



OHIO VALLEY CONFERENCE

Tennessee Tech Picked to Win East and UT Martin Picked to Win West in 2012-13 OVC Women's Basketball; UTM's Heather Butler Selected as Preseason Player of the Year

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BRENTWOOD, Tenn. - In a preseason poll of the league's head coaches and sports information directors, **Tennessee Tech** has been selected to win the Ohio Valley Conference Women's Basketball East Division while **UT Martin** is picked to take the West Division in 2012-13. The Golden Eagles earned 15 first-place votes and 121 points while the Skyhawks picked up 19 first-place votes and 129 points.

Eastern Kentucky is selected to finish second in the East Division after earning six first-place votes and 106 points. OVC newcomer **Belmont** garnered the three remaining first-place nods and 86 points in the East to be predicted to place third. Rounding out the East Division are **Morehead State** (69), **Tennessee State** (68) and **Jacksonville State** (40).

In the West Division, **Eastern Illinois** picked up the remaining five first-place votes and 113 points for a second-place predicted finish. **SIUE**, which is in its first season as a full Division I member, is selected to finish third with 86 points followed by **Murray State** (77), **Austin Peay** (47) and **Southeast Missouri** (39).

Tennessee Tech is coming off a season in which it went 17-17 overall and 11-5 in Conference play to finish fourth. The Golden Eagles made its second straight trip to the championship game of the league tournament last year where it fell to top-seeded UT Martin, 82-65. Tech played in a postseason tournament for the second consecutive season as it participated in the Women's Basketball Invitational where it fell at Bradley, 74-71. The Golden Eagles will be under new direction for just the fifth time in the programs' 42 year history as Jim Davis takes over the reigns. Davis has experience in the OVC as he coached for one season at former league member Middle Tennessee. He led the Blue Raiders to the OVC regular-season and tournament crowns in 1986-87. Davis brings 19 years of Division I coaching experience with 18 of those coming with ACC member Clemson. In his first season at Tech, Davis will have four starters among eight returning players from last year's squad. Among the top returnees is senior guard Jala Harris. The Madison, Ala., native is the team's top returning scorer after putting up 15.2 points per game. Also coming back this season is junior forward Molly Hedy. A product of Monterey, Tenn., Hedy averaged 8.2 points and 4.6 rebounds for the Golden Eagles last year.

UT Martin went 15-1 in the OVC and 23-9 overall last year to claim its second regular-season title and first since the 1998-99 season. The Skyhawks went on to win its second straight league tournament title as it defeated Tennessee Tech, 82-65, in the championship game. UT Martin earned the league's automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament for the second consecutive season and fell to Tennessee, 72-49. Kevin McMillan is in his fourth season at the helm of the Skyhawks and will have three starters among five players returning from last year's championship team. Among the top returnees is the duo of Heather Butler (Medina, Tenn.) and Jasmine Newsome (Millington, Tenn.). Butler, a junior guard, was selected as the league's Preseason Player of the Year after leading the league and ranking fourth in the nation with 23.8 points per game. Butler was third in the NCAA with a conference-best 42.3 three-point field goal percentage. She is one of 25 players nationally to be named to the Preseason Wade Trophy Watch List. Newsome, a junior guard, was named the 2011-12 OVC Player of the Year. She led the league with 6.0 assists and 2.7 steals per game while ranking second with 19.6 points each time out. Butler and Newsome combined for 1,386 of UT Martin's 2,563 points last season.

Belmont officially joins the league this season while SIUE becomes a full-time Division I member this year. The Cougars will be eligible for postseason play this year after finishing third in the OVC last season. The Bruins went 12-18 overall and 11-7 in the Atlantic Sun to finish third last season.

The 2012-13 campaign kicks off on Nov. 1 when Tennessee State host North Alabama and UT Martin welcomes Martin Methodist in exhibition games. The regular-season begins on Nov. 9 with Conference play starting on Dec. 29. Nine different teams have won a regular-season title with Tennessee Tech leading the way with 16.

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2011-12 All-OVC Preseason Women's Basketball Team

The 2012-13 Preseason All-OVC is headlined by UT Martin senior guard Heather Butler who was selected as the Preseason Player of the Year.

