



Eastern Kentucky, Murray State, Southeast Missouri Picked as 2013-14 OVC Men's Basketball Favorites; Redhawks Stone Named Preseason Player of the Year

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BRENTWOOD, Tenn. - In a vote of Ohio Valley Conference head men's basketball coaches and sports information directors **Eastern Kentucky** has been picked the favorites in the East Division while **Murray State** and **Southeast Missouri State** were tabbed co-favorites in the West Division in the OVC for 2013-14.

Eastern Kentucky picked up 18 of a possible 24 first-place votes (schools were not allowed to vote for themselves) and a total of 128 points to lead all vote getting. The Colonels were followed in the East by defending OVC champion **Belmont**, who picked up the remaining six first-place votes and 116 total points. The East Division voting was rounded out by **Morehead State** (74 points), **Jacksonville State** (72), **Tennessee State** (60) and **Tennessee Tech** (42).

The top of the West Division was shared by Southeast Missouri and defending West Champions Murray State. The Redhawks received 13 first-place votes while the Racers picked up the remaining 11 to both finish with 117 total points. The West was rounded out by **Austin Peay** (90 points), **UT Martin** (66), **Eastern Illinois** (58) and **SIUE** (44).

Eastern Kentucky returns four starters and 13 letterwinners from last year's team that won a school record 25 games. The team lost in the semi-finals of the OVC Tournament but was awarded with a berth in the CollegeInsider.com Postseason Tournament (CIT) where the Colonels topped Gardner-Webb in the first round, marking the first national postseason victory for the program in 68 years. Among the team's returning players are guards **Glenn Cosey** and **Corey Walden**, both of who are preseason All-OVC selections after being OVC All-Newcomer picks at the end of last season. Despite missing six games due to an injury, Cosey averaged 15.2 points/game, which ranked ninth in the OVC, and made 2.8 3-pointers/game, which was third-best in the league. Walden led the OVC in free throw percentage (87.8%) while also contributing 13 points and 3.5 rebounds/game. Also back is senior forward **Eric Stutz** who saved his best for late in the season, averaging 15.8 points, 6.3 rebounds, 2.0 assists and 1.5 steals/game in four postseason contests. The Colonels are hoping that combination of players will lead to an OVC regular season championship, something the program has not won since the 1979 season.

Southeast Missouri returns four starters from last year's team that finished second in the West Division and turned in its first winning season (17-16) since 2004-05 and also recorded the most wins in a season since 2000-01. Included in those returning players is Preseason OVC Player of the Year **Tyler Stone**. The senior has made a big impact with the Redhawks since transferring from Missouri and last season averaged 15.5 points (eighth in the OVC) and 7.8 rebounds (fifth in the OVC) per game. Stone also ranked fifth in the OVC in blocked shots and scored in double figures in 30 of his 33 contests. He is joined by junior **Nino Johnson** who ranked second in the OVC in blocked shots as a sophomore, in setting a new Southeast single-season blocks record (84). Johnson also averaged 11.1 points/game and connected on 56.6 percent of his field goal attempts. The other returning starters are senior guards **A.J. Jones** (8.6 points, 3.3 rebounds/game) and **Lucas Nutt** (5.6 points, 5.4 assists/game).

Murray State won the West Division last season, finishing second overall in the league before losing to Belmont in the OVC Tournament championship. The team has said goodbye to one of the top players in OVC history in All-American Isaiah Canaan (who is now with the Houston Rockets); during his four years the team finished as either the regular season or divisional champion each season, compiling a 56-12 league mark over that stretch. That success has garnered the program respect (being picked as co-favorites in the West) despite MSU returning just one starter and six total players from last year's team. The Racers, however, will be without guard **Zay Jackson** who was slated to return after a year away from the program, but suffered a injury in the preseason and will miss the year (Note: the OVC preseason voting was conducted prior to his injury). The lone starter returning is senior guard **Dexter Fields** who averaged 6.5 points/game in his first season with the program while knocking down 56 3-pointers. Among five newcomers is Clemson transfer guard **T.J. Sapp** who will be eligible after the first semester. The Racers are looking to continue its streak of 26 consecutive winning seasons, a mark that ranks tied for fourth nationally.

