

Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

---

WKU Archives Records

WKU Archives

---

11-9-2000

## UA12/2/1 Basketball Preview 2000 - Women

WKU Student Affairs

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc\\_ua\\_records](https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_ua_records)



Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [Journalism Studies Commons](#), [Mass Communication Commons](#), [Public Relations and Advertising 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](mailto:topscholar@wku.edu).

# To the Promised Land



Cassandra Shie/Herald

Western senior forward ShaRae Mansfield was selected as the Sun Belt Conference Preseason Player of the Year. Mansfield led the league in scoring and rebounding last season with 18.5 points and 10.6 rebounds per game.

## Senior hopes to lead team to NCAA tournament

BY LYNDSEY SUTTON  
Herald reporter

She rose from her chair and approached the podium in Diddle Arena with ease. In an orange shirt and a pair of slacks, the woman whose craziest ambition is to be a supermodel addressed the group of assembled media.

But, like solving a crossword puzzle, she had trouble locating the most appropriate words in her mind's dictionary. She stumbled with the words like a toddler stumbles on the floor.

For a few seconds during Western's Media Day, the brain and tongue of the typically articulate ShaRae Mansfield tangled together, resulting in a nervous laugh and the senior forward uttering "I can't do this."

The All-America candidate expressed an inability to communicate thoughts after being praised by her coach, Steve Small.

The 6-2 Lady Topper is the chosen one, the star of the women's basketball program, the one who will try to lead Western to the Promised Land of the NCAA Tournament.

"We definitely have the talent to do it, without a doubt," Mansfield said. "(There's) no doubt in my mind we can make it back if we just pull together. As

long as we're all on the same page and have the same goal in mind, we're gonna be fine."

But a return to the NCAA Tournament depends largely on Mansfield's performance during the regular season. She is a proven scorer and rebounder; she

averaged 18.5 points and 10.6 rebounds a game last season. Her presence in the basketball world is acknowledged in publications like Street & Smith's, where she was named one of 10 preseason All-Americans.

A professional career with the Women's National Basketball Association or overseas after graduation looms on the horizon. It is approaching quickly and whatever Mansfield does at Western this season will directly affect how a professional career will pan out for her.

Her job this year is to mold and shape this year's players so that they can continue to succeed after she is gone. They are her disciples, and in the short time that Mansfield has left as a Lady Topper, she must prepare them for the challenges and achievements that make college basketball what it is.

### No points, no game

Mansfield swears it's true. She promises; she knows people have it captured on video.

"Like, this is the truth and I promise ... I didn't score a point until the end of my seventh-grade year," Mansfield said. "And okay, scoring isn't everything but it does help, it does build confidence ... And then, it's like, maybe it was inspiration, but finally I could do something because I was so uncoordinated, couldn't catch the ball, horrible hands.

"But then, my eighth-grade year, I got pretty good."

And then she had a stellar prep career at Louisville Manual High School, averaging 18 points per game as a senior. She tore her anterior cruciate ligament in her knee at the beginning of her sophomore year and didn't have surgery on the knee until after her junior year, when she averaged 20.1 points, 11.5 rebounds and seven assists a game.

Similar injuries have sidelined some of Mansfield's college teammates, like sophomore guard Kristina Covington, who tore her ACL last year and had to sit out the whole season.

But Mansfield's situation in high school was dif-

ferent.

"You could do that in high school because competition is not nearly as tough and it's not as physical either," Mansfield said.

As a senior, Mansfield was named a 1997 Kentucky All-Star and the 1997 Kentucky Gatorade Player of the Year.

She entered Western that fall with the sixth-ranked recruiting class in the nation, a class that included 1997 Kentucky Miss Basketball Rachel Byars and Kentucky All-Stars Natalie Powers and LaVonda Johnson.

In the three previous years, Mansfield has emerged as the most visible member of that group. Byars transferred to Boston College, Powers battled injuries and Johnson was a role player who would have taken on a more pivotal role this season had she not torn her ACL.

And now Mansfield is the leader of the pack. Though Powers and Johnson are team captains too, Mansfield is the senior, an unspoken leader.

"ShaRae has been, by example and by her work ethic ... a leader," Small said. "I think because of her presence and everything that goes on, everybody knows, and they look to ShaRae to score and they look to ShaRae to get that big rebound. I think the way ShaRae leads by caring so much about everybody else is very evident."

### Learning to shine

It's also evident that Mansfield isn't comfortable with the label of being a star.

She prefers the term "go-to player." She has been criticized for being too unselfish when she plays.

"That was a big problem in high school," Mansfield said. "The coaches, people, the fans, would just be like, 'We could be so much better if you would be more selfish.' And I would just be like, 'I like to see my teammates score just as much as I do' ... I would always be the player to try to get my teammates

SEE SENIOR, PAGE 8B

### INSIDE

#### PLAYER PROFILES

Pages 4B-5B

#### WELL-GUARDED

Page 6B

#### NON-CONFERENCE PLAY

Page 2B

#### PLAYGROUND NOTES

Page 3B

# Undersized Lady Toppers don't feel small

BY KYLE HIGHTOWER  
Herald reporter

Don't talk to Western's women's basketball players about being undersized.

For the past two seasons the Lady Toppers have grown accustomed to playing amongst the giants.

Last year, 6-2 senior forward and All-America candidate ShaRae Mansfield found herself opposite much bigger bodies as she was forced to match up against opposing centers. Mansfield, a natural forward in both size and game, was forced into that role after projected starting center Kenosha Chastang left the program for undisclosed personal reasons in January.

5-9 graduate Jamie Britt was even the team's power forward during stretches of last season.

Western coach Steve Small said that even with an undersized lineup, he tried to stick to his guns on both the offensive and defensive sides of the court.

"We played a lot of zone last year with Britt and Mansfield in there at the four and five," Small said. "We just try to take advantage of our match-ups. We put our players on the wing against bigger players so they can use their quickness."

