



Murray State Named 2014-15 OVC Men's Basketball Favorites; Racers Payne Tabbed 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 **Murray State** has been picked the preseason favorite for the 2014-15 season.

Murray State, who has won a league-best 23 OVC regular season championships, picked up 15 of 24 first-place votes in being picked the overall regular season champion. The Racers were also tabbed the West Division favorites, picking up 22 of 24 first-place votes in that category, while two-time defending regular season champion **Belmont** was picked the East Division favorites.

In the overall champion voting, in addition to Murray State picking up 15 first-place votes other teams with first-place votes included Belmont (7), **Eastern Kentucky** (1) and **Morehead State** (1).

Since Murray State was picked as the overall champion, they were also an overwhelming favorite to take first place in its own division; the Racers have finished first in the West in each of the first two years of divisional play. MSU received 132 total points to top the West and were followed by **Southeast Missouri** (who picked up the other 2 first-place votes and 109 points), **SIUE** (77), **Austin Peay** (70), **Eastern Illinois** (64) and **UT Martin** (40).

Belmont picked up 16 of the 24 first-place votes and 125 points in being picked the East Division favorite while Morehead State (103) and Eastern Kentucky (102) each picked up four first-place votes. The East was rounded out by **Tennessee Tech** (71), **Jacksonville State** (52) and **Tennessee State** (40).

After playing a challenging non-conference schedule last season Murray State compiled a 13-3 record in Conference play to finish second overall behind Belmont. The Racers suffered a loss in the OVC Tournament semifinals to eventual champion Eastern Kentucky and accepted a bid to the CollegeInsider.com Postseason Tournament (CIT). After a first round road win at Missouri State, MSU came home to defeat Nebraska-Omaha, Towson, Pacific and Yale in succession to win the CIT Championship. This season MSU returns four starters from that squad including Preseason OVC Player of the Year **Cameron Payne** and Preseason All-OVC selections **Jarvis Williams** and **T.J. Sapp**. Payne earned OVC Freshman of the Year honors last season after ranking fourth in the OVC in assists (5.4/game), fifth in steals (1.7/game) and seventh in scoring (16.8 points/game); he was also named MVP of the CIT in helping the Racers to the title. Williams had a 64.8 field goal percentage during the season, which ranked first in the NCAA while also producing a league-best 14 double-doubles to go along with his 14.9 points and 9.9 rebounds/game average. In his first year with MSU after transferring from Clemson, Sapp averaged 13.3 points/game and knocked down 45 3-pointers. The Racers are looking to continue its streak of 27 consecutive winning seasons, a mark that ranks tied for fourth nationally.

After falling in the OVC Tournament Championship game last season, Belmont earned a bid to the National Invitational Tournament (NIT) and became the first OVC team to advance to the NIT Quarterfinals since 2002; the Bruins gave Clemson all it could handle in that matchup before falling by five points. The team did graduate OVC Player of the Year J.J. Mann but returns eight players from last season's 26-10 squad including two players who were named to the Preseason All-OVC Team in guards **Craig Bradshaw** and **Reece Chamberlain**. Bradshaw had a breakout season as a sophomore, going from a 2.2 points/game average his rookie season to averaging 15.7 points/game with increased playing time in 2013-14. Bradshaw also averaged 3.5 rebounds and 3.2 assists/game while knocking down nearly 40 percent of his 3-point attempts. Chamberlain ranked third in the OVC in averaging 5.5 assists/game while also scoring 10.9 points/contest. Entering this year the Bruins are one of just six Division I teams to win 26 or more games in each of the past four seasons.

Morehead State continues to make strides under third-year head coach **Sean Woods** who has improved the team's overall and Conference records in each of his first two seasons with the Eagles. Last year the team was 20-14 overall and 10-6 in Conference contests in earning a bid to the College Basketball Invitational (CBI). This year MSU returns nine players including four starters. That group is led by Preseason All-OVC selection **Angelo Warner** who finished last season ranked sixth in the OVC in scoring (17.5 points/game), third in steals (2.0/game) and fourth in minutes played (34.8/game). The senior Warner became a member of the school's 1,000-Point Club last season. He will share the backcourt with senior **Kareem Storey** who ranked fifth in the OVC in assists (5.1/game) last season.

Eastern Kentucky captured the OVC Tournament Championship in 2014 and gave No. 2 seed Kansas all it wanted before falling in the Second Round of the NCAA Tournament. The team returns eight players from that squad including 2013-14 OVC Defensive Player of the Year **Corey Walden**. Walden was also named a Defensive All-American by CollegeInsider.com after finishing the year with 76 steals (2.2/game) and also adding 13.8 points and 4.1 rebounds/game. He also earned OVC Tournament MVP honors in helping his team to three wins in as many days in Nashville; he scored 29 points in the team's title victory over Belmont. Also returning is senior forward **Eric Stutz** who shot 65.1 percent from the field while averaging 8.6 points and 4.6 rebounds/game; he scored 15 points against Kansas in the NCAA Tournament. The team got off to an early start this season with a preseason trip to Australia in August.

