

Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

WKU Archives Records

WKU Archives

11-4-1999

UA12/2/1 The Little Team That Could

WKU Student Affairs

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_ua_records



Part of the [Advertising and Promotion Management Commons](#), [African American Studies Commons](#), [Journalism Studies Commons](#), [Mass Communication Commons](#), [Public Relations and Advertising Commons](#), [Publishing Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), and the [Sports Studies Commons](#)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in WKU Archives Records by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

A special women's basketball preview section of the *College Heights Herald*

The Little Team that Could



Jonathan Kirshner/Herald

Senior guard/forward Jamie Britt, sophomore guard Kristina Covington, junior forward ShaRae Mansfield, sophomore guard Natalie Powers and senior guard Jaime Watz will lead the Lady Toppers in the 1999-2000 season.

This year's team is ready to prove the doubters wrong

By JERRY BREWER
Herald reporter

with apologies to Watty Piper,
author of "The Little Engine that Could"
The Lady Toppers think they can do this. They really do.

They think they can win with nine scholarship players.

They think they can win with only three 6-footers on the roster.

They think they can prove wrong all the people who are saying they may finish with a losing record.

They think they can, they think they can, they think they can.

Western is The Little Team that Could.

History lesson

Three years ago, the Lady Toppers were a hyped program. They had some big-time transfers and blue chip recruits. College basketball magazines picked Western to be among the top

five in the nation.

Western was as high tech as any program could be at the time. It was a freight train with a sleek passenger engine.

The train broke down, never did run as smoothly as it should have.

Over the past two years, key players from that era have exited. Three are now playing professional basketball. But because of a gamble by Coach Steve Small, many of those stars have not been replaced.

Last season, Small decided to hold back scholarships for the Kentucky high school class of 2000, one that many think is the best ever.

Small and his staff still recruited players from the Class of 1999, but Western only signed one, guard Jennifer Slaughter, who was picked up days before the fall semester began.

Whether the gamble works will be determined in the years to come, when people have time to evaluate the recruiting class that will come in next season.

But the gamble caused an immediate problem. There are only nine scholarship players this season. Small figured on having 11, but forward Rachel Byars transferred and forward Shatika Hutcherson

left school because of academic problems.

What's left is a small, seemingly unglamorous team that doesn't impress many onlookers.

And this is what Western will use to cross a mountain.

Beginning with tomorrow night's exhibition game, the Lady Toppers will start chugging toward a successful season.

They think they can, they think they can, they think they can.

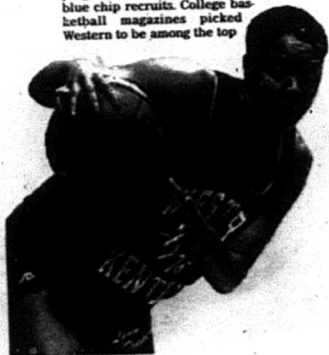
Pivotal season

This is a mountainous season because the Lady Toppers, since building the program, never have missed the NCAA Tournament in consecutive seasons. In the past 15 years, Western has not danced in March only twice — in 1995-96 and last season.

"A lot of people base your whole year on the postseason," senior guard/forward Jamie Britt said. "Yeah, we may go 21-7 again, but they'll still base our whole season on whether we make it to the NCAA Tournament. It's important for us to do that."

Western doesn't want to be known as a program

See Train, Page 8B



Inside

Meet the Lady Toppers

To find out who will be donning the Red and White for the Lady Toppers this year, check out the profiles of the team, complete with pregame rituals and mug shots for easy identification at the games.

Pages 4-5B

Filling the gaps

The Lady Toppers only have nine scholarship players. How will Coach Steve Small fill but the rest of his roster? Freshman guard/forward Elisha Ford and sophomore guard Jana Wright will walk-on this season to add some depth.

Page 7B

Sun Belt should have another predictable year

La Tech looks to win ninth straight title

By RYAN CLARK
Herald reporter

With a chill in the air and the leaves changing colors, basketball season is making a fast break to Western's campus. And the Lady Toppers are again facing a tough road in the Sun Belt Conference.

But can they finally dethrone Louisiana Tech — the goddesses of the Sun Belt and a Final Four team last year? Can Western even earn an NCAA

tournament bid? First the Lady Tops must hold their own in the Sun Belt, which should offer some tough competition.

The Herald has chosen its preseason conference results and it looks like the conference will have another predictable year. There could be some battles, but it looks like the biggest fight in the league will be for second place.

◆ Number 1: La Tech. These gals are good. They were 12-0 in the Sun Belt last year. They've won eight straight conference titles, been to two straight Final Fours and have a Sun Belt Player of the Year candidate in senior, Tamicha Jackson. Who's going to say they



won't finish first again?

Anybody? I didn't think so. ◆ Numbers 2-4: This is where the predicting game gets tricky. The two, three and four spots will offer the most competition for the three teams involved — Western, Florida International, and Arkansas State.

This is also the most important slot in the conference race. Last year, the Sun Belt only

sent two teams to the NCAA tournament, the champion and the runner-up. ◆ Florida International claimed the number two spot in their first year in the conference, going 9-3 in the Sun Belt, while Western finished third after posting an 8-4 mark.

But Arkansas State could be a sleeper. They went to the women's NIT last year after finishing 7-5 in the conference and they'd like to improve on that mark.

◆ Number 5: New Orleans seems to have this spot wrapped up. The team returns 11 juniors, or seniors from its 4-8 Sun Belt team last year and looks primed to make a run at an NIT bid. The players aren't good enough to

run with the big dogs, but they won't be content to sit on the porch either.

◆ Numbers 6-9: The remaining four teams could offer some excitement, but not by posting competitive teams.

The upper echelon of the conference will feast on Denver, Arkansas-Little Rock, South Alabama and Louisiana-Lafayette (formerly Southwest Louisiana).

The fun will be to see who has the best record out of the group, claiming the sixth spot in the conference, and who has the worst record, ending up dead last.