Small will be without 6-3 junior center Katie Wulf until early December, thanks to a broken right foot she injured in a pre-season practice.

To alleviate some of the strain in the post, Small went out and did some recruiting. First, he went out and signed 6-2 forward Aja Brown, a transfer from Middle Georgia Junior College. Small said that Brown, who may start at

center, will be needed to take some of the pressure off Mansfield, who he said should expect to see a number of double teams.

Mansfield says the addition of Brown and a healthy Wulf at center will be a big comfort to her.

"I kind of got used to being in the post and it's not my position," Mansfield said. "I do feel more comfortable playing out on the perimeter or around the free throw line. I think it will help my game a lot because, of course, I'm thinking about playing at the next level and when I do, I'm going to have to play on the outside."

She said she thinks that the extra help will also impact the entire team. She said that while it will be a change playing on the outside, it is something for which she's been preparing.

"During the offseason, I worked a lot on my perimeter game, trying to develop it, so I kind of expected to be playing more on the outside with two more post players coming in," Mansfield said.

If Mansfield is to continue giving opposing defenses headaches this season, she will need a little help. Shouldering a lot of that burden will be Brown, who Small expects to provide the Lady Toppers with a lift once she gets adjusted to playing at the Division I level.

That adjustment has been the biggest challenge for Brown.

"It's hard," Brown said. "Coming from junior college to Division I is definitely a big transition. Junior college basketball is still pretty similar to high school, but I'm adjusting pretty well."

Still, Brown said she aims to be

Newcomer of the Year in the Sun Belt Conference and help get the Lady Toppers back to the NCAA Tournament.

"Everybody in this conference, everybody in this nation knows who ShaRae Mansfield is," Brown said. "I'm coming out of junior college and nobody has really seen my face before — so while they're double-teaming and triple-teaming ShaRae, I'll be able to get a lot of quick and easy points with them having all their focus on her."

"Last year they (Western) did it with ShaRae as the prime post player, but in the offense this year we've got two or three that can get out there and get the job done so I think we're going to be really good at the post position this year."

Also in the mix is freshman forward Leah Lineberry. At 6-2, Lineberry offers decent size and is another post player for Small.

"We have had a big surprise in Leah Lineberry," Small said. "She has a lot of maturity just to be a freshman. I just worry about the physical part of her game, but she hasn't been afraid to get in there and bang."

Lineberry said, "I'm not that physically strong exactly. I'm not going to be able to go in there and do like a 6-4 player, but I can run the floor pretty well. One of my main goals this year, being in there with ShaRae, is to get in there to help free her up, get her the ball, rebound the ball well and run the floor."

Small said that while the Lady Toppers have a long way to go, he is hoping that the duo of Mansfield and Brown will be really good by January and February.

"ShaRae is going to get her points and her rebounds, I'm not

worried about that," Small said. "Aja Brown started practice just coming off of six weeks of mono, so she has to get healthy first. Coming back from that illness isn't easy; it may be early December before she's back 100 percent."

"She's got lots of good moves, but she first has to learn the system and get in shape. It may be three or four games into the season before we determine just what kind of impact she is going to have."

## WHY SHOULD THE LIVING ROOM HAVE ALL THE FUN?



With Insight, every TV set in the house gets cable for one low price. Just try to do that with a satellite dish. Insight lets you choose what to watch on every set in your

home. So don't let a dish keep you captive to your living room. Let cable entertain you in every room.



Call today and give your whole house cable.

782-0903

## Lady Tops begin season in Hawaii

BY DANNY SCHOENBAECHLER  
Herald reporter

The Lady Toppers may be starting the season in Hawaii, but the early schedule will be no vacation.

The team will open its season Nov. 17 in Honolulu, playing in the Hawaiian Regent Classic against Pepperdine.

The opener against Pepperdine, who made the NCAA field last season, should be challenging. The Waves finished 21-10 last season for their third consecutive 20-win season.

The Lady Toppers opened last season 5-6 and could be in the same situation this season.

"We might be 5-5," Coach Steve Small said. "I'm not afraid, but I hope we'll be ready."

Western will play 11 of its first 12 games against non-conference

opponents.

Miami (Fla.) and Southwest Missouri State will be the only non-conference opponents after December.

The Lady Toppers will play Jan. 29 at home against Southwest Missouri State. The Lady Bears are led by senior guard Jackie Stiles, who was the nation's leading scorer last season, averaging 27.8 points per game.

With a freshman, Camryn Whitaker, starting at point guard the early season could be very difficult for the team.

"Our freshmen will have to grow up very quickly," Small said.

The team's lone senior is forward ShaRae Mansfield, which means mental toughness could be a factor if the team struggles early.

"We have some very confident players and confidence can take you a long way," Mansfield said.

"It's a very tough schedule and we are very young, but we have the players."

The Lady Toppers will play four non-conference teams that played in the NCAA Tournament last season.

The team will play Tennessee Tech and Vanderbilt back-to-back on the road in early December. Tennessee Tech is the two-time defending Ohio Valley Conference champion.

Those games should prepare Western for the Sun Belt Conference, which was ranked the seventh best out of 16 conferences in the nation last year.

"The conference is tougher," junior guard Natalie Powers said. "This should prepare us for the rest of the year."

Small said, "It should be fun and exciting ... We won't be shocked when we get to the conference."

These local businesses are proud

supporters of WKU Basketball!

**Innerspace Scuba**  
110 Vanderbilt Ct.  
745-7233

**Baskin 31 Robbins**  
BY-PASS  
781-5684

**JIM JOHNSON**  
2200 Scottsville Rd.  
781-6770  
1900 Scottsville Rd.  
782-2000

# Lady Tops' coaches hope players stay off *other* roster

The Lady Toppers' starting roster and their injured roster are almost interchangeable, with seven of Coach Steve Small's players having something nagging enough about their condition to put on paper.

