



OHIO VALLEY CONFERENCE

Belmont, Murray State Picked as 2012-13 OVC Men's Basketball Favorites; Racers Canaan Named Preseason Player of the Year

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BRENTWOOD, Tenn. - In a vote of Ohio Valley Conference head men's basketball coaches and sports information directors defending champion **Murray State** was picked the favorite in the West Division while newcomer **Belmont** was picked as the East Division favorite in the OVC for 2012-13.

This year marks the first for divisional play in the OVC, which now includes 12 teams for the first time in Conference history.

Murray State led the West Division voting, picking up 22 of a possible 24 first-place votes (schools were not allowed to vote for themselves) and 132 total points. **Southeast Missouri State** was tabbed second and picked up the remaining two first-place votes and 108 points. The West was rounded out by **Austin Peay** (92), **SIUE** (73), **Eastern Illinois** (49) and **UT Martin** (38).

Belmont picked up 21 of the 24 first-place votes and 131 points to be picked the East Division favorites. **Tennessee State** was tabbed second and received the other three first-place votes and 109 points. The East was rounded out by **Tennessee Tech** (87), **Morehead State** (77) and **Eastern Kentucky** (56). Due to a NCAA APR penalty, **Jacksonville State** is ineligible for the OVC and NCAA Tournaments this season and was not included in the preseason voting.

Last year Murray State completed a 31-2 season (tying the most wins in OVC history), won both the OVC regular season and tournament championships, advanced to the third round of the NCAA Tournament, was ranked as high as No. 7 nationally (the highest-ranking in school history and first OVC team to be ranked in the Top 10 since the 1970-71 season), was the last undefeated team in Division I at 23-0 and the only team to be undefeated in road games (13-0). Along the way the Racers won the Great Alaska Shootout Championship and topped nationally-ranked Memphis and Saint Mary's during the year. After topping Tennessee State in the OVC Tournament Championship game, the team earned a No. 6 seed in the West Region, marking the highest-seed earned by an OVC school since the tournament began seeding in 1979. MSU bested Colorado State in the second round before falling to Marquette in the third round. This season second year head coach **Steve Prohm** has two key starters returning including first-team All-American **Isaiah Canaan**, who was named the OVC Player of the Year last season and who has been selected a preseason All-American this season. Canaan ranked 24th nationally in scoring last year (19.0 points/game) while also ranking sixth in 3-point percentage (45.6%). Also back is forward **Ed Daniel** who led the OVC with 1.5 blocks/game a year ago and hit 57.8 percent of his field goal attempts. Among the newcomers is junior guard **Dexter Fields**, who sat out last year after transferring from UAB. Over the past three years the Racers have won three OVC regular season championships while compiling an 85-16 overall and 46-6 OVC record.

After 11 years of competition in the Atlantic Sun Conference Belmont became an official member of the OVC on July 1. The Bruins have had tremendous success in recent years, appearing in the NCAA Tournament in five of the last seven seasons including both of the last two years. Head coach **Rick Byrd** has compiled a 545-284 record in 26 years at the Nashville-based school and returns 11 letterwinners and three starters from last year's team that was 27-8 overall. The team's strength is its senior backcourt of **Kerron Johnson** and **Ian Clark**, who were both named Preseason All-OVC selections without every playing a game in the Conference. The duo have combined for 2,246 career points, the fifth-highest total among returning backcourts in Division I basketball this season. Johnson led the team in scoring (13.8) last season while also dishing out 177 assists (5.2/game) and hitting 51.8 percent of his shots. Clark was second on the team in scoring (12.7) and knocked down 92 3-pointers in 34 games.

