.

"He's funny," Thomas said. "He has a side of him where you know he is serious, and off the court he's all about having fun."

Thomas said assistant coach Glenn Cyprien, who recruited him, also played a big part in his decision.

Cyprien said he is proud of Thomas' efforts so far.

"He has to understand that you can't get a degree in one year," he said. "He can't expect to make an immediate impact—he's got good players in front of him."

Junior guard Michael Fralix said he has some advice for

Thomas. "It's easy to get down on yourself as a freshman, but keep your head up, don't let your confidence get down and keep working hard."


Cyprien emphasized that Thomas will need to show progress.

"He's a McDonald's All-American Honorable Mention, and I think he's going to be a good player," Cyprien said. "Every day in practice he has to contribute to the team in some form or fashion."

Fralix said Thomas is fitting into the program and shooting well, and things should work out for him here.

"I see myself getting better," Thomas said. "I think all my hard work is going to pay off."

CARL THOMAS



20

FRESHMAN

FORWARD



HS Stats

Pts: 20.0

Reb: 12.0

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Mike Sweeney/Herald

New season's greeting: Senior forward Greg Glass and senior center Derek Flowers welcome senior guard Jeff Rogers onto the floor after he was introduced at Midnight Mania. Coach Matt Kilcullen and Lady Topper Coach Paul Sanderford held the event for the first time in three years, and more than 1,000 fans were on hand to watch both teams conduct short intra-squad scrimmage games.

POP: Eligibility was unsure

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12
Angelino.

Thornton's immediate eligibility was in question until three weeks ago. He had been told he wouldn't be able to play until Dec. 17 because of a failing grade on the math portion of his graduation testing at Angelino.

"I retook the math test on

Sept. 16 and passed," Thornton said. "Then they told me I was ineligible until I had 12 hours of classes on my schedule. I was taking six hours, so I added eight more."

Thornton's athleticism will make him valuable to the team, Kilcullen said.

"He's a tremendous athlete who runs and jumps very well," he said. "He's a little bit raw

inside, but when he learns how to read what kind of move to make, he will be a terrific basketball player for us."

Thornton said his role for Western will be that of rebounder, shot blocker and transition scorer.

"I'm just going to go out and try to play my best and see what happens," he said. "And after it's all over, I'll still be smiling."

FRALIEX: Junior could also be shooting guard

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12
different than the point.

"Being the two guard, you have a little more freedom to shoot," he said. "You have more opportunity to read screens."

Fraliex was named by the Sun Belt coaches to the preseason All-Conference team last week, and he has been named to several other preseason teams. But the preseason attention won't affect his game, Fraliex said.

"There's no added pressure," he said. "They're just giving their opinion. I'm not worried about that kind of thing."

Western practices can get pretty physical, and Fraliex said the team is playing hard.

"The intensity in practice has been great," he said. "It's all about working hard. You have to go 100 percent all the time. Our focus is, as Coach Kilcullen says, 'Take it to another level.'"

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SUN BELT

Dolphins, Ragin' Cajuns to challenge Tops for title

While Matt Kilcullen has left to become the head coach at Western, he didn't leave the cupboard bare at Jacksonville for new coach George Scholz.

Scholz' team should be Western's main competition in its quest to repeat as Sun Belt regular-season champions.

Sun Belt Tournament champions Southwestern Louisiana should join Western and Jacksonville in the race for the conference title.

Arkansas-Little Rock and new coach Wimp Sanderson could be the surprise of the league as the man in plaid takes his show to Little Rock.

Here's a look at the nine conference foes that Western will face this season.

Arkansas-Little Rock

◆ **Coach** — Wimp Sanderson, first year at Little Rock. Was 267-119 in 12 years at Alabama.

◆ **Last season** — 13-15 overall and 6-12 in the Sun Belt. Tied with Lamar for eighth in the conference. Beat Lamar in first round of conference tournament before falling to Western Kentucky in the quarterfinals.

◆ **Who's gone** — The big loss will be All-Sun Belt selection Derrick Hall (19.4 ppg, 5.6 rpg). Alex Rodriguez (8.4 ppg, 6.0 rpg) also graduated.