It's so bad that after reading the list of the injured, I said to myself, "Huh? Jennifer Slaughter only has shin splints?"

Only shin splints. Those things hurt bad. Really bad.

But consider that at least four players have torn something in their careers and a couple have broken something. Compared to those injuries, shin splints are pretty tame.

Only one player will be on that *other* list all season, senior guard LaVonda Johnson who tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her knee in a pickup game in late August. Small has a deep backcourt to fill her spot, but if another guard gets bitten by the injury bug the team might struggle.

When Johnson went down, junior guard Natalie Powers became *the* guard this year. Powers showed Sunday that she's going to step out of superstar ShaRae Mansfield's shadow more than a couple of times. Powers scored a team-high 21 points, leading the Lady Tops to a 95-61 victory. But she will have to contribute consistently



## PLAYGROUND NOTES

John Darr

until one of the younger players steps up and scores points during short, quality playing spurts.

No doubt that Powers will shore up the backcourt.

But it's Small's frontcourt that's really hurting.

The team won't have much height until Katie Wulf's broken foot heals; that should be sometime in December. Small will probably have his guards put pressure on the ball at mid-court to make entrance passes into the post difficult.








The small squad needs Wulf to return by Dec. 7 to play Vanderbilt so she'll have more than a month to get her court savvy back in time for the big one with Louisiana Tech.

However, even if Western has everyone healthy, the second half of the schedule doesn't look any better. It's studded with four games against two

tough teams, La Tech and Florida International. La Tech is always a national contender and FIU has some tall ladies that will test Western's post defense.

Even though Coach Small has won games with less, I'm not expecting much this year.


Small has had a lot of answers in the past and this year, despite the injuries, they're still considered a bubble team in Street & Smith's college basketball preview. But there's no question that Mansfield and Powers have to stay off that *other* roster for the focus to be on what this team can do this year — not what they could have done without the injuries.

<p>You must be 21 to enter our packaged liquors store</p>		<p><b>VETTE CITY LIQUORS</b> "We Sell For Less"</p>		<p>I.D. Required for purchase</p>	
<p>Bud &amp; Bud Lt. \$12.59  22 oz NR Bottles 15pk</p>		<p> \$6.99 12oz NR Bottles 12pk</p>		<p> ORIGINAL Coors \$12.99 12 oz cans case</p>	
<p> Michelob &amp; Michelob Light \$3.99 12 oz cans 12 pk</p>		<p> Busch/ Busch Lt \$24.99 Bud/ Bud Lt \$31.99 Miller Lite \$31.99</p>		<p>Natural Light  \$9.99 12 oz cans - case</p>	
<p> Jim Beam \$9.49 750ml</p>	<p>Established 1860  \$6.99 750 ml.</p>	<p><b>Marlboro &amp; Marlboro Lt.</b> \$2.19 pack</p>		<p> Seagram's Gin \$7.99 750 ml.</p>	<p> Bacardi \$8.99 750 ml.</p>
<p> \$14.99 750ml</p>	<p><b>Boone's Farm Wines</b> 3/5.99 750ml</p>	<p>We sell for less!  <b>Vette City Liquors</b> 2037 Russellville Road, Bowling Green, KY</p>		<p>Hooper's Hooch  \$5.99 12oz NR 6pk</p>	<p>Rick's Spiked Lemonade  \$5.99 12oz NR 6 pk</p>

These local businesses are proud

supporters of WKU Basketball!