Tennessee Tech begins year number four under head coach **Steve Payne** and also got the benefits of a summer foreign tour when the Golden Eagles played five games in the Dominican Republic (compiling a 4-1 record). The team welcomes seven newcomers this season but has experience back in senior center **Dwan Caldwell**, who led the team in scoring (10.7/game) and blocks (33) a season ago, and senior swingman **Javon McKay** who is the program's most experienced player, having played 91 games in a Golden Eagle uniform.

Jacksonville State returns seven players from last year's team that was 10-21 overall. Among the returning players is senior guard **Darion Rackley** who led the team with a 13.1 points/game average last season while also dishing out 61 assists and netting 36 steals. Also back is senior forward **D.J. Felder** who averaged 8.3 points and 4.9 rebounds/game.

Dana Ford takes over as the head coach at Tennessee State and at just 30 years of age is the youngest head coach in Division I. Ford served as an assistant coach at TSU under John Cooper (2009-11) and helped recruit current NBA player Robert Covington as well as current Tigers senior **Jay Harris**. Harris is the lone returning player from last year's squad and when paired with newcomer **Christian Crockett** (who played his freshman season at Mt. Saint Mary's) mark the only two players on the roster with Division I experience, making TSU the least experienced team in the country.

Southeast Missouri continues to make strides under head coach **Dickey Nutt** who enters his sixth season with the Redhawks in 2014-15. Nutt's teams have improved in each of his first five seasons with the program including winning 18 games a season ago. The 18 victories were the most for the program since the 2000-01 season. The team ranked among the top 10 in the nation in field goal percentage (49.9%), scoring offense (82.9 points/game) and assists (16.7/game) a season ago. Among the team's returning players this season is senior guard and Preseason All-OVC selection **Jarekious Bradley** who averaged 19.0 points/game and knocked down 75 3-pointers in his debut season with the team. Also back is senior forward **Nino Johnson** (8.5 points, 6.0 rebounds/game) and sophomore guard **Antonius Cleveland** (9.1 points, 1.7 assists/game).

SIUE appeared in its first Division I postseason a year ago, finishing 7-9 in OVC play and qualifying for one of the eight spots in the OVC Tournament field. The team set Division I program bests for overall wins (11) and Conference victories (7) while winning nine games at home. This season the team features five seniors, including **Kris Davis** and **Michael Messer** who have played their entire careers for the Cougars. Davis is just 94 points away from becoming the 15th player in SIUE history to reach 1,000 points while Messer is 19 games away from playing in his 100th career game with the Cougars.

Austin Peay failed to make the OVC Tournament field for the second consecutive season last year, marking the first time since the early 1980s that had occurred. The team looks to get back to its winning ways this season with six returning players, a pair of junior college transfers and four freshmen. Among the returning players is Preseason All-OVC selection **Chris Horton** who is poised to set the school's all-time blocks record this season. The junior Horton enters the year with 192 blocks, just 66 away from breaking the school record held of 257 held by Josh Lewis; when he reaches that mark he will rank second in OVC history. Horton also averaged 13.2 points and 9.5 rebounds/game while hitting 59.5 percent from the field.

Eastern Illinois has qualified for the OVC Tournament in each of **Jay Spoonhour's** first two seasons as head coach. This season his team returns nine letterwinners and four starters including senior guard **Reggie Smith**. Smith led the team with a 13.1 points/game average while also dishing out a team-high 84 assists last year. Junior forward **Chris Olivier** joined the team at the semester break last season and finished the year averaging 11.4 points and 4.4 rebounds/game.

After three years as an assistant coach at UNLV, former Portland State and Wyoming head coach **Heath Schroyer** takes over as the ninth head coach in UT Martin program history. Schroyer inherits seven players from last year's team including Preseason All-OVC selection **Myles Taylor**. The senior Taylor averaged 14.6 points and 6.3 rebounds/game last season while hitting 50.9 percent from the field; he enters the season ranked eighth in career scoring in UTM history. Also back is redshirt senior **Marshun Newell** (10.5 points, team-best 3.5 assists/game) and junior **Dee Oldham** (9.1 points/game, 87% from the free throw line).

The 2014-15 season kicks off with an exhibition contest on November 1 while the first regular season games will be played on Friday, Nov. 14. The 2015 Ohio Valley Conference Tournament will be held March 4-7 at Municipal Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee.

2014-15 All-OVC Preseason Men's Basketball Team

The 2014-15 OVC Preseason Men's Basketball team is headlined by Murray State sophomore guard **Cameron Payne** who was named the OVC Preseason Player of the Year.

Payne is the first sophomore to be named Preseason Player of the Year since the award was first handed out in 1993-94.

