



DRAKE PICKED TO REPEAT IN VALLEY WOMEN'S HOOPS

ST. LOUIS – Drake University has been tabbed as the preseason favorite in the MVC's women's basketball race in the annual survey of the league's coaches, sports information directors and media.

Drake, which has finished undefeated each of the past two Missouri Valley Conference regular seasons and tournaments, will vie for a three-peat in 2018-19, riding a 40-game MVC win streak. A three-peat of the MVC regular season or tournament would each be the first-ever in program history and only the third in MVC history. Drake, which qualified for its 12th NCAA Tournament last season, is looking to make the NCAA Tournament for a third-consecutive season. Drake received 35 of 40 first-place votes and 363 total points, out-distancing UNI (325), Missouri State (287) and Southern Illinois (279).



Drake returns all five starters and its top nine scorers from 2017-18, including the MVC Jackie Stiles Player of the Year, Becca Hittner; the MVC Defensive Player of the Year, Sammie Bachrodt; the MVC Sixth Player of the Year, Sara Rhine; and the MVC Tournament Most Outstanding Player, Maddy Dean. The Bulldogs led the nation in assists a year ago, averaging 22.9 per game, and was among the national leaders in scoring (82.4 ppg, 8th) and field-goal percentage (48.8%, 6th).

Dean and Rhine have each scored more than 1,000 points in their outstanding careers. Bachrodt with 865 points, Hittner with 894 points and Becca Jonas with 842 points are all on the verge of joining Dean and Rhine in the 1,000-point club.

Hittner was also tabbed the Preseason Player of the Year, headlining the Valley's preseason all-conference team, which also includes Drake's Sara Rhine, UNI's Megan Maahs, Missouri State's Alexa Willard and Southern Illinois' Nicole Martin.



Northern Iowa enters the 2018-19 season after earning a fourth-straight postseason bid, going 19-14 overall and 13-5 in MVC action,

earning a spot in the WNIT. UNI lost just one player to graduation a season ago and will return 83% of the scoring from last season. The Panthers welcome back four starters as junior Megan Maahs and senior Ellie Howell return after earning All-MVC honors a year ago. Maahs averaged 10.4 points and 9.8 rebounds per game last winter, posting 12 double-doubles, while Howell added 10.0 points and 4.0 rebounds per game with a team-high 62 assists. Head coach Tanya Warren enters the season as the all-time wins leader at UNI. Warren holds a record of 205-153 over her 11 seasons with the Panthers.



Missouri State welcomes back three starters from last season's 21-12 (15-3 MVC) team that returned to the postseason for the fourth-straight year, earning a bid into the WNIT. The streak is the school's longest since making nine consecutive trips from 1998-2006, which included seven NCAA Tournaments and two WNIT bids. The Lady Bears bring back the bulk of their statistical production from last season despite having a 2018-19

2018-19 PRESEASON POLL

Rank	Team (1st-place votes)	Points
1.	Drake (35)	363
2.	UNI (4)	325
3.	Missouri State (1)	287
4.	Southern Illinois	279
5.	Illinois State	223
6.	Bradley	193
7.	Indiana State	192
8.	Valparaiso	135
9.	Loyola	127
10.	Evansville	76

roster that includes 11 underclassmen and three juniors and seniors. MSU still has nine returners with a combined 391 games' worth of experience, which includes 153 starts. Additionally, Missouri State brings back 92 of its 165 starting assignments from last season. Junior Alexa Willard averaged 10.8 points and 2.2 rebounds per game last year, earning first-team All-MVC honors. Senior Danielle Gitzen earned All-Defensive team honors and averaged 8.9 points and 4.4 rebounds per game, while adding 56 steals.



Drake junior guard Becca Hittner earned the Jackie Stiles Player of the Year award last season. Hittner led The Valley in scoring (15.7) and three-point FG% (43.7%), while ranking Top 5 in FG % (48.2%) and free throw % (87.8%) during her sophomore campaign.