◆ **Who's back** — Everybody else. Guard Malik Dixon (10.3 ppg, 3.0 apg) was the Sun Belt's Co-Freshman of the Year last season. Junior guard Derek Fisher (10.1 ppg, 3.6 apg) and sophomore forward Reggie Robinson (5.0 ppg, 4.0 rpg) are the other returning starters. Forwards Tony Chime (7.9 ppg, 4.1 rpg) and Muntrelle Dobbins (7.0 ppg, 6.8 rpg) contributed off the bench last season.

◆ **Top newcomers** — The Trojans added six new players to their roster. Joe Stephens, who transferred from Colorado, may be the best of them. Junior college transfers Ron Bess and Orlando Donaldson also should see playing time.

◆ **Strengths** — Little Rock has one of the best backcourt tandems in the conference with Dixon and Fisher. Dobbins returns as one of the league's best rebounders, and Chime, the 1992 Sun Belt Freshman of the Year, has the potential to return to his old form after missing part of last year with a knee injury.

◆ **Weaknesses** — Lack of size and leadership. The Trojans have only one player over 6-8 and only three seniors, none of which started more than eight games last season.

◆ **Key to season** — The continued improvement of Robinson and Dobbins, who is only a sophomore, and a consistent effort from Chime.

◆ **Outlook** — Little Rock's easy non-conference schedule should give it confidence entering the conference portion of its slate. If some of the newcomers can contribute, the Trojans could be the sleeper of the conference this year with Sanderson at the helm. They host the Sun Belt Tournament at the end of the season.

Arkansas State

◆ **Coach** — Nelson Catalina, 180-119 in 10 years at Arkansas State.

◆ **Last season** — 15-12 overall and 10-8 in the Sun Belt. Finished fifth in the conference. Lost to Jacksonville in the quarterfinals of the conference tournament.

◆ **Who's gone** — Co-Sun Belt Player of the Year Jeff Clifton (21.3 ppg, 10.0 rpg) will be sorely

missed. In not even two years at the school, he became the Indians' fourth all-time career scorer. The Indians lost two other starters in Jay Cook (5.0 ppg, 3.9 rpg) and Jason Grimes (5.0 ppg, 2.8 rpg), and sixth man Jerry Major (6.9 ppg, 3.9 rpg).

◆ **Who's back** — The Indians will have an experienced backcourt in senior guards Arthur Agee (7.9 ppg, 3.9 apg) and Vernell Cole (6.3 ppg, 2.6 rpg). Senior guard David Bass (4.9 ppg) and senior forward Yaki Saunders (4.7 ppg, 2.4 rpg) played in all but one game last season.

◆ **Top newcomers** — Tennessee Mr. Basketball Edgar Perkins is the gem of the class Catalina has coming in, but immediate frontcourt help must come from junior college transfers Damon Nicholas and Devin Rollins.

◆ **Strengths** — The Indians should be set in the backcourt with Agee, Cole and Bass. Catalina has never had a losing season at Arkansas State and is one of the most underrated

coaches in the country.

◆ **Weaknesses** — Losing Clifton will hurt badly. He was the only Indian last year to average double figures in scoring. Except for the returning backcourt, not much talent is coming back from last season.

◆ **Key to season** — Agee and Cole stepping up to ease the loss of Clifton. The newcomers will need to contribute immediately.

◆ **Outlook** — The Indians don't look to have the talent to compete with the upper echelon of the Sun Belt. A .500 season would be an accomplishment.

Jacksonville

◆ **Coach** — George Scholz, first year as head coach in Jacksonville. Was most recently an assistant coach with the Orlando Magic. Was 189-63 in eight years at Division II Florida Southern.

◆ **Last season** — 17-11 overall and 11-7 in the Sun Belt.