Austin Peay was picked third in the West Division despite winning just eight games last year. But the Governors, who have finished .500 or better in OVC play in 19 of the last 20 seasons, have three starters back, two of whom landed on the Preseason All-OVC Team. In his first season with the Governors, senior guard **Travis Betran** led the team in scoring (17.2 points/game) while connecting on 84 3-pointers, which ranked fourth in the Conference. Fellow senior **Will Triggs** also landed on the preseason team after averaging 12.2 points and 5.3 rebounds/game last season and connecting on 54 percent of his field goal attempts. In the middle the Gobs return sophomore **Chris Horton** who shattered the APSU single-season blocks record, breaking the old record by 17 in netting 100 total blocks; the 100 blocks were the fourth-most in OVC history. Head coach **Dave Loos** returns for his 24th season at Austin Peay and this year without being in the role of Austin Peay's Director of Athletics. Loos, the winningest coach in OVC history, stepped down from that position, which he had held for 17 years, to concentrate on basketball.

UT Martin closed last season strong, including its first-ever victory at Murray State, to earn the No. 8 seed in the OVC Tournament; that came one season after the Skyhawks had gone winless in OVC play. This year the team returns 11 players and four starters including Preseason All-OVC selection **Myles Taylor**. Taylor missed the OVC Tournament last year with an injury but during the regular season ranked sixth in the OVC in both scoring (16.2 points/game) and rebounding (7.2 rebounds/game). He scored in double figures in 27 games, including eight games with 20 or more points, and recorded six double-doubles.

In the first season under head coach **Jay Spoonhour**, Eastern Illinois won four of its final five games to lock up the No. 7 seed for the OVC Tournament, marking its first appearance in the event since 2010. This season the Panthers welcome 14 newcomers to its 18-player roster including three players who sat out as redshirts a year ago. Among those redshirts is UNLV transfer **Reggie Smith** who will join returning starters **Sherman Blanford** (10.5 points and 6.4 rebounds/game) and **Josh Piper** (10.2 points, 4.4 rebounds/game) this season. Among the newcomers are two of the tallest players in program history in brothers **Matt and Luke Piotrowski** (standing 7'2" and 6'11" respectively).

SIUE returns three starters from last year's team that missed out on the OVC Tournament due to a tiebreaker. Last year was the first that SIUE

had been eligible for OVC and NCAA postseason play after its reclassifying to Division I. Among the returners who will look to lead the Cougars to its first OVC Tournament are junior guard **Kris Davis** (11.7 points, 3.5 assists/game), senior guard **Tim Johnson** (7.3 points, 2.8 rebounds/game) and junior guard **Michael Messer** (8.9 points, 4.4 rebounds/game).

Joining Eastern Kentucky in the East is Belmont, who won both the OVC regular season and tournament championships in its first year in the OVC. The Bruins finished the year 26-7 overall and were 14-2 in OVC play and most likely would have been an at-large selection to the NCAA Tournament had it not won the OVC Tournament; the Bruins had a Top 20 RPI and the No. 2 non-conference strength of schedule entering the NCAA Tournament. Belmont graduated its decorated backcourt of Ian Clark (now with the Utah Jazz) and Kerron Johnson (who hit the game-tying shot in regulation and game-winning shot in overtime in the OVC Tournament title game) but returns eight total players, two starters and a key transfer. The returning starters are Preseason All-OVC selection **J.J. Mann** (10.5 points, 4.7 rebounds, 2.5 assists and 1.9 steals/game) and **Blake Jenkins** (9.6 points, 4.6 rebounds/game) while the team is also bolstered by Samford transfer **Drew Windler** who sat out last season. Overall Belmont has an 80-20 record over the past three seasons, making them one of just six programs nationally with an .800-plus winning percentage.