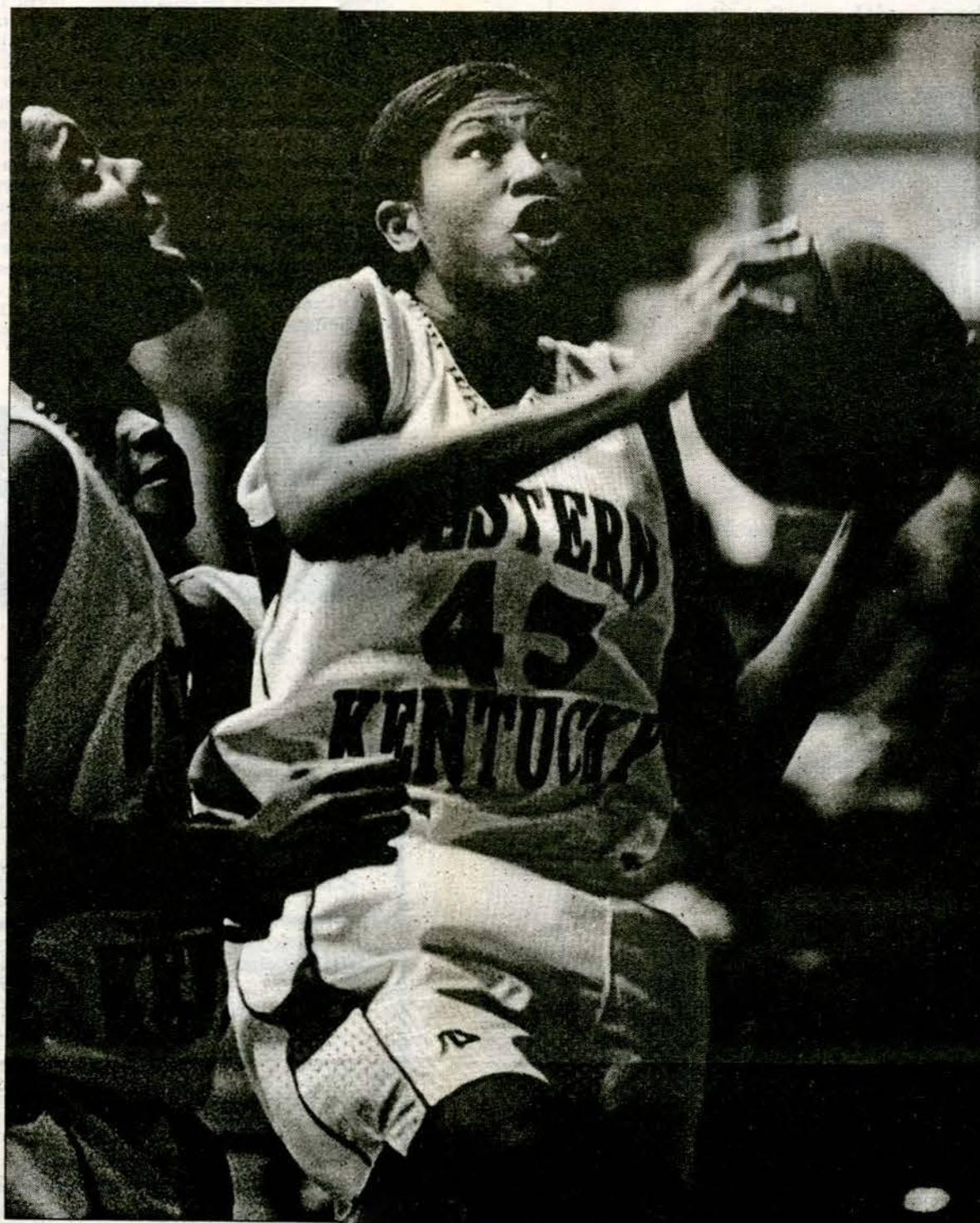
  
1225 Fairway St.  
781-3910

  
1525 31 W Bypass  
842-3344  
9am-8pm Mon.-Sat.

College Heights   
122 Garrett Center  
745-2653

# PLAYER PROFILES

Compiled by Lyndsay Sutton



Dave Albers/Herald

During an exhibition game against the Nashville All-Stars, Western forward ShaRae Mansfield looks to shoot alongside teammate guard Kristina Covington. Western defeated the All-Stars 95-61.

## Seniors



### LaVonda Johnson, No. 3

Last year's Most Improved Player, the senior point guard will sit out this season after tearing her anterior cruciate ligament in a pickup game in late August. She had considered trying to return in January but will apply for a medical redshirt to ensure that the knee heals properly and adequately.

Coach Steve Small on Johnson: "As we know with (Jaime) Walz coming back and different players over the years, when you sit out a year, you get a little hungry. We're hoping LaVonda will be very, very hungry to fight for and earn her position back at point guard."



### ShaRae Mansfield, No. 45

The All-American forward is undoubtedly the star of the team. She averaged 18.5 points and 10.6 rebounds a game as a junior and helped lead the Lady Toppers to the second round of the NCAA Tournament last March. If she remains aggressive on the boards, she could become the second player in school history to record over 1,000 rebounds and 1,000 points. She has 1,184 career points and 703 rebounds. Though the Preseason Sun Belt Conference Player of the Year will have more help in the post this year with the additions of forwards Aja Brown and Leah Lineberry, Mansfield will still be counted on for a bulk of the scoring and rebounding. How Mansfield plays this year will be a big factor in how far the Lady Toppers can go in the postseason and how a professional career will pan out for her after graduation.

Coach Small on Mansfield: "She's a true All-American. She leads by example. She's led by example since she walked on the floor. ShaRae Mansfield has the capabilities to take over a basketball game. Everybody will have to figure out a way to stop ShaRae... She's so relentless in her pursuit of getting the basketball — that makes it very hard."

## Juniors



### Aja Brown, No. 42

The junior forward transferred to Western from Middle Georgia College where she averaged 10 points and eight rebounds a game last season. At 6-2 she is one of four Lady Toppers over six feet tall this year, and she is expected to ease the scoring and rebounding burden on ShaRae Mansfield. Brown has said one of her goals this season is to be named Newcomer of the Year in the Sun Belt Conference. For that to happen, she'll have to show that she can give the team a boost on a consistent basis when opponents try to shut down Mansfield. Brown hasn't fully recovered from mono, which has slowed her progress in the preseason.

Coach Small on Brown: "Aja Brown comes in as a junior college player with a tremendous amount of ability — very, very athletic... I think she's going to make a big impact before the year is over."



### Natalie Powers, No. 5

With Jaime Walz gone, the junior moves from point guard to shooting guard and takes on a greater leadership role for the Lady Toppers and the seven other guards on the roster. As the most experienced member of Western's backcourt, her on-court presence must be evident through more than scoring. Injuries hampered the junior early in her career but she is poised for a breakout season. She started all but one game for the Lady Toppers last season and averaged 10.5 points a game. She spent her summer driving back and forth to Nashville working with the women's basketball team at Vanderbilt. The former Kentucky All-Star is quick and could easily average 15 to 20 points a game.

Coach Small on Powers: "Natalie Powers has worked as hard as any athlete's ever worked since I've been here, on her game in the offseason. She's playing with confidence. She has the ability to take it off the dribble, pull up and take a jump shot, a big threat from the outside, knows how to draw fouls. She's just improved her game and improved her strength, done everything she can to get herself in position."



### Katie Wulf, No. 33

The junior center lost weight in the offseason and worked with strength trainers to get in better shape as the season approached. But she broke her foot in practice several weeks ago and will be out until early December. At 6-3, Wulf is the tallest Lady Topper and coaches are impressed with her off-season improvements. They expect her to be an integral part of the post play this year after playing in 29 games as a sophomore.

Coach Small on Wulf: "She had slimmed down. She had worked this summer with John, our strength coach... and her game had improved so much. We're looking forward to Katie getting back. That helps us in the middle tremendously because she has the ability to guard bigger, tougher players."

## Sophomores



### Kristina Covington, No. 14

It has been nearly a year since the sophomore guard tore her anterior cruciate ligament in the first game of the season on Nov. 19 last year. She was cleared to play again July 1 and has picked up where she left off after being named Sun Belt Conference Freshman of the Year in 1999. If she was ever hesitant about returning, it's not visible. In practices, she is as aggressive on the boards as she was before she tore her ACL. Her trademark is great defense, but she can also shoot the ball well and run the floor with ease — which makes her ideal for the three-spot in a three-guard lineup.