2018-19 MVC PRESEASON ALL-CONFERENCE TEAM

PLAYER, TEAM	POS.	CL.	HT.	HOMETOWN (HIGH SCHOOL)
*Becca Hittner, Drake	G	Jr.	6-0	Urbandale, Iowa (Dowling Catholic)
Megan Maahs, UNI	F	Jr.	6-1	Epworth, Iowa (Western Dubuque)
Nicole Martin, Southern Illinois	F	Jr.	6-1	Jefferson City, Mo. (Jefferson City)
Sara Rhine, Drake	F	RJr.	6-1	Eldon, Mo. (Eldon)
Alexa Willard, Missouri State	G	Jr.	6-2	Lebanon, Mo. (Stoutland)
*Preseason Player of the Year				



Southern Illinois finished the season with a 17-14 overall record and an 11-7 mark in MVC action. SIU posted a winning record for the fourth-straight season, the longest such streak for the Salukis in 20 years. SIU brings back the bulk of its statistical production from last season with a roster that includes six underclassmen and nine upperclassmen. The Salukis returns an experienced nucleus of 11 letterwinners from last season that accounted for 81.8% of their scoring, 85.9% of their rebounds, 81.3% of their steals and 79.2% of their assists from a year ago. The returners are led by first-team All-MVC selection Nicole Martin as well as MVC Freshman of the Year Abby Brockmeyer. Martin had a breakout sophomore season in which she led the team in scoring and finished the regular season ranked in the top-15 in the Valley in six statistical categories, while Brockmeyer led all MVC freshmen in rebounds, blocks, offensive rebounds and defensive rebounds.



Illinois State welcomes back four starters from the 2017-18 squad as the Redbirds will look to improve upon last season's 14-16 overall mark (8-10 MVC). Head Coach Kristen Gillespie finished her first season at the helm, leading the Redbirds to 14 wins which is the most wins the team has seen in five years. Simone Goods earned honorable mention All-MVC honors a year ago and was chosen as the MVC Newcomer of the Year. The senior forward led the 'Birds in scoring efforts, tallying 13.5 points per game, shooting 45.6% from the field. She had six 20 plus point games, 12 double-digit games and four double-doubles. Sophomore Paige Saylor returns after earning All-Freshman and All-Defensive Team honors a year ago.



Bradley returns three starters from last year's group (13-18, 6-12 MVC), including sophomore guard Gabi Haack, who averaged 10.5 points per game. Haack started 21 games as a freshman, ranking second in the MVC in three-point FG percentage and third in three-point FG made. The freshman standout earned MVC All-Freshman honors for her efforts. Bradley ranked third in The Valley in scoring at 65.8 points per game for the team's best offensive effort since 2013-14 (69.7 ppg), but it was the defense that was key to success for the Braves last year. Bradley ranked 64th in the nation (2nd in MVC) in field goal percentage defense, limiting opponents to 38.1% shooting.



Indiana State brings back four starters from last season's team (11-19, 9-9 MVC). Junior Ashli O'Neal earned honorable mention All-MVC honors as a sophomore, averaging 12.0 points and 2.8 rebounds per game. First-year head coach Vicki Hall will lead the Sycamores in 2018-19 after six seasons as associate head coach at Toledo. Hall has introduced five newcomers to the Indiana State roster for the 2018-19 season including two foreign additions hailing from the Netherlands and Spain. Despite five newcomers, Indiana State returns plenty of production to the floor in 2018-19. With eight letter winners and four starters returning, the Sycamores return 69% of its points and 66% of its rebounds from last season.



Valparaiso finished its first season as a member of The Valley with a 13-18 overall record (5-13 MVC), which marked the most wins by the program since 2008-09. Mary Evans was named the eighth head coach of the Valparaiso program on April 13, 2018. A first-time head coach, Evans brings 15 years of Division I experience with her to Valpo and has spent the last five seasons as an assistant at Ohio. Valpo returns nine of its top 10 scorers from a year ago, but the one departure was significant as leading scorer Dani Franklin graduated after finishing in the Top 10 in Valpo history in 13 statistical categories. Franklin, an all-conference first team selection as a senior, finished second in program history in career scoring with 1,721 points and fifth in rebounding with 713.



Loyola returns three starters from last season's team that finished the season 7-23 and 5-13 in MVC play. The Ramblers return seven letterwinners and 62% of their scoring from last season. Leading the way for that group is guard/forward Abby O'Connor. O'Connor earned MVC All-Freshman Team accolades following a rookie campaign that saw her lead the Loyola roster in scoring (10.5 ppg), rebounding (5.6 rpg) and blocks (1.2 bpg). Also looking to provide support on the offensive end will be the guard pairing of Kailyn Strawbridge (8.0 ppg) and Ellie Rice (7.4 ppg). Prior to its 18-game MVC slate, Loyola will open the year with a challenging non-conference schedule that features matchups against four postseason participants from a year ago. The 11-game slate is highlighted by clashes with local foes UIC, Chicago State and DePaul, and also includes a road test against Purdue.