SEE DOLPHINS, PAGE 17

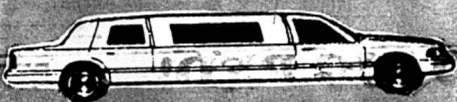
AROUND THE SUN BELT

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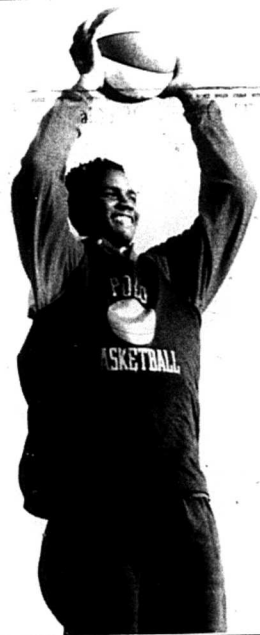


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SUN BELT

CARDINALS: Class of newcomers strong

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

◆ **Top newcomers** — The class of eight newcomers was ranked as the 35th best in the nation by recruiting expert Bob Gibbons. Alabama Mr. Basketball Khaalis Abdul-Raqueeb was the best of the class. Junior college transfers Ozzie Smith-Bay and Lucas Wagler are expected to contribute right away.

◆ **Strengths** — The recruiting class. Having lost so much talent, Giovanine needed a good mix of junior college players and freshmen. He got it.

◆ **Weaknesses** — The Cardinals only have two players on their roster who have played in more than 12 games at Lamar. It will be difficult to replace the backcourt of Browne, Dockins and Venev.

◆ **Key to season** — Big contributions from the newcomers. Giovanine has a big rebuilding job ahead of him.

◆ **Outlook** — Staying out of the cellar will be the main goal for the Cardinals this year.

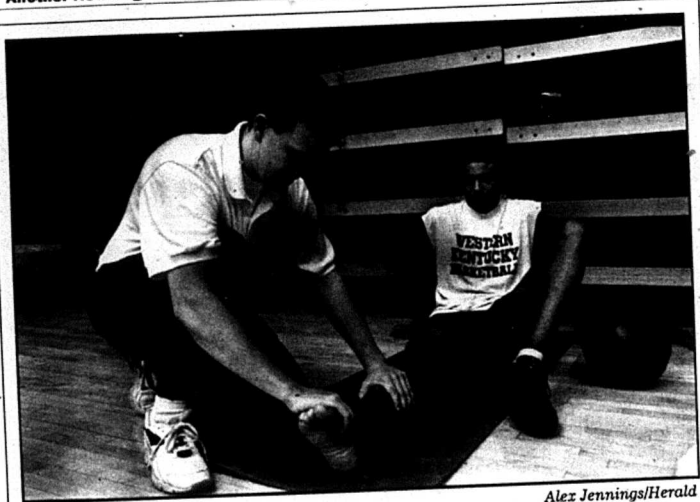
Finished third in the conference. Advanced to the semifinals of the conference tournament before losing to eventual champion Southwestern Louisiana. Gained a NIT bid and defeated Texas A&M in the first round before losing to NIT runner-up Vanderbilt.

◆ **Who's gone** — The Privateers lost just about everyone from last year's team. Melvin Simon (16.3 ppg, 11.8 rpg) will be the biggest loss. Guards Reni Mason (7.9 ppg, 3.4 apg) and Gerald Williams (13.0 ppg, 3.4 apg) also are gone. Tony Madison (11.9 ppg, 3.1 rpg) is gone.

◆ **Who's back** — Not much. The Privateers return only three players who saw any action last year. Senior center Michael McDonald (5.7 ppg, 3.2 bpg) is the only one who saw any significant playing time.

◆ **Top newcomers** — The Privateers have seven junior college transfers and two freshmen. Guards Jermaine Spivey and

SEE PRIVATEERS, PAGE 19



Alex Jennings/Herald

No pain, no gain: Sophomore guard Andre Lewis is expected to get more playing time this season after averaging 1.6 points and one rebound per game last season.

The men's season gets started with a road game against Jacksonville, Coach Matt Kilcullen's former team, on Dec. 3.

Louisiana Tech

◆ **Coach** — Jim Wooldridge, in his first year in Ruston. Spent his last three years at Southwest Texas State, compiling a 46-40 record. Was 131-48 in six years at Division II Central Missouri State.

◆ **Last season** — 2-25 overall and 0-18 in the Sun Belt. Finished in last place in the conference. Lost to Texas-Pan American in the first round of the conference tournament.

◆ **Who's gone** — The Bulldogs lost two starters in Antonio Robinson (4.8 ppg, 3.5 rpg) and Keith Spencer (7.3 ppg, 3.4 rpg). Reserve guards Fred Carr (1.6 ppg) and Duane Taylor (4.3 ppg, 2.5 rpg) quit school.