Coach Small on Covington: "Playing the three-spot is a big, big spark plug because she plays with enthusiasm... I look for her to pick right up where she left off. She brings quickness, athleticism on the floor, the ability to score, another good, solid rebounder. Even for her size, she's a great rebounder."

## Sophomores



### Jennifer Slaughter, No. 00

She lost about 15 pounds in the offseason and has impressed coaches with her improvements. The sophomore guard is lethal from behind the three-point arc but will have to show a more well-rounded game this season to warrant significant playing time off the bench. She hit six of 13 three-pointers last year and averaged 1.3 points a game.

Slaughter has had shin splints recently, which have kept her out of practice at times. Coach Small on Slaughter: "Jennifer is another one that, she has the ability to score anytime she has the ball in her hands. Now, she's picked up and learned how to play defense and get herself in great shape and do other things necessary to get a lot of playing time."

## Freshmen



### Danika Cox, No. 4

Cox, a freshman guard, joins the Lady Toppers after a career as a four-year starter at Montgomery County High School. She averaged 11.3 points, 5.8 rebounds and 2.2 assists as a Lady Indian and helped her squad get to two Sweet Sixteen State Tournaments, including a state runner-up finish in 1998. She averaged 19.7 points a game last year and finished her prep career with 2,103 points and 1,077 rebounds.

Coach Small on Cox: "I look for her to be a very strong college basketball player... Danika Cox is a very, very good outside shooter, penetrates and so far what she's shown me is a lot of aggressiveness on the defensive end. She's not afraid to get in a battle and that's going to be to her advantage."



### Elisha Ford, No. 15

The freshman guard tore her anterior cruciate ligament and the meniscus in her right knee in practice three days after Covington tore her ACL. Because of the injury, Ford saw action in just two games last year, against Indiana and then No. 17 Oregon. Her 5-9 height and ability make her capable of playing guard or forward. At Lebanon (Tenn.) High School she was a four-year starter and once scored 27 points for the Blue Devils.

Coach Small on Ford: "She hasn't missed a beat, still hustling, diving on the floor, loves to guard people, loves to play the game. She's just an all-around go-getter, one of those people that the coaching staff appreciates because she comes in and plays with reckless abandon and puts everything she's got into practice."



### Leah Lineberry, No. 55

The 6-2 freshman forward won't be counted on for scoring this year as much as she will be rebounding and getting the ball to Mansfield. The hope is that she can learn from Mansfield and become an All-Conference type of player over the next four years. She runs the floor well and gives the Lady Toppers a quicker lineup when she's in the game. She was a three-year starter at Marshall County High School and averaged 16.1 points, 7 rebounds and 2.3 blocked shots a game as a senior.

Coach Small on Lineberry: "Leah Lineberry has been very, very impressive as a freshman not only rebounding but the physical part of the play. She shows a lot of maturity. She runs the floor extremely well... It looks like she's going to get a lot of playing time."



### Lindsay Preston, No. 22

Preston, a freshman guard, missed her senior season in high school after she tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee in a preseason scrimmage. She has not practiced much with the Lady Toppers so far because she has a severe case of shin splints. When she is healthy, she will likely back up freshman Camryn Whitaker at the point guard position. As a junior at Warren East High School in Bowling Green, she averaged 13.2 points, 5.5 rebounds and 3.9 assists a game. Her aunt is former Lady Topper great Kami Thomas, who coached Preston for two years at Warren East. Western assistant coach Blane Embry coached Preston as a freshman.

Coach Small on Preston: "I love another intense ball player that will get after you and make things happen, and like Camryn, is extremely team-oriented and wants the team to win. We've got a nice duo there."



### Jamie Truitt, No. 20

Truitt is the third Owensboro Apollo High School product to play for the Lady Toppers in the last six seasons. She is known for her three-point shooting ability; she had 300 treys in her high school career. A Kentucky All-Star and three-time Third Region Player of the Year, the freshman guard will be needed for quality minutes off the bench this season.

Coach Small on Truitt: "She has shown exactly like in high school, she's a great shooter, pretty good passer in the open floor. If she learns how to change over and play aggressive defense and what the college game is all about, she could be a big weapon on down the road in a system because she has a real knack of the game."



### Camryn Whitaker, No. 25

Though the freshman guard was the last to join Western's recruiting class, signing in the late period last season, she may be the one to make the biggest impact early on. As Powers moves to shooting guard and Johnson is out for the season, Whitaker will likely start at point guard. She led Harrison County High School to a 28-4 record and its first-ever trip to the Sweet Sixteen last year. She was a Kentucky All-Star and became only the second player in the state, behind former Lady Topper Jaime Walz, to record over 2,000 career points and 1,000 career assists; Whitaker had 2,574 points and 1,044 assists.

Coach Small on Whitaker: "Camryn Whitaker has taken like a duck to water. She just came in here and has fought, scrapped, laughed, very, very intense on the basketball floor. I look for Camryn to be a big surprise to everybody and a crowd favorite because of her tenacity... Camryn's a leader. She's vocal, she talks a lot for a freshman, she says what she has to. She's another one like a Kristina, like a ShaRae, she just pours it all out on the floor and leaves it right out there."