Evansville returns three starters from last season's squad (3-27, 0-18 MVC). Despite a large amount of new faces on UE's roster, the six returners represent 55.4% of the scoring from a season ago, led by senior Kerri Gasper, who tied for the team-lead, averaging 13.1 points per game in 2017-18. The Aces captured the 2017-18 NCAA team statistical championship for free-throw shooting percentage, after hitting 82.0% from the charity stripe last season. The Aces smashed the previous program record of 78.5% set in 2006-07 and broke the MVC record of 80.5% set by Illinois State in 2010.

Preseason voters have correctly selected the conference's regular-season champion 21 times in 35 seasons, but since the poll was expanded to include sports information directors and media in 1994-95, pollsters have accurately predicted 16 of the 24 champions. Preseason favorites have played in 27 post-seasons, including 19 NCAA Tournaments with one Sweet 16 and one Final Four appearance.

STARTERS RETURNING/LOST

Team	Returning	Lost
Bradley	3	2
Drake	5	0
Evansville	3	2
Illinois State	4	1
Indiana State	4	1
Loyola	3	2
Missouri State	3	2
UNI	4	1
Southern Illinois	4	1
Valparaiso	4	1
MVC TOTAL	37	13
MVC 2017-18	31	19
MVC 2016-17	25	25



UNI junior Megan Maahs, will lead the charge for the Panthers after nearly averaging a double-double during her sophomore season. Maahs led the MVC in rebounding (9.8 rpg) while averaging 10.4 points per contest. She also paced the league with 12 double-doubles.

PREVIOUS MVC WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PRESEASON POLLS

1983-84	PTS.
1. Southern Illinois (3)	20
2. Drake (4)	22
3. Illinois State (1)	31
4. Wichita State (1)	44
5. Eastern Illinois	48
6. Indiana State	63
7. Missouri State (1)	70
8. Northern Iowa	82
9. Western Illinois	83
10. Bradley	87

1984-85	PTS.
1. Illinois State (9)	99
2. Drake	77
3. Southern Illinois	73
4. Wichita State	67
5. Eastern Illinois	63
6. Missouri State (1)	59
7. Indiana State	38
8. Bradley	36
9. Western Illinois	25
10. Northern Iowa	12

1985-86	PTS.
1. Drake (7.5)	97.5
2. Southern Illinois (2.5)	92.5
3. Illinois State	75
4. Missouri State	64
5. Bradley	51
6. Eastern Illinois	50
7. Indiana State	41
8. Wichita State	38
9. Northern Iowa	31
10. Western Illinois	10

1986-87	PTS.
1. Southern Illinois (10)	100
2. Illinois State	89
3. Bradley	75
4. Drake	64
5. Eastern Illinois	53
6. Missouri State	49
7. Indiana State	37
8. Wichita State	35
9. Northern Iowa	34
10. Western Illinois	14

1987-88	PTS.
1. Southern Illinois (10)	100
2. Eastern Illinois	80
3. Drake	75
4. Bradley	71
5. Illinois State	70
6. Missouri State	48
7. Wichita State	33
8. Western Illinois	29
9. Indiana State	26
10. Northern Iowa	18

1988-89	PTS.
1. Eastern Illinois (5)	74
2. Illinois State (3)	73
3. Drake (2)	69
4. Southern Illinois	59
5. Indiana State	49
6. Missouri State	36
7. Bradley	34
8. Western Illinois	24
9. Wichita State	18
10. Northern Iowa	14

1989-90	PTS.
1. Southern Illinois (5)	77
2. Illinois State (4)	74
3. Eastern Illinois	58
4. Drake	55
5. Missouri State (1)	49
6. Western Illinois	45
7. Indiana State	33
8. Bradley	32
9. Wichita State	16
10. Northern Iowa	11

1990-91	PTS.
1. Southern Illinois (4)	94
2. Missouri State (3)	87
3. Illinois State (2)	83
4. Bradley (1)	72
5. Eastern Illinois	53
6. Western Illinois	45
7. Wichita State	38
8. Drake	33
9. Indiana State	27
10. Northern Iowa	18

1991-92	PTS.
1. Missouri State (8)	98
2. Southern Illinois (2)	91
3. Illinois State	74
4. Bradley	58
5. Wichita State	55
6. Indiana State	53
7. Eastern Illinois	48
8. Western Illinois	29
9. Drake	28
10. Northern Iowa	16

1992-93	PTS.
1. Southern Illinois (6)	77
2. Missouri State (3)	72
3. Illinois State (1)	63
4. Creighton	57
5. Drake	38
6. Wichita State	38
7. Indiana State	30
8. Bradley	17
9. Northern Iowa	17