That's it. That's the conference in a nutshell. Pretty simple, huh?

Lady Tops have remedy for doubters — Winning

Team wants to continue tradition

By JERRY BREWER
Herald reporter

They've heard all the damn comments, heard all the doubts and questions and predictions of close games with Belmont.

The Lady Toppers know people don't expect much from them this season. This is foreign to the players, feels like "somebody is kicking us in the butt," junior guard LaVonda Johnson said.

Now the question is: What is Western — mighty Western, storied Western — going to do about it?

Feel sorry for themselves? Thanks for participating. Try us again next time.

Point fingers? Hope you didn't wager too much on that one.

Become even closer? Hmm. We have a winner.

Teams made when something is running amok and somebody steps up and says, "Enough of this, we're going to come together." Small said.

So the Lady Toppers have decided to spend their Sundays together. They have bonding sessions. They go to soccer games or volleyball matches or have dinner as a team.

Western has swept the cliques away and polished any potential problems. Western has always been known as a close-knit program surrounded by a family atmosphere.

But this season, the sisters don't bicker at all.

This is the first year where there has been no conflict no confrontations," senior guard/forward Jamie Britt said. "It hasn't happened in the past. We handle our business on the floor, and we leave it there."

A family searches for answers

No one is certain how this season will play out. Everyone has opinions, but the Lady Toppers are a mystery.

It appears that Western will have strong guard play. Senior Jaime Walz and sophomore Natalie Powers will be the two starters. But both are coming off injuries. Sophomore Kristina Covington, Johnson and freshman Jennifer Slaughter provide plenty of depth in the backcourt and each bring different skills. Britt will start at small forward and can also play at guard.

The frontcourt is another story. Only three players are there — junior forward Shaftae Mansfield and sophomore cen-

ters Kenosha Chastang and Katie Wulf.

Post players are always prone to foul trouble. Western plans to play a 2-3 zone defense instead of man-to-man for most of the game, which could be an answer for excessive fouling. But all three post players — the only players the Lady Toppers have who are 6-footers — must be crafty while being aggressive.

"We know we have to play hard to be good," said Mansfield, the team's leading returning scorer (14.7 points per game) and rebounder (8.1 rebounds per game). "Maybe it's because of the numbers or whatever. We have the talent. But we can't slack off a day. We have to play hard."

Lady Tops more than just stats

If you learned anything last season, you learned to throw all logic out when thinking about the Lady Toppers.

Only one thing matters to members of the Lady Topper program — sustaining and building upon their rich tradition.

"If you just work hard, you can create your own identity," Mansfield said. "We'll create our own identity."

Western didn't make the NCAA Tournament for only the second time in 15 years last season, but it did post a 21-7 record despite having six players suffer injuries during the season.

Another player, starting point guard Katashia Witcher (now an assistant coach), played on aching knees.

That's some kind of resiliency, and the NCAA's snubbing of Western buried that fact at the end of the season.

"Last year left a sour taste in our mouth," Johnson said. "This year, we know we gotta get back in the tournament and we gotta try our best, which is going to be tough. But we'll be fine."

Mansfield predicted Western would make the NCAA Tournament this season. "We'll be there," she said, unblinking.

If the Lady Toppers can figure this thing out, play with its trademark flair and urgency and remain healthy, perhaps Mansfield will be right.

Unlike other seasons, many don't think this is possible. So instead of being burdened with expectation, the only thing weighing on Western is that little thing on their shoulder. It looks like a chip.

"I think we do have a lot to prove," Mansfield said. "We are still the Lady Toppers and not just some weak team."

These local businesses are proud supporters of WKU Basketball

Vette City Liquors
2017 RUSSELLVILLE ROAD BOWLING GREEN KY
82-5555

Ultimate
314 Morgantown Road
26-2T

Captain's Tavern Restaurant
1823 Morgantown Road
22-7

Goody's
1007 U.S. 31 W
16-20

Bowling Green Biological
10 Old Morgantown
23-0

Firstar Bar
Adeley Circle - 783-
Campbell Lane - 783-
Cave Mill - 783-

Volunteers, UConn lead Herald Top 25

BY JERRY BREWER
Herald reporter

When most teams lose an all-world, all-century player like Chamique Holdscaw, the next season becomes a rebuilding year. Not Tennessee.

No Chamique. No problem. The Lady Volunteers still have two first team All-Americans — junior forward Tamika Catchings and junior guard Semeka Randall — in their lineup. And if junior guard Kristin "Ace" Clement thrives as the starting point guard, they may be playing "Rocky Top" at the Final Four in Philadelphia.

But don't expect the rest of the college basketball world to concede anything to Tennessee. Expect Connecticut, Rutgers, Iowa State, Notre Dame, Georgia, North Carolina and UCLA to all be in the hunt for the NCAA title.

- 1 Tennessee.** Two of the three Meeks are still around. They could leave opponents feeling meek.
- 2 Connecticut.** If sophomore point guard Sue Bird is the answer at point guard, this team is national-championship caliber. But without a point guard, UConn may not make it to the Sweet 16.
- 3 Rutgers.** Some publications think this is the finest team in the nation. Great guard play. Experienced backcourt. Good bench. Coach Vivian Stringer is grinning, for sure.
- 4 Iowa State.** A win over UConn in the Sweet 16 last year confirmed how good this team is. And the core players from that team are back.
- 5 Notre Dame.** Muffet McGraw is a wonderful postseason coach. With Ruth Riley as the team's anchor, expect the Irish to go deep into the postseason.
- 6 Georgia.** The Miller twins — Kelly and Coco — are so good they could lead most any team to at least the Sweet 16. The two accounted for 44.9 percent of Georgia's shots last season.
- 7 North Carolina.** This team is quick, athletic, and it has three goto players — Nikki Teasley, Juana Beto and LaQuanda Barksdale.