## LADY TOPPER 2000-2001 SCHEDULE

November	December	January	February	March
11/11 - Sat. vs. Premier Sports (exhibition) 7:00 p.m.	12/4 - Mon. at Tennessee Tech 7:00 p.m.	1/3 - Wed. at New Mexico State* 7:00 p.m.	2/1 - Thurs. vs. Middle Tennessee* 7:00 p.m.	3/1-6 - Fri.-Tue. at Sun Belt Conference Tournament in Mobile, Ala.
11/17 - Fri. vs. Pepperdine** 6:30 p.m.	12/7 - Thurs. at Vanderbilt 7:00 p.m.	1/6 - Sat. at Louisiana-Lafayette* 7:00 p.m.	2/3 - Sat. at North Texas* 7:00 p.m.	
11/18 - Sat. vs. Northern Arizona** 5:00 p.m.	12/10 - Sun. vs. Denver* 2:00 p.m.	1/11 - Thurs. vs. South Alabama* 7:00 p.m.	2/6 - Tue. vs. New Orleans* 7:00 p.m.	
11/19 - Sun. at Hawaii** 11:00 p.m.	12/18 - Mon. at South Florida 5:00 p.m.	1/14 - Sun. vs. Arkansas-Little Rock* 2:00 p.m.	2/10 - Sat. vs. Louisiana Tech* 7:00 p.m.	
11/24 - Fri. vs. Evansville 7:00 p.m.	12/28 - Thurs. at Arkansas 7:00 p.m.	1/18 - Thurs. at Louisiana Tech* 7:00 p.m.	2/15 - Thurs. at Florida International* 6:00 p.m.	
11/26 - Sun. vs. Montana 1:00 p.m.	12/31 - Sun. vs. Murray State 2:00 p.m.		2/17 - Sat. at Arkansas-Little Rock* 4:35 p.m.	
11/30 - Thurs. vs. Louisville*** 7:00 p.m.			2/22 - Thurs. vs. Arkansas State* 7:00 p.m.	
			2/24 - Sat. at Middle Tennessee* 7:00 p.m.	

\* Sun Belt Conference Game  
\*\* Hawaiian Regent Classic (Honolulu, Hawaii)  
\*\*\* Area Bank Classic

# LADY TOPS: Guards-a-plenty

Depth in backcourt gives team young weapons

BY BRIAN MOORE  
Herald reporter

Natalie Powers can put the ball in the basket.

That's how women's basketball head coach Steve Small feels about the junior guard who averaged 10.5 points a game last year, mostly from the point guard position. But while Powers proved she has the ability to run the Lady Toppers from that spot, Small said she's a natural shooting guard.

Because of the team's personnel, she shared the point position with then-junior LaVonda Johnson, the gutsy hometown hero from Warren East High School who became an obvious crowd favorite. Among Powers' roles was getting the ball to forward ShaRae Mansfield and guard Jaime Walz so they could do that thing they did best: make baskets.

Things have changed. Nine of the 13 players on the team's 2000 roster are listed as guards. Walz is gone because her eligibility expired and a strong core of freshman ball-handlers has arrived to compete for the point guard position.

"If the season started today, I really think that Camryn Whitaker would start, or have an opportunity to start, at point guard for us," Small said about a week ago. "I can't wait for Lindsay Preston to get healthy and play. I really wanted Lindsay and Camryn to run the point for us."

"Natalie feels comfortable playing the one. I would think she would prefer to play two because it gives her an opportunity to shoot the ball more."

Whitaker is a 5-9 freshman from Harrison County High School. Preston, a 5-7 freshman from Warren East, is recovering from knee surgery. Severe shin splints have kept her out of practice, but she was cleared to play earlier this week.

The reloaded backcourt doesn't stop there. Sophomore Kristina Covington will make her way back onto the floor after missing most of last year with a torn anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee. She was the 1999 Sun Belt Conference Freshman of the Year.

Sophomore Jennifer Slaughter dropped 15 pounds in the off-season and is much improved, Small said.

Redshirt freshman Elisha Ford will see her first collegiate action after missing most of last season with a torn ACL and meniscus. Freshman Jamie Truitt, who joined Whitaker on this year's Kentucky All-Star team, will also contend for playing time in the backcourt. Truitt and Whitaker were both honorable mention All-America selections by USA Today.

Seven of the nine guards listed on the roster did not play on the Hill last year. One of the two that did, Johnson, will miss this season because of an ACL tear sustained in late August. With so many inexperienced players battling for playing time, preseason practice has been exceptionally interesting, Small said.

"I like having all the

**"I like having all the guards. We're able to get up and down the court."**

— Camryn Whitaker  
freshman guard

guards," Whitaker said. "We're able to get up and down the court. I like to compete, so I'm out here competing against other guards, trying to get playing time for myself. Everybody else is working really hard, too. I really don't think (the small line-up) puts our team down at all because we've got a great post-player in ShaRae. That's really all you need is her."

Don't expect the guard situation to create any major changes in the Lady Topper game plan. Small's teams have been traditionally undersized compared to its opponents, but rebounding hasn't been a problem and it shouldn't be this year, he said.

With Mansfield, 6-3 junior center Katie Wulf and 6-2 forwards Aja Brown and Leah

Lineberry, both newcomers, Small figures he'll run a four-player perimeter set with one player in the post.

And he'll look to Powers for scoring and leadership.

"I like both positions," Powers said on the possibility of playing as the shooting guard. "It's just a different viewpoint, I guess, as far as being on the floor. As a point guard you look to distribute the ball. I would get to shoot it more being a two guard, which would be nice."

With the number of guards competing for playing time, Small realizes that some of them will be discouraged with the amount of playing they'll receive. But that's part of the game, he said, citing Slaughter's turnaround from a year ago as an example.

"There's nobody on this team that just wants to sit and clap," Small said. "But that's also knowing your role and learning what you have to do. I told Jennifer last year, 'Go out and lose weight. Go out and do this, go out and do that.' She did everything. And she's shown from day one her improvements."

Need to rent a place for a reception, banquet, organizational meeting or workshop?

**Carroll Knicely Institute**  
WKU South Campus  
2355 Nashville Road

- Conference Facilities for:
- Receptions
  - Banquets
  - Dinners
  - Meetings
  - Seminars
  - Workshops
  - Retreats
- Additional Services:
- Continuing Education
  - On Site Employee Training
  - Leadership Programs
  - Small Business Development



Call (270)745-1908 for free consultation.