1993-94	PTS.
1. Missouri State (6)	78
2. Creighton (3)	75
3. Drake	58
4. Southern Illinois	44
5. Wichita State	42
6. Bradley	39
7. Illinois State	35
8. Indiana State	18
9. Northern Iowa	16

1994-95	PTS.
1. Creighton (26)	355
2. Missouri State (3)	291
3. Drake (5)	288
4. Southern Illinois (3)	285
5. Wichita State	234
6. Bradley	172
7. Illinois State	149
8. Indiana State	137
9. Northern Iowa	64
10. Evansville	60

1995-96	PTS.
1. Missouri State (20)	344
2. Drake (13)	337
3. Southern Illinois (4)	286
4. Creighton	265
5. Indiana State	199
6. Wichita State	195
7. Illinois State	167
8. Bradley	118
9. Northern Iowa	67
10. Evansville	57

1996-97	PTS.
1. Missouri State (33)	391
2. Drake (6)	311
3. Southern Illinois	301
4. Illinois State (1)	288
5. Creighton	278
6. Bradley	183
7. Northern Iowa	150
8. Wichita State	134
9. Indiana State	111
10. Evansville	53

1997-98	PTS.
1. Drake (29)	385
2. Missouri State (11)	363
3. Illinois State	316
4. Southern Illinois	236
5. Wichita State	226
6. Indiana State	215
7. Bradley	182
8. Creighton	123
9. Northern Iowa	101
10. Evansville	53

1998-99	PTS.
1. Missouri State (26)	368
2. Drake (12)	350
3. Indiana State	284
4. Creighton	245
5. Northern Iowa	199
6. Illinois State	198
7. Wichita State	159
8. Southern Illinois	143
9. Evansville	79
10. Bradley	65

1999-00	PTS.
1. Drake (14)	276
2. Missouri State (14)	269
3. Evansville (2)	243
4. Northern Iowa	226
5. Creighton	161
6. Wichita State	146
7. Indiana State	131
8. Southern Illinois	87
9. Illinois State	77
10. Bradley	34

2000-01	PTS.
1. Missouri State (31)	378
2. Drake (1)	330
3. Evansville (7)	329
4. Northern Iowa	243
5. Wichita State	224
6. Creighton	206
7. Indiana State	177
8. Southern Illinois	102
9. Illinois State	101
10. Bradley	55

2001-02	PTS.
1. Drake (37)	370
2. Missouri State	306
3. Northern Iowa	283
4. Evansville	259
5. Wichita State	233
6. Creighton	195
7. Indiana State	125
8. Bradley	123
9. Illinois State	88
10. Southern Illinois	53

2002-03	PTS.
1. Creighton (31)	390
2. Drake (9)	361
3. Missouri State	271
4. Wichita State	256
5. UNI	244
6. Bradley	216
7. Indiana State	170
8. Evansville	135
9. Illinois State	98
10. Southern Illinois	59

2003-04	PTS.
1. Missouri State (27)	379
2. Creighton (12)	365
3. Indiana State (1)	301
4. UNI	277
5. Wichita State	230
6. Drake	212
7. Bradley	147
8. Evansville	129
9. Illinois State	105
10. Southern Illinois	52

2004-05	PTS.
1. Missouri State (34)	379
2. Creighton (3)	324
3. Illinois State	283
4. Drake (2)	275
5. Indiana State	272
6. UNI	182
7. Bradley	158
8. Wichita State	117
9. Evansville	106
10. Southern Illinois	40

2005-06	PTS.
1. Indiana State (34)	393
2. Missouri State (3)	349
3. Creighton (3)	302
4. Drake	271
5. UNI	219
6. Evansville	207
7. Illinois State	190
8. Bradley	99
9. Wichita State	92
10. Southern Illinois	78

2006-07	PTS.
1. Drake (28)	373
2. Wichita State (10)	345
3. UNI	274
4. Evansville	242
5. Illinois State	237
6. Indiana State (2)	227
7. Missouri State	176
8. Southern Illinois	176
9. Creighton	84
10. Bradley	66

2007-08	PTS.
1. Drake (24)	348
2. Illinois State (12)	342
3. Indiana State	289
4. Evansville (1)	288
5. Southern Illinois (1)	233
6. Creighton (1)	223
7. Missouri State	136
8. UNI	113
9. Wichita State	95
10. Bradley	78

2008-09	PTS.
1. Illinois State (40)	400
2. Creighton	310
3. Drake	297
4. Evansville	251
5. UNI	245
6. Missouri State	215
7. Indiana State	166
8. Bradley	161
9. Southern Illinois	108
10. Wichita State	47