Overall seven different schools were represented on the team with Murray State having the most selections (3) and Belmont (2) also having multiple picks. Austin Peay, Eastern Kentucky, Morehead State, Southeast Missouri and UT Martin had one selection apiece. The squad features five players who were either first or second-team selections last season and three players who were selected to the 2013-14 OVC All-Newcomer Team. The team is comprised of seven seniors, two juniors and a sophomore.

Payne was named both a first-team All-OVC selection and OVC Freshman of the Year after averaging 16.8 points, 5.4 assists, 3.6 rebounds and 1.7 steals/game and leading Murray State to the CollegeInsider.com Postseason Tournament (CIT) Championship (where he was named MVP).

In addition to Payne the other players named to the All-OVC Team last year and appearing on the preseason team this season are Southeast Missouri State senior guard **Jarekious Bradley** (19.0 points, 6.3 rebounds/game), Belmont junior guard **Craig Bradshaw** (15.7 points, 3.5 rebounds, 3.2 assists/game), Morehead State senior guard **Angelo Warner** (17.5 points, 4.8 rebounds, 3.0 assists, 2.0 steals/game) and Murray State senior forward **Jarvis Williams** (14.9 points, 9.9 rebounds/game and 64.8 FG%).

The Preseason All-OVC Team is rounded out by Belmont senior guard **Reece Chamberlain** (10.9 points, 5.5 assists/game), Austin Peay junior center **Chris Horton** (13.2 points, 9.5 rebounds, 3.1 blocks/game), Murray State senior guard **T.J. Sapp** (13.3 points, 3.8 rebounds/game), UT Martin senior forward **Myles Taylor** (14.6 points, 6.3 rebounds/game) and Eastern Kentucky senior guard **Corey Walden** (13.8 points, 4.1 rebounds, 2.9 assists, 2.2 steals/game), who was the 2013-14 OVC Defensive Player of the Year.

2014-15 OVC Men's Basketball Predicted Order of Finish

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

Overall OVC Champion: Murray State (15 first-place votes)

Other Teams Receiving Overall First-Place Votes: Belmont (7), Eastern Kentucky (1), Morehead State (1)

	<u>Order of Finish</u>	<u>Points</u>
East		
1.	Belmont (16 first-place votes)	125
2.	Morehead State (4)	103
3.	Eastern Kentucky (4)	102
4.	Tennessee Tech	71
5.	Jacksonville State	52
6.	Tennessee State	40
West		
1.	Murray State (22 first-place votes)	132
2.	Southeast Missouri (2)	109
3.	SIUE	77
4.	Austin Peay	70
5.	Eastern Illinois	64
6.	UT Martin	40

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

2014-15 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: Cameron Payne, 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 2013-14</u>
Jarekious Bradley, Southeast Missouri #%	G/F	6-5	220	Sr.	Memphis, Tenn.	19.0 ppg, 6.3 rpg, 1.6 apg, 75 3's
Craig Bradshaw, Belmont #	G	6-3	210	Jr.	Ridgetop, Tenn.	15.7 ppg, 3.5 rpg, 3.2 apg, 39.6 3FG%
Reece Chamberlain, Belmont	G	6-1	190	Sr.	Goodlettsville, Tenn.	10.9 ppg, 3.7 rpg, 5.5 apg, 1.4 spg
Chris Horton, Austin Peay @	C	6-8	195	Jr.	Decatur, Ga.	13.2 ppg, 9.5 rpg, 3.1 bpg, 59.5 FG%
Cameron Payne, Murray State *%	G	6-2	180	So.	Bartlett, Tenn.	16.8 ppg, 3.6 rpg, 5.4 apg, 1.7 spg
T.J. Sapp, Murray State	G	6-3	190	Sr.	Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.	13.3 ppg, 3.8 rpg, 1.7 apg, 39.8 3FG%
Myles Taylor, UT Martin &	F	6-7	250	Sr.	Little Rock, Ark.	14.6 ppg, 6.3 rpg, 1.0 bpg, 50.9 FG%
Corey Walden, Eastern Kentucky @	G	6-2	206	Sr.	Daytona Beach, Fla.	13.8 ppg, 4.1 rpg, 2.9 apg, 2.2 spg
Angelo Warner, Morehead State #	G	6-2	195	Sr.	Orlando, Fla.	17.5 ppg, 4.8 rpg, 3.0 apg, 2.0 spg
Jarvis Williams, Murray State #%	F	6-8	215	Sr.	Macon, Ga.	14.9 ppg, 9.9 rpg, 1.8 bpg, 64.8 FG%

* - 1st team All-OVC team in 2013-14

- 2nd team All-OVC team in 2013-14

% - OVC All-Newcomer team in 2013-14

@ - OVC All-Newcomer team in 2012-13

& - OVC All-Newcomer team in 2011-12