The best of luck to the WKU Hilltoppers and Lady Toppers.

Come celebrate with us after the game.



Home of the 99¢ Super Value Menu.

**ZAXBY'S**

CHICKEN FINGERS & BUFFALO WINGS

Go  
**Hilltoppers!**

We wish you luck on your upcoming season!

Two great locations

1801 31W ByPass  
796-8300

1651 Campbell Lane  
846-0000

[www.wkuherald.com](http://www.wkuherald.com)

# Road through Sun Belt could be long, tough one

BY CHAD QUEEN  
Herald reporter

There aren't many occasions in college basketball when a team can win 13 conference games, advance through the NCAA Tournament and still not be considered the best team in its conference, let alone its division.

Western is that team. Louisiana Tech ranks as one of the top women's basketball teams in the country, and they are standing right in Western's way of being that "best team." But La Tech is not just some bump in the schedule that must be overcome; they are Mt. Everest.

When a highly-regarded Western squad played the Lady Techsters in the regular season last year, instead of a shootout at the OK Corral, fans were treated to Doc Holliday against a 10-year-old with a squirt gun. La Tech destroyed the Lady Toppers in their first two meetings last year by more than 20 points, but in the Sun Belt Conference Tournament, Western came back from more than 20 down to lose 97-94.

One would think that this year's Western team would be a little worried about playing such a powerhouse.

"I think we'll be fine," junior guard Natalie Powers said. "This is a very mature team. I don't think we'll back down to anyone, we are always up for that game."

Another approach being taken is simply not to circle January 18th and February 10th, the days that Western and Louisiana Tech go head to head, on the calendar.

"I'm not looking down the road," head coach Steve Small said.

And it wouldn't be smart to look past other teams and focus on La Tech. Out of 16 conferences last year, the Sun Belt Conference was the seventh toughest, Small said. With the additions of North Texas, Middle Tennessee State and New Mexico State, the conference gets bigger and, judging by a combined 45 and 28 record, better.

Small and his players said they have heard good things about the new programs but will admit that they don't know what to expect.

"To be honest I really don't know much about them," Powers said. "We'll find out when we play them."

This season will have a new feel, not only because of the addition of three new schools, but because of the implementations of divisions within the conference.

The conference has been divided up into halves. Western will play the schools in the Eastern Division twice and the schools in the Western Division once.

"Someone must have had one too many to drink when they put Louisiana Tech, Western Kentucky, Arkansas State and Florida International in one division," Small said.

There is no balance between the placement of the teams. This controversial division includes the top four out of five teams from a year ago. Small said "it's going to be a war" and could make for a

very exciting season for hoop fans.

Louisiana Tech is considered the favorite to win the Sun Belt Conference by the media and coaches, but Preseason All-American and Western star ShaRae Mansfield is especially confident about the Lady Toppers'

chances in the conference.

"I don't care what the other teams bring," Mansfield said. "I think we can (win it) — I can't see anything but us winning it."

The trip to a conference title will be long and difficult for any team in the Sun Belt this year.

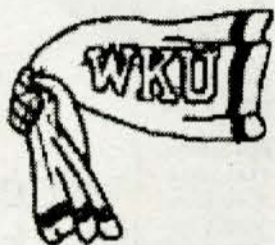
Louisiana Tech has the hype, Western has the superstar, Arkansas State has the depth and Denver has an easier schedule, so any team could come out on top.

For every season there is a sleeper team, a let-down team and teams that do exactly what was

expected. Those kinds of seasons are results of work ethic and twists of fate. Beyond the intangibles, it may take something more. Western believes they have it.

"We have players that are confident," Mansfield said, "and confidence can take you a long way."

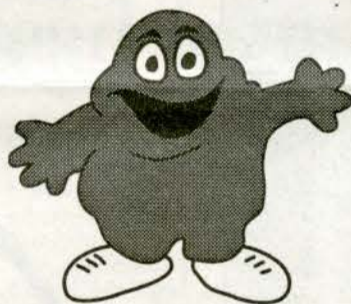
## Go Toppers & Lady Toppers



Special for All Basketball Fans

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

Valid through 11/22/00



### University Bookstore

Store Hours

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

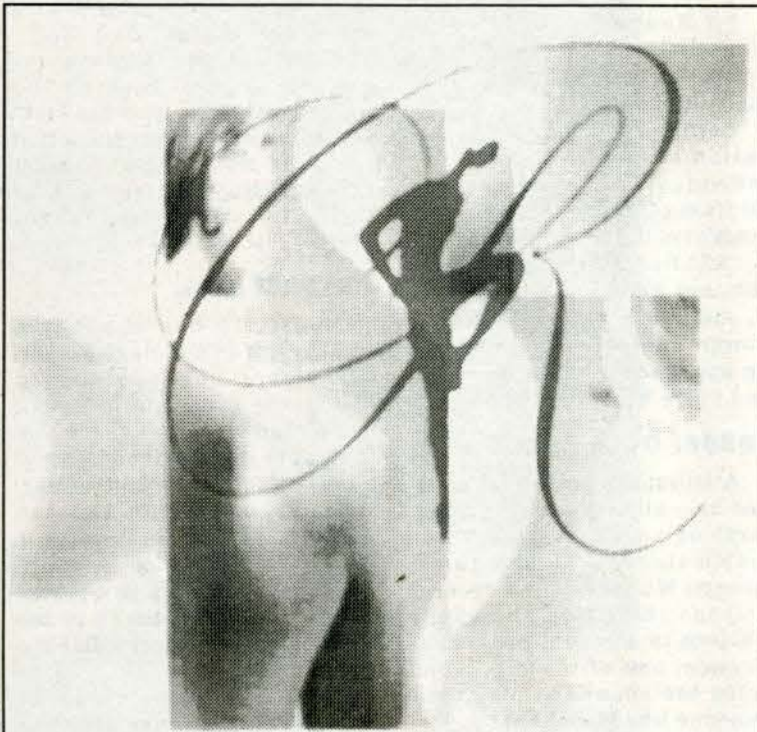
Sat. 10:00 am ~ 2:00 pm

www.wku.edu

Phone: (270)745-2467

1-800-444-5155

Fax: (270) 745-5336



## Experience the Ultimate.

SALON AND DAY SPA SERVICES

IMAGE

- Facial Analysis and Design Cutting
- Signature Hair Color & Texture
- Bridal & Special Occassion Hair
- Make-Up Application