Joining Belmont in the East Division is cross-town foe Tennessee State, who last year came within one shot of appearing in its first NCAA Tournament since 1994. The Tigers were the only OVC foe to top Murray State a year ago (a 72-68 victory on Feb. 9), but lost 54-52 in the title game of the OVC Tournament and had to settle for an appearance in the CollegeInsider.com Postseason Tournament (CIT). The team finished the year with 20 victories, the first 20-win season for the program since 1978-79. This season **Travis Williams** takes over as the Tigers head coach after serving as an assistant coach on the Tigers staff for three seasons under John Cooper, who left to coach at Miami (Ohio). Williams has 10 players and four starters back from last season including All-OVC selection **Robert Covington**. Covington is one of the most versatile players in the league and last year ranked second in the OVC in rebounding (7.9/game), third in scoring (17.9/game), third in 3-point percentage (44.8%), fourth in blocks (1.4/game), fifth in steals (1.5/game), seventh in field goal percentage (52.6%) and ninth in 3-pointers made (2.0/game). Also back is preseason All-OVC selection **Patrick Miller** who averaged 10.8 points, 3.6 rebounds, 3.6 assists and 1.5 steals/game last year.

Second-year head coach **Steve Payne** led Tennessee Tech to 19 wins in his first season as head coach, after he had spent nine seasons as the Golden Eagles assistant coach. Payne did lose leading scorer Kevin Murphy to graduation (Murphy was drafted by the Utah Jazz) but has three starters back this year. That group is led by senior guard **Jud Dillard**, who led the OVC in rebounding (8.5) while ranking fourth in the league in scoring (17.3 points/game); Dillard was named a first-team All-OVC selection last year and is a preseason All-OVC selection this season.

After two NCAA Tournament appearances (and victories) in the past four years, Morehead State is now under the direction of head coach **Sean Woods**, who led Mississippi Valley State to the NCAA Tournament a year ago. After losing All-American Kenneth Faried to the NBA before last season and leading scorer Terrance Hill to an injury early in the year, the Eagles overachieved in winning 18 games overall and finishing third in OVC play. This year Woods has 13 newcomers on the roster that also includes junior big man **Drew Kelly**. Kelly averaged 10.2 points and 4.8 rebounds/game in 33 total games (32 starts) last year.

Eastern Kentucky enters the eighth season under head coach **Jeff Neubauer**. Neubauer has eight returning letterwinners to blend with six newcomers this season. The returning starters include senior guard **Mike DiNunno** who averaged 9.5 points, 2.8 assists and 1.5 steals/game in his first season with the Colonels, and sophomore **Eric Stutz** who averaged 8.0 points, a team-best 4.5 rebounds and connected on 55.1 percent of his field goal attempts (third in the OVC).

Despite being ineligible for postseason play this year, Jacksonville State is looking to build on the success it had at the end of last season. The Gamecocks won eight of its final 11 regular season games and topped Austin Peay in the first round of the OVC Tournament, marking the program's

first neutral site victory in that event. This year head coach **James Green** has four starters back including junior guard **Brian Williams** who averaged 13.2 points, 3.1 assists and 2.8 rebounds/game last year. Other returning starters include seniors **Ronnie Boggs** (7.4 points, 4.5 rebounds/game) and **Tarvin Gaines** (10.9 points, 4.3 rebounds/game) and junior **Nick Cook** (6.0 points, 4.8 rebounds/game).

In the West Division, Southeast Missouri has improved in each of its first three seasons under head coach **Dickey Nutt** and will look to push favorite Murray State. The Redhawks finished fifth in the OVC standings (9-7, its first winning OVC record since 2004-05) last year and this season the team has seven letterwinners and three starters back, including two players selected to the preseason All-OVC squad. One of those preseason picks is junior forward **Tyler Stone**, who averaged 14.7 points and 7.3 rebounds/game in his first season with Southeast Missouri after transferring from Missouri; those numbers earned him second-team All-OVC and All-Newcomer honors last year. Senior guard **Marland Smith** enters his final year in a Redhawk uniform 16th on the school's career scoring list (1,089) and third on the career 3-pointers made chart (188); Smith averaged 12.3 points/game a season ago.

Austin Peay struggled in compiling a 12-20 overall record last season, but the team did finish 8-8 in the OVC, marking the 19th-straight season the team has been .500 or better in Conference action. This year the Governors return nine letterwinners as well as getting back senior **Anthony Campbell** from injury. Campbell, a second-team All-OVC selection in 2009-10, played in only 10 games in 2010-11 before suffering an injury and last year he was once again hurt 10 games into the season. Head coach **Dave Loos**, who enters his 23rd season with the team and who is the winningest coach in OVC history, also has back sophomore guard **Herdie Lawrence** (who started four of the final five games of the season) and junior forward **Will Triggs** (6.2 points and 3.9 rebound/game).