In its first year under head coach **Sean Woods** Morehead State earned the No. 5 seed for the OVC Tournament in finishing 8-8 in Conference play. The Eagles topped UT Martin in the first round before falling to Tennessee State in the quarterfinals; MSU has now won at least one game in the OVC Tournament in each of the past five years. Morehead State returns eight players from that team including seniors **Bakari Turner** (8.2 points/game), **Chad Posthumus** (7.5 points, 6.8 rebounds/game) and **Drew Kelly** (7.1 points/game) and junior **Angelo Warner** (10.9 points, 4.4 rebounds, 2.2 assists/game). The squad also has two transfers who sat out last season that are now eligible to play among its group of nine total newcomers.

Last season Jacksonville State was ineligible for postseason play because of NCAA APR penalties; this season, however, the Gamecocks are fully eligible and ready to make a run at the postseason. Over the last two seasons Jax State has had back-to-back .500 or better seasons in Conference play, the first time that has happened for the program since joining the league in 2003-04. The Gamecocks were 17-11 overall a year ago, which marked the second-best record in the program's Division I history. This season the team has eight returning players and three returning starters. Among those returning starters is the team's backcourt of junior **Darion Rackley** (13.7 points/game) and senior **Brian Williams** (13.1 points, 4.3 assists/game).

Tennessee State will look to replace a trio of seniors who combined for nearly 45 points and 18 rebounds/game last season. Despite losing four starters overall, the team returns senior **Patrick Miller** who was a first-team All-OVC selection as a junior a year ago. Miller led the OVC in assists (5.8/game) while also contributing 14.8 points (11th in OVC), 4.3 rebounds and 1.7 steals/game (8th in the OVC). The guard was also a key leader for the team when Robert Covington (who is now with the Houston Rockets) missed time with an injury during the middle of the season. The team also returns **M.J. Rhett**, who pulled down 6.1 rebounds/game and blocked 32 shots a year ago.

Tennessee Tech welcomes seven newcomers (including five junior college transfers) to its roster to join four returning starters. Among the returners is senior **Dennis Ogbe** who led the OVC in field goal percentage (61.8%) last season while averaging 10.8 points/game overall and 12.4 points/game in OVC play. He is joined by senior guard **Jeremiah Samarrippas** who dished out 123 assists in his first year with the Golden Eagle program in 2012-13.

The 2013-14 season kicks off with an exhibition contest on Oct. 29 while the first regular season games will be played on Friday, Nov. 8. The 2014 Ohio Valley Conference Tournament will be held March 5-8 at Municipal Auditorium in Nashville, Tenn.

2013-14 All-OVC Preseason Men's Basketball Team

The 2013-14 All-OVC Preseason Men's Basketball team is headlined by Southeast Missouri State senior **Tyler Stone**, who was named the Pre-season Player of the Year.

Overall seven different schools were represented on the team with Austin Peay, Eastern Kentucky and Southeast Missouri having two selections apiece while Belmont, Jacksonville State, Tennessee State and UT Martin had one selection each to round out the team. The squad features two players who were All-OVC first or second-team selections last season and three players who were selected to the All-Newcomer squad. The team is comprised of seven seniors and three juniors.

Last season Stone ranked eighth in the OVC in scoring (15.5 points/game), fifth in rebounding (7.8/game) and blocked shots (1.3/game) and 12th in field goal percentage (49.2%) while leading Southeast Missouri to a winning overall record and berth in the OVC Tournament quarterfinals. Stone scored in double figures in 30 of the Redhawks 33 games including a season-high 32 points against Central Arkansas. Following the season Stone was named a second-team All-OVC selection for the second consecutive year. He was also named an OVC All-Newcomer pick in 2011-12 after transferring from Missouri.

In addition to Stone, Tennessee State senior guard **Patrick Miller** (14.8 points, 5.8 assists, 4.3 rebounds, 1.7 steals/game) is the only other All-OVC first or second-team pick to be named to the preseason team this season; Miller earned first-team honors last season.