- 8 UCLA.** Another glamour team in America's most glamorous city. The Bruins averaged 85.2 points a game last season. With some defense, this could be a Final Four team.
- 9 Illinois.** All five starters return from a 19-12 team. Illinois forward Tauja Catchings may get a chance to ruin sister Tamika's national title hopes.
- 10 Louisiana Tech.** We know all about La Tech, so why bother?
- 11 LSU.** Not spectacular, but a solid team that is well coached. And Coach Sue Gunter added highly-touted recruit Kasha Tardy late in the signing period.
- 12 Auburn.** Isn't there a rule that says at least four Southeastern Conference schools must be in the top 15?
- 13 Virginia Tech.** What's up with Virginia Tech and excellence in college sports these days? Tulane, Grace Daley is one of those Best Players You've Never Heard About.
- 14 Oregon.** The bad news for the Ducks in the second game of the season. At Oregon. Uh oh.
- 15 Penn State.** Heien Darling is good. Enough said.

- 17 Kentucky.** UK is also chasing the title of best program in the state. We'll find out on Dec. 1 whether Western is ready to give up that distinction.
- 18 Boston College.** Well, at least Rachel Byars transferred to a good place. Be happy for her.
- 19 Kansas.** This has the potential to be a great season for the Jayhawks. Four starters and the top 11 players return. Their star, Lynn Pride, will be a coveted player in next spring's WNBA draft. But will the Jayhawks push themselves or settle for another season of being good but not great?
- 20 Purdue.** The Boilermakers are going to struggle as they defend their national title. Expect eight or nine losses. But with juniors Katie Douglas and Carnelle Cooper, Purdue should be good by the postseason.
- 21 Southwest Missouri State.** You must see guard Jackie Stiles play. You have been deprived if you don't.
- 22 Arizona.** Five players who averaged 9.7 points a game or higher return. If the Wildcats can develop some depth inside, they'll be fearsome.
- 23 Nebraska.** Hi Paul. Good to see you're building a strong program in Nebraska. Coach Sanderford. So tell us, when are you

going to get this program out of the bottom half of the Top 25?
24 St. Joseph's. This is a good team that plays an even better schedule (Tennessee, Duke and Stanford among others). It probably means the won-lost record won't be great, but this is definitely a great team.
25 Florida. Yo, alert the NCAA selection committee! Western is playing four Top 25 teams this season!

ALL-AMERICA TEAM

- First team**
 Kelly Miller, Georgia guard
 Semeka Randall, Tennessee guard
 Tamika Catchings, Tennessee forward
 Svetlana Abrosimova, Connecticut guard/forward
 Maylana Martin, UCLA forward
- Second team**
 Jackie Stiles, Southwest Missouri State guard
 Tasha Pointer, Rutgers guard
 Helen Darling, Penn State guard
 Lynn Pride, Kansas forward
 Ruth Riley, Notre Dame center
- Third team**
 Edwina Brown, Texas guard
 Shea Ralph, Connecticut guard/forward
 Grace Daley, Tulane forward
 LaQuanda Barksdale, North Carolina forward
 Summer Erb, NC State center

1999-2000 Lady Topper Roster

- No. 42 Jamie Britt**
A 5-9 senior guard from Bowling Green
- No. 22 Kenosha Chastang**
A 6-4 sophomore center from Columbus, Ohio
- No. 4 Alison Cook**
A 5-6 sophomore guard from Elizabethtown
- No. 14 Kristina Covington**
A 5-10 sophomore guard from Elizabethtown
- No. 15 Elisha Ford**
A 5-8 freshman guard from Lebanon, Tenn.
- No. 10 LaVonda Johnson**
A 5-6 junior guard from Bowling Green
- No. 45 ShaRae Mansfield**
A 6-2 junior forward from Louisville.
- No. 5 Natalie Powers**
A 5-11 sophomore guard from Owensboro.
- No. 25 Jennifer Slaughter**
A 5-9 freshman guard from Brownsville
- No. 21 Jaime Walz**
A 5-11 senior guard from Ft. Thomas
- No. 11 Jana Wright**
A 5-6 sophomore guard from Franklin, Tenn.
- No. 33 Katie Wulf**
A 6-3 sophomore center from Bloomington, Ill.

The SunFit Club

Special Offer

METABOLIFE 356

\$39.95

with this coupon
expires 11-30-99

30 Day Unlimited Tanning - \$35

782-7171




YOU'VE TRIED THE BEST
NOW TRY THE BEST

ARE YOU HUNGRY?



- * Great Double T[®] Steaks
- * GrillSide[™] Dinner Buffet
- * Hearty Homestyle[™] Lunch Buffet

PONDEROSA

Steakhouse

TAKE ANOTHER TASTE.

1608 31W BYPASS

All-You-Can-Eat Dinner Buffet

\$3.99

Monday-Wednesday 4:00 PM - Close
Offer good at 1608 31-W Bypass

All-You-Can-Eat Hearty Homestyle Lunch Buffet

\$2.99

Monday-Friday 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Offer good at 1608 31-W Bypass

© 1999 Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Companies, L.P. Printed in USA 00189

VETTE CITY LIQUORS

"WE SELL FOR LESS"

• SUPER SPECIALS •



Miller Lite	\$31.99
Busch & Busch Light	\$24.99
Bud & Bud Light	\$31.99
Michelob & Michelob Light	\$31.99

<p>12 oz NR bottles 12 - pack \$ 6.99</p>	<p>Marlboro & Marlboro Light King Size \$1.99 pack</p>		
<p>Bud & Bud Light 12 oz. bottles 12 - pack \$6.99</p> <p>Budweiser</p>	<p>Lite BEER</p> <p>12 oz. NR Bottles 12 - pack \$6.99</p>		
<p>Jim Beam 750 ml \$8.99</p>	<p>Captain Morgan's Spice Rum 750 ml. \$11.99</p>	<p>Bacardi Rum 750 ml. \$8.99</p>	<p>E&J Brandy</p> <p>750 ml. \$7.99</p>
<p>FARLY TIMES</p> <p>750 ml. \$6.99</p>	<p>SMIRNOFF</p> <p>750 ml. \$8.99</p>	<p>JACK DANIEL'S</p> <p>750 ml. \$14.99</p>	<p>Makers Mark</p> <p>750 ml. \$15.99</p>