After completing its reclassification process to Division I, SIUE is now eligible for postseason play for the first time this season. The Cougars return 10 players and four starters from last year's team that was 6-10 in OVC play. Among the returning starters is senior **Mark Yelovich**, a preseason All-OVC selection. Yelovich averaged 15.1 points (eighth in the OVC) and 6.2 rebounds (seventh in the league) per game a season ago. Sophomore guard **Kris Davis** led all Division I players in 3-point percentage last season, connecting on 58-of-97 (59.8%) attempts while **Jerome Jones** was named an All-Newcomer pick after averaging 12.7 points and 5.9 rebounds/game.

The Eastern Illinois team will have a new look in 2012-13, as **Jay Spoonhour** takes over as head coach and has a roster that includes just seven returning players (who combined to start only 13 total games last year). Spoonhour, the son of coaching legend Charlie Spoonhour, came to EIU after a successful stint as head coach at Moberly Area Community College and also brings more than 10 years of experience as a NCAA Division I assistant coach.

UT Martin returns four starters from last year's team that was winless in OVC competition. Among those starters is junior **Mike Liabo** who averaged 15.2 points/game last season and sophomore **Myles Taylor** who was an OVC All-Newcomer selection after averaging 13.7 points and 5.2 rebounds/game. The team also returns sophomore **Terence Smith**, who averaged 11.3 points/game as a freshman in 2010-11 but missed all of last season.

The 2012-13 season kicks off with an exhibition contest on Oct. 30 while the first regular season games will be played on Friday, Nov. 9. The 2013 Ohio Valley Conference Tournament will be held March 6-9 at Municipal Auditorium in Nashville, Tenn.

2012-13 All-OVC Preseason Men's Basketball Team

The 2012-13 All-OVC Preseason Men's Basketball team is headlined by Murray State senior **Isaiah Canaan**, who is the defending OVC Player of the Year and a preseason All-American selection.

Overall six different schools were represented on the team with Belmont, Murray State, Southeast Missouri and Tennessee State having two selections apiece while SIUE and Tennessee Tech each had one selection to round out the team. The squad features three players who were All-OVC first-team selections last season, two players who were second-team selections and one player who was selected to the All-Newcomer squad. The team is comprised of eight seniors and two juniors.

Last season Canaan was named the 2012 OVC Player of the Year and 2011-12 OVC Male Athlete of the Year after ranking 24th nationally in scoring (19.0), sixth in 3-point percentage (45.6%) and 13th in 3-pointers made/game (2.97). He was the leader of the Murray State men's basketball team that completed a 31-2 season (tying the most wins in OVC history), won both the OVC regular season and tournament championships, advanced to the third round of the NCAA Tournament, was ranked as high as No. 7 nationally (the highest-ranking in school history and first OVC team to be ranked in the Top 10 since the 1970-71 season), was the last undefeated team in Division I at 23-0 and the only team to be undefeated in road games (13-0). Following last season he was named an All-American by seven different outlets including the Wooden Team (one of 10 total players), The Sporting News (first-team), CBSSports.com (first-team), Associated Press (second-team), USBWA (second-team), NABC (third-team) and Lute Olson Team. He was also one of five finalists for the Bob Cousy Award, given to the nation's top point guard.

In addition to Canaan, Tennessee State senior forward **Robert Covington** (17.8 points, 7.9 rebounds, 1.5 steals, 1.4 blocks, 1.3 assists/game while making 52.6% from the field and 44.8% from 3-point range) and Tennessee Tech senior guard **Jud Dillard** (17.3 points and an OVC-best 8.5 rebounds/game) were each first-team selections last year and are on the preseason team this year.

The second-team selections from last year appearing on the preseason team this year are Southeast Missouri junior forward **Tyler Stone** (14.7 points, 7.3 rebounds and 1.1 blocks/game while hitting 53.0% from the field) and SIUE senior forward **Mark Yelovich** (15.1 points, 6.2 rebounds/game).