◆ **Who's back** — Junior center Ryan Bond (10.3 ppg, 7.5 rpg) led the team in scoring and rebounding after Lorenzo Ewing quit the team in the middle of last season. Senior guard LaMont King (8.3 ppg, 4.0 apg) and senior forward James Johnson (5.0 ppg, 3.4 rpg) are also back from last year's starting lineup.

◆ **Top newcomers** — Junior college transfers and freshmen dot the roster. Nenad Ivancevic is a 6-9 freshman from Yugoslavia. Freshman guard Josh Danos and junior college transfer forwards Troy Taylor and Cornelius Frazier are expected to contribute right away.

◆ **Strengths** — Getting Wooldridge away from Southwest Texas State, which he guided to the NCAA Tournament last year, was a good start to getting the program back to where it was three years ago when Tech won the conference championship. Bond was one of the most improved players in the conference last season.

◆ **Weaknesses** — The returning players don't really know how to win. Tech is 9-46 over the last two years. Bond is the only returning player who averaged in double figures in scoring last season.

◆ **Key to season** — King, Bond and Johnson must lead the team. Wooldridge has to make his players believe they can win.

◆ **Outlook** — The Bulldogs probably will battle Lamar for ninth place in the league.

New Orleans

◆ **Coach** — George "Tic" Price, in his first year as head coach of the Privateers. This is his first head coaching job.

◆ **Last season** — 20-10 overall and 12-6 in the Sun Belt.



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SUN BELT

PRIVATEERS: Postseason success unlikely to continue unless newcomers pick up slack

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

Tyrone Garris are expected to be the best of the recruiting class that was ranked as high as 17th by recruiting experts.

◆ **Strengths** — McDonald was one of the best shot blockers in the country last season. The recruiting class should be able to contribute right away.

◆ **Weaknesses** — Inexperience. McDonald is the veteran and just about everyone else is new. Replacing four starters will be tough.

◆ **Key to season** — Developing the newcomers into a formidable squad. Welcome to the big time, Coach Price.

◆ **Outlook** — New Orleans has a great basketball tradition, having advanced to postseason play in seven of the last eight years. The streak won't continue this year. Expect a middle-of-the-pack finish in the conference.

South Alabama

◆ **Coach** — Ronnie Arrow, 113-90 in seven years at South Alabama.

◆ **Last season** — 13-14 overall and 9-9 in the Sun Belt. Finished in a sixth-place tie in the conference with Texas-Pan American. Lost to New Orleans in the quarterfinals of the conference tournament.

◆ **Who's gone** — The Jaguars lost four of their top five scorers, including leading scorer John Blake (13.8 ppg, 6.6 rpg). Also gone are Earnest Jackson (8.8 ppg, 8.3 rpg) and Charlie Burke (12.7 ppg, 4.5 rpg). Shot-blocking ace Kelvin Cato (6.0 ppg, 3.5 bpg) was eligible to return but left the school.

◆ **Who's back** — Senior guard Anthony Foster (8.9 ppg, 3.8 rpg) is the leading returning starter. Junior guard Dean Marshman (6.3 ppg, 2.6 rpg) and junior forward Frank Wilson (6.0 ppg, 4.7) were major contributors last season.

◆ **Top newcomers** — Transfer forward Eric Cardenas was a junior college All-American. Freshman forward Arnell Hamilton and junior college transfer guard Albert Telfair are expected to contribute.

◆ **Strengths** — Foster, Marshman and Wilson are a good nucleus for an otherwise young team. Arrow brought in a good crop of newcomers.

◆ **Weaknesses** — Beyond the top three, there is not much experience. The Jaguars were hoping Cato would become a force inside. Wilson and Cardenas will have to pick up the slack.

◆ **Key to season** — The Jaguars' mediocre records of the last two seasons (13-14 and 15-13) have been a result of mostly sloppy play and poor shooting. They must improve on those two areas if they want to improve on their record.

◆ **Outlook** — The Jaguars were the underachievers of the conference last season. A similar near-.500 season is probable unless the newcomers over-achieve.