BODY

- Facials & Massages
- Customized Body Treatments
- Spa Manicures & Pedicures

EXPERIENCE

- A Day of Beauty for Women
- A Great Escape for Men

REGINA WEBB

salon & spa

Gift Certificates Available

In Thoroughbred Square at 1945 Scottsville Road, Bowling Green 781-4676

**HOWARD'S**  
CYCLING & FITNESS  
604 Park Street  
782-7877

**Guthrie's**  
Golden Fried Chicken Fingers  
Bring in this ad on Sunday and receive a FREE drink with the purchase of a plate or box.  
846-9003

**YELLOW CAB Co.**  
843-3232

These local businesses are proud

supporters of WKU Basketball!

# SENIOR: 'She is the star of the team'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

involved. That's sort of my motivation, seeing my teammates have fun because I don't think it's good to single out a person and call them a star.

"I think that's unhealthy because it does put pressure on people."

So Mansfield doesn't read the articles in the newspapers or the magazines. Those don't motivate her.

Calling her a star isn't motivation either. Ironically, her individual success has sprouted from planting herself as the team's roots.

"ShaRae says she's not the star, but when it comes down to it, she is the star of the team," Powers said. "She just picks us up and takes us all on her back and I give her all the credit."

### Leader of the pack

A tribute to Mansfield's talent and ability comes in the form of adoration from her teammates. Freshman guard Camryn Whitaker cited several reasons she's glad she chose Western in a recent press conference, one of those reasons being the chance to play with someone like Mansfield.

Freshman forward Leah Lineberry echoed those sentiments. "I've learned quite a bit from ShaRae already,"

Lineberry said. "I mean, the season hasn't even started and being in there with her, the way she plays hard, it automatically makes you play that much harder just having her in there to go against every day."

Mansfield has always led by example, but as a senior captain, she said she wants to be a more vocal leader.

"I do feel like there's a way for me to give back to the younger players in some fashion, whether showing them that you gotta play hard 40 minutes or you gotta practice hard, or trying to talk to the younger players," Mansfield said.

### The next level

Mansfield has about five months left as a college basketball player. She is interested in playing professionally and has already made an impact on several professional coaches.

Small said Van Chancellor, coach of the WNBA's Houston Comets, called requesting a Western schedule so he could see Mansfield play in person. Same goes for the coach of the New York Liberty, Richie Aduato.

"So I know there's a lot of interest in this young lady but I'm not ready to give her up yet," Small said on Media Day. "We need about 30 good games out of her."

Though Mansfield was used as a center/forward last year, she said she needs to adapt to playing the three position, or small forward, which is what she would play in the WNBA. Her individual focus is on getting physically stronger and developing her perimeter capabilities.

"My physique is kind of frail; it's always been that way," Mansfield said. "... So I've been lifting weights trying to get a little bulk on me so I can push people around. I've been working on my outside shot, basically being able to play inside and outside, being versatile which would help me a whole lot. Like right now, I don't feel my left hand is as developed as it should be or as it can be but I'm working on that, being able to dribble with both hands."

### Balancing greatness

And with both hands she must balance professional aspirations and her last season as a Lady Topper. She can't be so focused on the WNBA that she doesn't give her all to Western and vice versa.

The Lady Toppers are young; they have six freshmen and two sophomores this season. They need Mansfield's talent to carry them and they need her example to live by

when she's gone.

This is her team, her band of disciples. By example and with talent, she will try to lead them to the postseason Promised Land — at least the Sweet Sixteen of the NCAA Tournament.

"I do feel like I'm here maybe to teach, to teach the younger players," Mansfield said, "help them understand even though it's basketball and it's supposed to be fun, take it serious because it goes by so fast."



## When things get messy, it's usually time for a change.

Life can get messy...bad relationships, tough circumstances, lack of purpose. Fortunately God doesn't require us to deal with life in isolation. We can live our lives connected to him, actually receiving guidance from him. We can start over with a clean slate...start down a new road... and begin to really live.

Having a relationship with Jesus Christ doesn't mean life suddenly becomes smooth. Life has its challenges. But we don't walk it alone. Find out what God can do in your life. For your free article, The Source of a Changed Life,

call 1-800-236-9238.

there is a God. you should know. that's why we're here.

join us for :

# CRYU

every thursday night at 8:30pm in tate page auditorium

sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ

## SUN BELT CONFERENCE PRESEASON POLLS

### East Division

1. Louisiana Tech
2. Western
3. Florida International
4. Arkansas State
5. Middle Tennessee
6. Arkansas-Little Rock

### West Division

1. Denver
2. North Texas
3. New Orleans
4. New Mexico State
5. Louisiana-Lafayette
6. South Alabama



## Good luck Lady Tops!

## From the College Heights Herald

**Discount Mart**  
415 31W-By-Pass  
843-6000

**TOOT'S**  
Good Food & Fun  
Every Monday  
25¢ Wings  
25¢ Raw Oysters  
\$4.50 Pitchers  
and Monday Night Football  
843-2335  
Take-Out Avail.

**Nexus Hobbies**  
839 Broadway Ave.  
793 - 9886

These local businesses are proud

supporters of WKU Basketball!