The Preseason All-OVC team is rounded out by the Belmont senior backcourt duo of **Kerron Johnson** (13.8 points, 5.2 assists, 3.1 rebounds/game and 51.8% from the field) and **Ian Clark** (12.7 points, 2.6 rebounds and 2.4 assists/game to go along with 92 made 3-pointers), Murray State senior forward **Ed Daniel** (6.8 points, 5.5 rebounds and 1.5 blocks/game while hitting 57.8 percent from the field), Tennessee State junior guard **Patrick Miller** (10.8 points, 3.6 rebounds and 3.6 assists/game) and Southeast Missouri senior guard **Marland Smith** (12.3 points, 3.0 rebounds, 2.5 assists/game and 63 made 3-pointers).

2012-13 OVC Men's Basketball Predicted Order of Finish

(Selected by OVC Head Basketball Coaches and Sports Information Directors)

	<u>Order of Finish</u>	<u>Points</u>
East		
1.	Belmont (21 first-place votes)	131
2.	Tennessee State (3)	109
3.	Tennessee Tech	87
4.	Morehead State	77
5.	Eastern Kentucky	56
-	Jacksonville State	n/a
West		
1.	Murray State (22)	132
2.	Southeast Missouri (2)	108
3.	Austin Peay	92
4.	SIUE	73
5.	Eastern Illinois	49
6.	UT Martin	38

6 points awarded for a first-place vote, 5 for second, etc. - Coaches and SID's could not vote for their own teams

Note: Due to a NCAA APR penalty, Jacksonville State is not eligible for the OVC or NCAA Tournaments and was not ranked.

2012-13 Preseason All-Ohio Valley Conference Men's Basketball Team

(Selected by OVC Head Basketball Coaches and Sports Information Directors)

Preseason OVC Player of the Year: Isaiah Canaan, Murray State

<u>NAME, SCHOOL</u>	<u>POS.</u>	<u>HT.</u>	<u>WT.</u>	<u>CL.</u>	<u>HOMETOWN</u>	<u>KEY STATS FROM 2011-12</u>
Isaiah Canaan, Murray State * & @	G	6-1	195	Sr.	Biloxi, Miss.	19.0 ppg, 3.5 rpg, 3.6 apg, 98 made 3's
Ian Clark, Belmont	G	6-3	175	Sr.	Memphis, Tenn.	12.7 ppg, 2.6 rpg, 2.4 apg, 92 made 3's
Robert Covington, Tennessee State * ^ @	F	6-9	215	Sr.	Bellwood, Ill.	17.8 ppg, 7.9 rpg, 1.5 spg, 1.4 bpg, 52.6 FG%
Ed Daniel, Murray State	F	6-7	228	Sr.	Birmingham, Ala.	6.8 ppg, 5.5 rpg, 1.5 bpg, 57.8 FG%
Jud Dillard, Tennessee Tech *	G	6-5	190	Sr.	Riverdale, Ga.	17.3 ppg, 8.5 rpg, 1.3 apg, 51.8 FG%
Kerron Johnson, Belmont	G	6-1	175	Sr.	Huntsville, Ala.	13.8 ppg, 5.2 apg, 3.1 rpg, 51.8 FG%
Patrick Miller, Tennessee State	G	6-1	189	Jr.	Chicago, Ill.	10.8 ppg, 3.6 rpg, 3.6 apg, 1.5 spg
Marland Smith, Southeast Missouri	G	6-2	175	Sr.	Little Rock, Ark.	12.3 ppg, 3.0 rpg, 2.5 apg, 63 made 3's
Tyler Stone, Southeast Missouri # %	F	6-8	230	Jr.	Memphis, Tenn.	14.7 ppg, 7.3 rpg, 1.1 bpg, 53.0 FG%
Mark Yelovich, SIUE #	F	6-6	223	Sr.	Mt. Zion, Ill.	15.1 ppg, 6.2 rpg, 1.2 apg, 46.9 FG%

* - 1st team All-OVC team in 2011-12
& - 1st team All-OVC in 2010-11

- 2nd team All-OVC team in 2011-12
^ - 2nd team All-OVC in 2010-11

% - OVC All-Newcomer team in 2011-12
@ - OVC All-Newcomer team in 2009-10