"We Sell For Less"



VETTE CITY LIQUORS

2037 RUSSELLVILLE ROAD-BOWLING GREEN, KY 40302-782-5551

Men's Basketball
Preview Section

Coming Next Thursday

Meet the Lady Toppers

Compiled by Jerry Brewer

Seniors

No. 42 JAMIE BRITT
Last season: Britt averaged 7.7 points and 3.5 rebounds per game last season. She won Western's Sixth Woman Award for her play off the bench.
Meet Jamie: She had to make the transition from being a point player in high school to playing on the perimeter in college. She has done a nice job with that. Britt and Johnson are cousins, and both are part of a family that has a tremendous athletic heritage, which includes former Hilltopper great Johnny Britt, who was inducted into Western's Athletic Hall of Fame earlier this year. She was a two-time All-State first team pick in high school and averaged 24.0 points a game as a senior at Warren East High School.
Prospects for upcoming season: Britt will start at the small forward spot, or she will be the third guard in a three-guard set, however you see it. Though undersized, Britt, who is 5-4, probably will be quicker than most of her defenders. One of only two seniors on the team, Britt is primed for a breakout season. She can shoot (22.3 career 3-point percentage), and she's stronger than most players her size, so she will be effective going to the basket or on the quick post. When Britt is on, she is a nice player. Not a star, but a player who can bite if you forget about her. Britt could average about 10 points and four rebounds this season.

No. 21 JAMIE WALZ
Last season: Walz played in only 16 games last season because she tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee and missed the final third of the season. In those 16 games, Walz averaged 1.3 points, 3.3 assists and 2.2 rebounds per game.
She led the Lady Toppers with 16.3 points and was fifth in the Sun Belt Conference with a 1.13 assist/turnover ratio.
Meet Jamie: Walz won the Kentucky Miss Basketball award in 1996, becoming the ninth Miss Basketball to play at Western. She was also named national high school player of the year by most every publication. She was magical and stunning in high school. She scored 4,948 points, an unofficial national record. Her career high school totals were 25.5 points, 9.1 rebounds, 7.0 assists and 5.2 steals per game during her time at Fort Thomas Highlands High School.
Prospects for upcoming season: Coach Steve Small has been impressed with Walz during the preseason. She is accepting her leadership role and has shown confidence in her game. Walz has yet to fully reach her potential. With this being her final season, it seems Walz is more urgent. She is serious about having a strong senior season. She's always talking about "leaving it all out on the floor" and "playing as hard as I can in practice."
Before she tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee last season, Walz appeared to be on the brink of a breakthrough. She is determined to continue her progression. Walz will start in the backcourt with Powers. She could average 10-14 points and 4-6 assists this season.

Sophomores

No. 5 NATALIE POWERS
Last season: Powers redshirted last season after playing only six games because of a stress fracture in her right leg. In those six games, she averaged 2.7 points in 12.7 minutes per game.
Meet Natalie: She is a junior academically, but a sophomore because of the redshirt. Before Powers left Apollo High School in Owensboro, she set the school's all-time scoring mark with 2,497 points. It's a school that has had such standouts as former Lady Topper Laurie Townsend and Phoenix Sun guard Rex Chapman. She was a four-year starter at Apollo, a three-time All-State pick and a four-time member of the All-State Academic Team. She is the daughter of Ron and Jan Powers.
Prospects for upcoming season: Powers could be the Lady Toppers' biggest surprise this season. She has all the makings to be a standout guard. The sophomore guard is quick, left from the perimeter and a great handle. After missing the bulk of two seasons because of stress fractures in her right leg, Powers will step into a starting spot at guard. It would be crazy to ask her to instantly become a star, but Powers is certainly capable of averaging between 10-12 points this season with about 3-4 assists.

No. 14 KRISTINA COVINGTON
Last season: Covington was named Sun Belt Conference Freshman of the Year after averaging 3.7 points and 2.2 rebounds.
Meet Kristina: One of the best personalities on the Lady Topper team. Very personable. She led Elizabethtown High School to its first state title in 1998 after averaging 15.3 points, 5.5 steals, 4.5 rebounds and 4.5 assists per game.
She is the daughter of Jerry and Darlene Covington.
Prospects for upcoming season: Covington is the prototypical player for Small's program. The sophomore guard is 5-10 and can play either shooting guard or small forward. She's quick and aggressive. Covington is a pesky defender and a willing defender. She understands the value of defense. She appears to be in the sixth man role, but Covington could easily start. Her versatility and tenacity are much needed. Covington tended to try to do too much last season, but she has matured. If she can control her aggression, look out.

No. 23 KATIE WULF
Last season: Wulf was brought along slowly in her freshman year. She played in only 11 games and averaged 2.5 minutes a game. Wulf averaged 1.5 points a game and 0.9 rebounds and hit 4 of 4 from the field and 9 of 10 free throws.
Meet Katie: Wulf has a personality reminiscent of former Lady Topper Wendi Kittelner, whose eligibility ran out last season. She loves to play physical basketball. At Normal Community High School, Wulf averaged 11 points and 9 rebounds as a junior and was an all-conference honorable mention pick that year. She is the daughter of Mary Jo and Robert Wulf.
Prospects for upcoming season: Wulf is going to have to make a big leap this season if Western is to do anything. The sophomore center played sparingly last season, seeing only action off the bench in the post. And post players have a tendency to get into foul trouble. Wulf will see plenty of action this season.
What Wulf brings is a physical presence. The rest of the Lady Toppers are finesse players who could use a Snickers bar. Expect Wulf to be much improved this season, but improvement will be gradual.