2009-10	PTS.
1. Creighton (34)	393
2. Illinois State (6)	340
3. Drake	296
4. UNI	253
5. Indiana State	250
6. Bradley	214
7. Missouri State	188
8. Evansville	108
9. Wichita State	97
10. Southern Illinois	61

2010-11	PTS.
1. Missouri State (27)	385
2. UNI (3)	329
3. Creighton (7)	328
4. Illinois State (2)	258
5. Wichita State	226
6. Bradley (1)	204
7. Drake	180
8. Indiana State	150
9. Southern Illinois	83
10. Evansville	57

2011-12	PTS.
1. Missouri State (36)	396
2. UNI (4)	322
3. Wichita State	315
4. Creighton	246
5. Indiana State	234
6. Illinois State	224
7. Drake	168
8. Bradley	162
9. Evansville	68
10. Southern Illinois	65

2012-13	PTS.
1. Creighton (26)	382
2. Wichita State (12)	347
3. Illinois State (2)	323
4. UNI	272
5. Missouri State	265
6. Bradley	144
7. Indiana State	135
8. Southern Illinois	123
9. Drake	121
10. Evansville	119

2013-14	PTS.
1. Indiana State (26)	378
2. Wichita State (13)	360
3. UNI	259
4. Drake	221
5. Missouri State	216
6. Loyola (1)	211
7. Bradley	194
8. Illinois State	166
9. Evansville	104
10. Southern Illinois	91

2014-15	PTS.
1. Wichita State (36)	395
2. UNI (2)	348
3. Drake (2)	315
4. Evansville	252
5. Indiana State	234
6. Missouri State	190
7. Loyola	166
8. Illinois State	125
9. Southern Illinois	116
10. Bradley	60

2015-16	PTS.
1. Missouri State (22)	373
2. Drake (15)	347
3. UNI (1)	320
4. Southern Illinois (1)	297
5. Wichita State (1)	214
6. Evansville	182
7. Indiana State	151
8. Loyola	142
9. Bradley	126
10. Illinois State	48

2016-17	PTS.
1. Drake (34)	392
2. UNI (4)	317
3. Missouri State (2)	313
4. Southern Illinois	306
5. Wichita State	248
6. Indiana State	199
7. Bradley	141
8. Illinois State	123
9. Evansville	109
10. Loyola	52

2017-18	PTS.
1. Drake (31)	356
2. Missouri State (7)	323
3. UNI (2)	311
4. Southern Illinois	256
5. Indiana State	231
6. Bradley	216
7. Illinois State	139
8. Evansville	132
9. Valparaiso	131
10. Loyola	105

Gateway Conference poll until 1991-92 & MVC poll from 1992-93 until present. Number in parentheses is first-place votes. Polls were coaches-only prior to 1994-95. Media panel and sport information directors were added as voters for the 1994-95 poll.

PREVIOUS FAVORITES AND CHAMPIONS

	Preseason Favorite	Champion
1983-84	Southern Illinois	Drake
1984-85	Illinois State	Illinois State
1985-86	Drake	Southern Illinois
1986-87	Southern Illinois	Southern Illinois
1987-88	Southern Illinois	Eastern Ill./Drake
1988-89	Eastern Illinois	Illinois State
1989-90	Southern Illinois	Southern Illinois/Illinois State
1990-91	Southern Illinois	Missouri State
1991-92	Missouri State	Missouri State
1992-93	Southern Illinois	Missouri State
1993-94	Missouri State	Missouri State
1994-95	Creighton	Missouri State
1995-96	Missouri State	Missouri State
1996-97	Missouri State	Drake
1997-98	Drake	Drake
1998-99	Missouri State	Missouri State
1999-00	Drake	Drake
2000-01	Missouri State	Missouri State/Drake
2001-02	Drake	Creighton
2002-03	Creighton	Creighton/Indiana State
2003-04	Missouri State	Missouri State
2004-05	Missouri State	Missouri State
2005-06	Indiana State	Indiana State
2006-07	Drake	Southern Illinois
2007-08	Drake	Drake/Evansville/Illinois State
2008-09	Illinois State	Illinois State
2009-10	Creighton	Illinois State
2010-11	Missouri State	UNI
2011-12	Missouri State	Missouri State
2012-13	Creighton	Wichita State
2013-14	Indiana State	Indiana State/Wichita State
2014-15	Wichita State	Wichita State
2015-16	Missouri State	UNI
2016-17	Drake	Drake
2017-18	Drake	Drake