Southwestern Louisiana

◆ **Coach** — Marty Fletcher, 141-96 in eight seasons in Lafayette.

◆ **Last season** — 22-8 overall and 13-5 in the Sun Belt. Finished second in the conference. Won the conference tournament, defeating Western Kentucky in the finals. Lost to Marquette in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

◆ **Who's gone** — Lost four of their top five scorers, including Co-Sun Belt Player of the Year Michael Allen (22.7 ppg, 5.0 rpg).

Also lost two other starters, Byron Starks (17.9 ppg, 4.8 rpg) and Shawn Griggs (7.8 ppg, 4.0 rpg), and sixth man Tony Moore (10.2 ppg, 2.3 rpg).

◆ **Who's back** — Guard Barry Bowman (8.2 ppg, 2.6 rpg) was the Co-Freshman of the Year last season. Senior center Bryan Collins (7.3 ppg, 9.4 rpg) is the other returning starter, and sophomore forward Kevin Scruggs (3.7 ppg, 3.9 rpg) also returns.

◆ **Top newcomers** — The Ragin' Cajuns' recruiting class was ranked in the top 10 by some recruiting experts. Forwards Chris Manuel and Kelvin Price were picked as the Sun Belt's preseason Co-Freshmen of the Year. Junior college transfer forwards Eric Redeaux and Ron Bailey and freshman guard Chris Snowden are expected to contribute.

◆ **Strengths** — The Ragin' Cajuns have a strong nucleus of talent returning and an excellent crop of newcomers. Collins is one of the premier rebounders in the Sun Belt, and Bowman

showed signs of brilliance as a freshman last season.

◆ **Weaknesses** — The Ragin' Cajuns will have to rely on newcomers to replace the conference's best backcourt of last year — Allen and Starks. Southeastern must improve over last year, when they were the worst rebounding team in the Sun Belt.

◆ **Key to season** — Price, Manuel and the other newcomers must blend well with the established talent that the Ragin' Cajuns already have.

◆ **Outlook** — If the recruiting class is as good as advertised, the Ragin' Cajuns will compete with Western Kentucky and Jacksonville for the league title. If not, they will compete with Little Rock for third place.

Texas-Pan American

◆ **Coach** — Mark Adams, 18-32 in two seasons at Pan American.

◆ **Last season** — 16-12 overall and 9-9 in the Sun Belt. Finished in a sixth-place tie with South Alabama in the con-

ference. Beat Louisiana Tech in the first round of the conference tournament before losing to Southwestern Louisiana in the quarterfinals.

◆ **Who's gone** — Lost their two leading scorers in Greg Guy (19.2 ppg, 3.7 rpg) and Bobby Allen (16.3 ppg, 4.7 rpg). Three other bench players either were lost to academics or quit school.

◆ **Who's back** — Three of last year's starters. Senior forwards Charles Williams (10.3 ppg, 6.4 rpg) and Reggy Scott (10.0 ppg, 6.7 rpg) and senior guard Greg Black (5.5 ppg, 7.2 rpg) will be the nucleus. Sophomore forward Nelson Oliveira (7.2 ppg, 5.0 rpg) was a key contributor off the bench. Senior forward Chris Clay (12.7 ppg, 2.9 rpg) in '92-'93) is back after a back injury limited him to one game last season.

◆ **Top newcomers** — Junior college transfer center Sedat Necipoglu is 7-1 and the tallest player in the league. Sophomore guard Linwood Bonner, a junior college trans-

fer, also should see playing time.

◆ **Strengths** — The Broncos have a good nucleus of talent coming back from last season. Williams, Scott and Oliveira could become one of the strongest frontcourts in the league with some support from the newcomers.

◆ **Weaknesses** — Replacing Guy, who led the nation in scoring two years ago, will be tough. There are only four players returning from last year who saw any action.

◆ **Key to season** — Clay's return to the form that he showed two seasons ago. The other returnees must step up their play even more than they did last season.

◆ **Outlook** — The Broncos made one of the biggest turnarounds in the country last season. The talent is there to have another successful season. However, the newcomers must play well if the Broncos want to take the next step in the conference. Expect the Broncos to finish in the middle of the pack.

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