No. 4 ALISON COOK
Last season: Cook averaged 3.3 points and two assists at Georgetown last season. She appeared in 29 games and led the Lady Tigers in free-throw percentage (90.5) and 3-point percentage (35.7).
Meet Alison: She is currently nursing a knee injury. Cook was a three-year starter at Central Hardin High School in Cecilia. She also lettered three years in track and one in cross country at Central Hardin. She is the daughter of Robert and Jayne Cook.
Prospects for upcoming season: Because of NCAA transfer rules, Cook must sit out this season. When she returns to the court next season, she will bring perimeter shooting and quickness to the team.

No. 22 KENOSHIA CHASTANG
Last season: Chastang sat out last season because of NCAA transfer rules. The 6-4 center transferred from Pittsburgh after the 1997-98 season.
Meet Kenoshia: Western is extremely happy to see Chastang on the court. She brings some desperately needed size. As a freshman at Pitt, she averaged 5.5 points and 3.9 rebounds in 17 minutes per game. She played two seasons at West High School in Columbus, Ohio, and was named an honorable mention All-American by USA Today. She is the daughter of Carl Chastang Sr. and Cheryl Chastang.
Prospects for upcoming season: An absolutely pivotal player for the Lady Toppers. Chastang should be the starter at center, and she will need to contribute. The Lady Toppers don't have enough depth in the post for Chastang to coast at all this season. The sophomore seems ready for the challenge. The year layoff may cause Chastang to be rusty at first, but expect her to average 7-9 points and six rebounds this season. If she doesn't, the Lady Toppers are in trouble.

No. 11 JANA WRIGHT
Last season: Wright tried to walk on the Lady Topper team last season, but she wasn't needed. Now, the team is happy to have her.
Meet Jana: Denver Nuggets stand-out Ron Mercer is her cousin. She averaged 8 points and 3 rebounds per game during her three-year career at Centennial High School in Franklin, Tenn.
She is the daughter of Johnny and Linda Wright.
Prospects for upcoming season: Wright is the smallest player on the roster if you consider both height and weight. She does have basketball in her blood, and she has some game. But getting off the bench will be a quite a task considering the players in front of her.



The Lady Toppers play a scrimmage during preseason practice at Diddle Arena. The team will play their first game of the season against Basketball Travelers in an exhibition game at 7 p.m. tomorrow in Diddle Arena.

Juniors

No. 10 LAVONDA JOHNSON
Last season: Johnson averaged 2.3 points and played in 18 games. She had to sit out 10 games from Jan. 16 to Feb. 25 because of a stress fracture in her leg.
Meet LaVanda: Jamie Britt and Johnson are cousins. In high school, current Lady Topper assistant Blaine Embry coached her at Warren East.
As a senior at East, she averaged 23.9 points, 4.2 steals and three assists per game.
Prospects for upcoming season: The wait is over for Johnson. After averaging only 2.9 minutes per game in her first two seasons, the junior guard will get substantial playing time coming off the bench at the point guard position. Johnson may be the quickest player on the roster.
A stress fracture in Johnson's leg caused her to miss most of the conference portion of the schedule last season. Before the injury, her playing time was growing rapidly. Now Johnson has a chance to really contribute.

No. 40 SHARAE MANFIELD
Last season: Manfield blossomed after a breakout game against Wisconsin. In that game, she scored 22 points and grabbed 16 rebounds. Manfield was later named to the All-Sun Belt Conference team and finished the season with averages of 14.7 points and 11.1 rebounds.
Meet Sharae: When she is not playing basketball, Manfield probably is writing poetry, drawing, writing music or singing. In 1997, Manfield completed a stellar career at Mansfield High School in Louisville by averaging 18 points and leading her team to a 26-3 record. She is the daughter of Jerry and Pamela Williams.
Prospects for upcoming season: Will the junior forward be a star or a superstar? That is the only question surrounding Manfield. Ever since she stepped on the Hill, Coach Small has touted her as the next All-American in Western's program. She is one of those players who can carry a team.
But she is unselfish to a fault at times. Passing up a wide open 8-footer to make a tough pass underneath the goal? C'mon now, Sharae, be more selfish. Manfield moves to her natural position of power forward this season, after spending most of last season at the center spot. It means that she won't be underused at her position and that she'll face the basket more. Manfield spent much of the offseason working on her ball handling skills and increasing the range on her jumpshot. She figures that if she's a threat from 15-feet and can dribble then defenders will have a tough time guarding her because she is so quick.
Manfield could average 18 points and nine rebounds this season. Those are star numbers. If she wants to be a superstar, she could average more than 20 points.

Freshmen

No. 25 JENNIFER SLAUGHTER
Last season: Slaughter led Edmonson County High School in Brownsville while averaging 14.5 points, 4.1 assists and 3.9 rebounds per game.
Meet Jennifer: Slaughter finished her high school career with 1,567 points, the second highest total in school history. At a junior, she led the state in 3-point accuracy at 44.6 percent. She is the daughter of Lennie and Kim Slaughter.
Prospects for upcoming season: Slaughter is a pure shooter. And since she will be a relatively unknown player to opponents, the freshman guard figures to get plenty of open shots. The Lady Toppers have depth at guard and how much playing time Slaughter gets may come down to how well she adjusts to playing defense on the college level.



Junior guard LaVonda Johnson drives down the court during Monday's practice.

No. 15 ELISHA FORD
Last season: Ford finished a solid career at Lebanon High School in Lebanon, Tenn.
Meet Elisha: Teammates call her Barbie because they say she is "too pretty for a basketball player." Ford is famous for her nails and makeup after practice. She was a four-year starter in basketball and a four-year letterwinner in volleyball. She didn't garner national attention, but Ford was the most valuable player for the Blue Devils. She is the daughter of Ronnie Ford and Terry Bryant.
Prospects for upcoming season: The freshman guard is atypical of most walk-ons. During practices, Ford has really battled, and you hardly notice that she is not on scholarship. She can play, but she will be looked many talented guards who are on scholarship. But Ford is the type of player who could come into a game this season and surprise spectators with her hard-nosed play.