The three players named to the OVC All-Newcomer team last year and appearing on the preseason team this season are Austin Peay senior guard **Travis Betran** (17.2 points, 2.7 assists/game, 84 made 3-pointers), Eastern Kentucky senior guard **Glenn Cosey** (15.2 points, 3.3 rebounds, 3.2 assists, 1.6 steals/game, 80 made 3-pointers) and Eastern Kentucky junior guard **Corey Walden** (13.0 points, 3.5 rebounds, 1.9 assists, 1.7 steals/game).

The Preseason All-OVC team is rounded out by Southeast Missouri junior forward **Nino Johnson** (11.1 points, 8.8 rebounds, 2.5 blocks/game, 56.6 FG%), Belmont senior guard/forward **J.J. Mann** (10.5 points, 4.7 rebounds, 2.5 assists, 1.9 steals/game, 64 made 3-pointers), UT Martin junior forward **Myles Taylor** (16.2 points, 7.2 rebounds/game), Austin Peay senior forward **Will Triggs** (12.2 points, 5.3 rebounds/game) and Jacksonville State senior guard **Brian Williams** (13.1 points, 4.3 assists, 2.4 rebounds/game, 51 made 3-pointers).

2013-14 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.	Eastern Kentucky (18 first-place votes)	128
2.	Belmont (6)	116
3.	Morehead State	74
4.	Jacksonville State	72
5.	Tennessee State	60
6.	Tennessee Tech	42
West		
1.	Southeast Missouri (13 first-place votes)	117
	Murray State (11)	117
3.	Austin Peay	90
4.	UT Martin	66
5.	Eastern Illinois	58
6.	SIUE	44

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

2013-14 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: Tyler Stone, Southeast Missouri

<u>NAME. SCHOOL</u>	<u>POS.</u>	<u>HT.</u>	<u>WT.</u>	<u>CL.</u>	<u>HOMETOWN</u>	<u>KEY STATS FROM 2012-13</u>
Travis Betran, Austin Peay %	G	6-3	185	Sr.	Harlem, N.Y.	17.2 ppg, 2.2 rpg, 2.7 apg, 84 3's
Glenn Cosey, Eastern Kentucky %	G	6-0	182	Sr.	Flint, Mich.	15.2 ppg, 3.3 rpg, 3.2 apg, 1.6 spg, 80 3's
Nino Johnson, Southeast Missouri	F	6-9	245	Jr.	Memphis, Tenn.	11.1 ppg, 8.8 rpg, 2.5 bpg, 56.6 FG%
J.J. Mann, Belmont	G/F	6-6	215	Sr.	Smyrna, Ga.	10.5 ppg, 4.7 rpg, 2.5 apg, 1.9 spg, 64 3's
Patrick Miller, Tennessee State *&	G	6-1	195	Sr.	Chicago, Ill.	14.8 ppg, 4.3 rpg, 5.8 apg, 1.7 spg
Tyler Stone, Southeast Missouri #^@	F	6-8	230	Sr.	Memphis, Tenn.	15.5 ppg, 7.8 rpg, 1.3 bpg, 49.2 FG%
Myles Taylor, UT Martin @	F	6-7	250	Jr.	Little Rock, Ark.	16.2 ppg, 7.2 rpg, 47.0 FG%
Will Triggs, Austin Peay	F	6-6	230	Sr.	Edwardsville, Ill.	12.2 ppg, 5.3 rpg, 2.0 apg, 54.0 FG%
Corey Walden, Eastern Kentucky %	G	6-2	206	Jr.	Daytona Beach, Fla.	13.0 ppg, 3.5 rpg, 1.9 apg, 1.7 spg
Brian Williams, Jacksonville State	G	6-1	175	Sr.	Lawrenceville, Ga.	13.1 ppg, 2.4 rpg, 4.3 apg, 51 3's

* - 1st team All-OVC team in 2012-13

- 2nd team All-OVC team in 2012-13

% - OVC All-Newcomer team in 2012-13

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

@ - OVC All-Newcomer team in 2011-12

& - OVC All-Newcomer team in 2010-11