The preseason squad features players from seven different teams led by Eastern Illinois with three selections. UT Martin earned a pair of honors while Eastern Kentucky, Murray State, SIUE, Tennessee State and Tennessee Tech each have one pick. Three members of the squad were selected to the All-OVC team last year while five earned second team honors and two were on the All-Newcomer squad.

Butler was a first team All-OVC selection last year after leading the league and ranking fourth in the nation with 23.8 points per game. She also topped the OVC in three-point field goal percentage (42.3%) and three-point field goals made (3.1 per game). She also finished among league leaders in field goal percentage (42.6%), assists (3.3 apg) and free throw percentage (81.1%)

In addition to Butler, Eastern Illinois' **Ta'Kenya Nixon** (16.3 ppg, 52.4 fG%) and UT Martin's **Jasmine Newsome** (19.6 ppg, 6.0 apg) were each All-OVC first team picks last year and earned spots on the Preseason All-Conference team this year.

Rounding out the preseason squad are Eastern Illinois' **Mariah King** (12.5 ppg, 7.0 rpg) and **Sydney Mitchell** (11.0 ppg, 45.2 FG%); SIUE's **Raven Berry** (11.7 ppg, 9.8 rpg); Murray State's **Erica Burgess** (16.8 ppg, 5.3 rpg); Tennessee State's **Jasmin Shuler** (15.2 pp, 2.5 3-pt field goals made per game); Tennessee Tech's **Jala Harris** (15.2 ppg, 42.2 FG%); and Eastern Kentucky's **Marie Carpenter** (13.4 ppg, 41.8 3-PT FG%).

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

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

EAST

Order of Finish

Points

1. Tennessee Tech (15 first-place votes)	121
2. Eastern Kentucky (Six first-place votes)	108
3. Belmont (Three first-place votes)	86
4. Morehead State	69
5. Tennessee State	68
6. Jacksonville State	40

WEST

Order of Finish

Points

1. UT Martin (19 first-place votes)	129
2. Eastern Illinois (Five first-place votes)	113
3. SIUE	86
4. Murray State	77
5. Austin Peay	47
6. Southeast Missouri	39

(*Schools were not allowed to rank their own team. 6 points awarded for a first-place vote, five for second, etc.)

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

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

Preseason OVC Player of the Year: Heather Butler, UT Martin

<u>NAME, SCHOOL</u>	<u>POS.</u>	<u>HT.</u>	<u>CL.</u>	<u>HOMETOWN</u>	<u>KEY STATS FROM 2011-12</u>
Ta'Kenya Nixon, Eastern Illinois*	G	5'8	Sr.	Michigan City, Ind.	16.3 ppg; 52.4 FG%
Jasmine Newsome, UT Martin*	G	5'7	Jr.	Millington, Tenn.	19.6 ppg; 6.0 apg
Heather Butler, UT Martin*	G	5'6	Jr.	Medina, Tenn.	23.8 ppg; 42.3 3-PT FG%
Raven Berry, SIUE#	F/C	6'1	Sr.	Collinsville, Ill.	11.7 ppg; 9.8 rpg
Mariah King, Eastern Illinois#	F	6'2	Sr.	Chicago, Ill.	12.5 ppg; 7.0 rpg
Erica Burgess, Murray State#%	G	5'6	Jr.	Memphis, Tenn.	16.8 ppg; 5.3 rpg
Jasmin Shuler, Tennessee State#	G	5'8	Sr.	Clarksville, Tenn.	15.2 ppg; 2.5 3-PT FG made per game
Jala Harris, Tennessee Tech#%	G	5'5	Sr.	Madison, Ala.	15.2 ppg; 42.2 FG%
Sydney Mitchell, Eastern Illinois	F	6'1	Sr.	Columbus, Ind.	11.0 ppg; 45.2 FG%
Marie Carpenter, Eastern Kentucky	G	5'8	Jr.	Nashville, Tenn.	13.4 ppg; 41.8 3-PT FG%

* - 1st team All-OVC in 2011-12

- 2nd team All-OVC in 2011-12

% - OVC All-Newcomer team in 2011-12