Lady Toppers' 1999-2000 Schedule

11/5 - Fri	Basketball Travelers (exh.)	7:00 pm	1/2 - Sun	Vanderbilt (Fox Sports Net South)	4:00 pm	2/10 - Thur	at Louisiana-Lafayette*	7:00 pm
11/14 - Sun	Sports Tours (Austin-exh.)	4:00 pm	1/6 - Sun	at Arkansas State*	7:00 pm	2/12 - Sat	at Louisiana Tech*	7:00 pm
11/19 - Fri	Indiana #	7:00 pm	1/8 - Sat	at Florida International*	5:00 pm	2/15 - Wed	New Orleans*	8:00 pm
11/21 - Sun	at Oregon	2:00 pm	1/9 - Wed	at South Alabama*	7:00 pm	2/19 - Sat	at Arkansas Little-Rock*	7:00 pm
11/28 - Sun	at Tennessee Tech	6:00 pm	1/11 - Tue	Miami (Fla)	7:00 pm	2/24 - Thur	at Denver	7:00 pm
12/1 - Sat	at Kentucky	6:00 pm	1/13 - Thu	Louisiana-Lafayette*	7:00 pm	3/4 - Sat	at Sun Belt Tournament	TBA
	at Univeristy Lady Tiger Classic*	7:00 pm	1/16 - Sun	Arkansas State*	2:00 pm			
12/3 - Fri	vs. Evansville*	6:00 pm	1/19 - Wed	at Louisville	8:00 pm			
12/4 - Sat	vs. Centenary or Missouri*	7:00 pm	1/23 - Sun	Louisiana Tech*	2:00 pm			
12/20 - Sat	Murray State	7:00 pm	1/27 - Thur	at South Alabama*	7:00 pm			
	at State Farm Classic*	6:00 pm	1/29 - Sat	at New Orleans*	2:00 pm			
12/28 - Thu	at Florida (Clemson Network)	6:00 pm	2/3 - Thur	Arkansas-Little Rock*	7:00 pm			
12/29 - Wed	vs. Maine or Boston College*	3:30 pm	2/5 - Sat	Florida International*	2:00 pm			

* Sun Belt Conference Game
doubleheader with WKU Volleyball team
% 7th annual Bowling Green Bank Classic
* Columbia, Mo.
* Gainesville, Fla.



Sophomore guard Kristina Covington drives for the basket during practice Monday. Covington was named Sun Belt Freshmen-of-the-year last season, the first women's player to earn that award.

Daniel Wallace/Herald

Trying to uncover these Lady Tops could be tough

A Diddle dabble with a ghost of a Lady Topper fan. What's with the puzzled look? I'm just catching a glimpse of the Lady Topper basketball team. I've been watching this practice for quite some time, and there's one thing that just won't stop blazing my brain.

Well, there are 12 players out there, crashing into each other, their sneakers streaking back and forth this golden floor.

They all look like they have some talent. There's Jaime Walz, she's a senior guard who's looking to finally break out. There's junior forward ShaRae Mansfield. I don't think anyone outside Big Red Way knows about her. She's a well-kept secret, or maybe just one that everyone's too ridiculous to notice.

I mean, I could go down the entire roster and have good things to say about each Lady Topper. It is a talented team. That doesn't sound too perplexing to me?

No, no, that's not it. The thing that shakes my mind like a California earthquake is that even knowing the squad is talented, I don't know what to expect of it. Last season, I expected success.

And they hollered back with a 21-7 record. Still can't figure out how they weren't in that tour of tourney trekkers.

But, I just can't put a finger on what to expect from this team.

Maybe Jaime Walz can help? "I think we all know that we have the talent to play at this level. And we know there's people that doubt that we do have that talent. But we have 12 players that can go out there. As long as we play with a lot of heart and push ourselves to the limit,



OUT OF BOUNDS

Travis Mayo

we're going to be able to compete against the tough teams."

Now what do you think? "That helps. But doesn't every team say it can win before the actual work shift kicks in? If this is a challenge, figuring out just what this team is all about, then wouldn't that make it difficult?"

"I think the challenge definitely makes it better."

Thanks, Jaime. But what does your coach think? You know, the guy who roams around Diddle Arena. The one who you wouldn't think was the coach if you didn't catch him hollering out instructions.

"That's what coaching's all about. That's what you enjoy the most."

Hey, ShaRae. Glad I caught you. What do you think? "I don't think it's tough if you just work hard, you can create your own identities."

See, that's good enough for me. Nah, not for me. I mean, what they've said is good, but I still don't know whether to expect this team to win a lot and be competitive with the La Techs of the hoops haven, or just begin building onto a hopeful future. There are a lot of doubters this time around.

"A lot of people. I guess they doubt. That makes us want to work that much harder and

prove everyone wrong. Definitely. So we've been coming out practicing harder than we've ever practiced the four years I've been here."

In case you were wondering, that was ShaRae. She always has a bright outlook.

Anything else that you need to come up with an answer?

Yeah. Just one more thing. Who or what in the world can you compare this team with? Usually, you can say, "They're like the team two years ago," or remember a team that mirrors the one you're watching now.

Must have been damn tough during that stretch of UCLA dynasties. There was never a break to compare different teams.

But this is a ringer, too. "Everybody fell in love with a pro football team they called the 'No Names,' because none of them were great or famous," Small said. "You've got a blend of walk-ons, a blend of returning players, you've got a blend of unknowns. Some skeptics are already saying, 'You don't have 13, 14, 15 players.' I'm sort of looking forward to proving the few skeptics wrong."

"But of course, you're gonna have your skeptics, no matter what you do. But we really want this group to be competitive."

That's it. I'm leaving. I'll leave it up to the season to find out.

That guy just doesn't get it. It's obvious what to expect from this Lady Topper team. It's like expecting to wear a coat in January. Good basketball. Like always.

Travis Mayo's column normally runs Thursday and occasionally Thursday. He can be reached at 745-6291 or by e-mail at mizbro@hotmail.com.

Good Luck Lady Toppers From the

College Heights **Herald**

Go Toppers & Lady Toppers



Special for All Basketball Fans

10% Discount on any WKU Basketball Tee Shirt, Sweatshirt, or Hat.

Valid through 11/24/99



University Bookstore

Store Hours

Mon - Fri 7:45 am ~ 7:00 pm

Sat. 10:00 am ~ 2:00 pm

www.wku.edu

Phone: (270) 745-2467

1-800-444-5155

Fax: (270) 745-5336

Post players crucial to Lady Toppers' success

Western has just three six-footers on roster

By CHRIS YEO
Herald reporter

If you happened to be walking through Diddle Arena this week, you probably noticed the red and white-clad women's basketball team sprinting and shooting on the floor.

You could have even heard Coach Steve Small shouting, "You gotta own the red!, on offense and defense, guards too, you gotta own the red!", emphatically stressing the importance of rebounding to the team during an afternoon practice.

The bulk of the work in the paint this season will be done by Junior ShaRae Mansfield, sophomores Katie Wulf and Kenosha Chastang and senior Jamie Britt. The coach and his players are confident in their ability to rebound effectively this season without running into much foul trouble.

"We're three strong post players," Wulf said. "If one of us gets into trouble, we always have two backups. We each have dif-

ferent abilities we bring to the team, and we have Jamie Britt."

The battle of the boards will be fought primarily by the big three.

"Rebounding will be very good with me and Katie and Kenosha," Mansfield said.

Britt and Jaime Walz are the only seniors on the team this year, but this hasn't been a problem for Western's most experienced players. Both Lady Toppers have proven during the pre-season that they are willing, and able to step into their new roles.

"I'm really impressed with the leadership shown by the two seniors," Small said.

The Lady Toppers aren't worried they have just four upper classman on the team.

"A lot of girls have played a lot of minutes," Wulf said. "We have a lot of experience on the floor."

Foul trouble is not an area Small is too concerned about. It is not something that will cause the Toppers to change their aggressive approach on defense. In fact, their 2-3 zone may help the Lady Toppers avoid fouls.

"Because of the style of defense we play, we tend to stay away from a lot of fouls," Chastang said.

One of the Toppers' post players who hopes to be an inside defensive stopper is Wulf.

"I'll probably be one to come in when we're playing zone to get a defensive stop," Wulf said. "I'm not the quickest player on the floor but I take up a lot of space. I like to get in and bang."

If the Lady Toppers can rebound well they may see the results pay off in points. Increasing her role as scorer is one of Mansfield's goals this season.

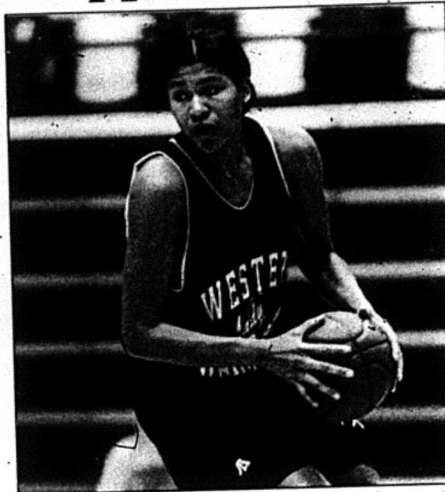
"In the past, I've been passive because we've always had Shea Lunsford and then Leslie Johnson and Danielle McCulley," Mansfield said. "Now I'm gonna have to step up."

Besides his seniors, Small is happy with the consistency of the team's shooting, a component of the game that can be contributed to greatly by imposing post players.

"We bring a lot of strength and size to the team. I think it will open up the outside a lot," Chastang said.

Aside from the X's and O's on the court, the Hilltoppers will have to learn to play together as a team, not to get too high or too low throughout the season. There are qualities that can be the difference between a good team and a great team.

"I think it all starts from the inside out, we have good unity," Chastang said.



Daniel Wallace/Herald

Junior forward ShaRae Mansfield was one of three players Western sent to the All-Sun Belt Conference Team.

Walk-ons contribute depth to roster

By MALCOLM C. KNOX
Herald reporter

The National College Athletic Association allows 15 players on basketball rosters. Lady Topper head coach Steve Small says 12-13 players is a "real nice number."

So how does he expect to survive the gauntlet of Ragin' Cajuns, Jaguars, and Golden Panthers with only nine scholarship players?

Western will have two walk on players along for the campaign this season — freshman guard/forward Elisha Ford and sophomore guard Jana Wright.

Scholarships or not, Ford and Wright are part of the team.

"We feel like everybody in the organization plays a vital role," Small said. "Everything's the same."

Graduation, a transfer and academic problems robbed the Lady Toppers of five players from last year's team. That squad made it to the semi-finals of the Sun Belt Conference tournament.

Without enough scholarship players to even run a full scrimmage at practice, the team welcomed Ford and Wright with open arms, Small said. Then he put them to work.

"At practice, we get right

"We feel like everybody in the organization plays a vital role."

— Steve Small
women's basketball coach

in," Ford said. "We have our chance to show what we can do."

They get beat, banged, pushed and shoved just like everyone else, Small said.

They also get the jokes that come with being part of the family.

Wright, nicknamed Baby J, said she gets teased about her height, 5-6, and how quiet she usually is. But the silence doesn't last for long.

"In basketball, when I get excited, when I get into it, I'm loud," she said.

Sophomore guard Kristina Covington tagged Ford with the alias "Barbie" for her fingernails, blonde hair and red sports car.

"She's real girlish," Covington said laughing. Ford said she's always tried to avoid the tomboy stereotype that female athletes sometimes get.

"I don't like people to look at me that way," she said. "I've

always been more girly-like. But don't expect Barbie and Baby J to back down from competition."

Even without a scholarship, Wright says the chance to play is a fair exchange for all the hard work.

"Sometimes I'm down, but I never say it's not worth it," she said. "I prayed a lot and I think this is a gift, so I can't turn it down."

Encouragement from her family also keeps her going.

"It's one of the best feelings in the world to know that I have a sister (Shayla, a freshman at Western) and a mom and dad that are always there for me."

Both players said they don't know if Big Red scholarships are somewhere down the line, but Ford said the hope of earning one makes her work that much harder.

"If I don't work hard, if I don't do well," she said, "the coach can be like, 'We don't need you.'"

"It makes me work harder." For the team, for themselves, for their families, for future Lady Toppers, Ford and Wright are Lady Toppers this season.

"I think Jana and Alicia give hope for other people that have dreams of making a team," Small said. "They're a big part of a family this year."

WHOLESALE JEWELRY



&
Pawn Shop

781-1194

We Buy Wholesale Jewelry Closeouts!

Get it Early While You Can For Christmas!

OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK

2910 B Scottsville Rd.

Bowling Green

(270) 781-1194

In the Big Red Barn on Scottsville Rd.

10% Discount on top of WHOLESALE to WKU students!

Questions loom as Lady Tops begin season

- ◆ Is Western still the best women's college basketball program in the state?
- ◆ Will an injury-plagued backcourt stay healthy?
- ◆ Will this be a breakout year for senior guard Jaime Walz and sophomore guard Natalie Powers? What happens if it is not?
- ◆ With only nine scholarship players, what if someone gets hurt?
- ◆ How do you push players in practice when you know, if they get hurt, it could ruin the team?
- ◆ How do players play relentlessly knowing an injury is a no-no?
- ◆ How will Coach Steve Small handle the criticism that is bound to come because he gambled and signed only one player for this year in order to stock up on recruits from a stacked group of Kentucky high school seniors?
- ◆ Will junior forward ShaRae Mansfield be selfish enough to take over games?
- ◆ Who, other than Mansfield, will be go-to players on offense?
- ◆ With only three players above 6-foot tall, will rebounding be a problem?
- ◆ Can sophomore centers Kenosha Chastang and Katie Wulf be enough of a post presence?
- ◆ Can sophomore centers Kenosha Chastang and Katie Wulf be enough of a post presence?
- ◆ How will the team react if it gets off to a slow start?
- ◆ Will a lack of depth, which means many players will average 30-plus minutes, make Western run out of steam late in the season?
- ◆ Will this team play with a sense of urgency, a must-win-despite-the-circumstances mentality?
- ◆ Will the fans back this team?

— Jerry Brewer

TRAIN: Lady Toppers think they can make it up the hill

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

that's slipping. They plan on using their lack of height and low numbers as an advantage.

The Lady Toppers aren't small. They're quick, they say.

They aren't undermanned. The low numbers just means everyone will get playing time. And since every player knows she'll be on the court, that is motivation to practice harder.

"It's like you have a lot held in you and you just want to let it out," said junior guard LaVonda Johnson, who has not played much her first two seasons because of injuries and team depth. "I'm just ready to play and get an opportunity to do the best I can."

"If you look at a lot of teams, the maximum they play is about eight to nine players. Sometimes less than that. The downfall in that is no one can get hurt. And you have to look at foul trouble and stuff like that, but I think if we just play hard and work together as a team, everything will turn out fine."

The coaching staff has made adjustments to fit this team. The Lady Toppers will not apply fullcourt defensive pressure often, which goes against traditional ways. Instead, the team will play an aggressive 2-3 half-court zone defense for most of the game.

The offense will be more of a flex offense because the team doesn't have a lot of great one-on-one players.

Small has a plan. Trust him, he says.

"People are asking me, 'Are you taking it easy on them?'" Small asked. "No. Of course

not. You can't coach things you can't control. You just deal with it. There are all kinds of great stories on this team. I hate to spend time on "what if."

They think they can, they think they can, they think they can.

Handling a different kind of pressure

Searching for an antonym for expectation...
Doubt. Skepticism.

Uncertainty.

Many of the Lady Topper faithful have converted to this thinking. And you thought expectation was tough to handle.

As former Lady Topper coach Paul Sanderford once said, "The pressure is when people don't know who you are and don't expect you to do well."

So the Lady Toppers will drive the lane this season and try to get past the opponent and doubt.

People are doubting Small as a coach, doubting the talent still on this team, even doubting some of the players who have been injured, which is something they couldn't control.

"We have to be strong against people who talk about our family," Britt said. "We're not naive. We know what people are saying. We have to come together and have faith in each other."

The Lady Toppers are a closer team this season because they know they're all they have. If they don't believe, how is someone else going to?

Small does not buy into the



Mark Weber/Herald
Lady Topper junior forward ShaRae Mansfield watches her teammates as they run through drills during practice at Diddle Arena.

belief that when you lose players, the team is worse the next year. Sure Western will miss the three starters it lost — forwards Shea Lunsford and Kristi Hartley, point guard Katashia Witcher — but Small figures that gives someone else the chance to be a pivotal player.

love with," Small said.

Ready to roll

Want to see what the 1999-2000 Lady Toppers are about? Come watch us play, the players say.

"I think we're going to win a lot of games," junior forward ShaRae Mansfield said.

"I think we're going to surprise a lot of people," senior

guard Jaime Walz said.

"I think we're a whole lot better than everybody thinks we are," Britt said.

"I think we'll be fine," Johnson said.

"I think people will be impressed," sophomore guard Natalie Powers said.

They think they can? It seems the Lady Toppers know they can.

JUST SAY

**"BIGGIE
SIZE IT!"**



Upsize your
COMBO MEAL
to 32 oz. Biggie
drink & Great Biggie fry!

for only
39¢
extra!

There's
WESTERN BASKETBALL
nothing
HILLTOPPER'S
like
LADYTOPPER'S
Wendy's
after the
WKU BASKETBALL
game.



Wendy's is a proud corporate
sponsor of Western Basketball.