



OHIO VALLEY CONFERENCE

## Belmont Picked to Win 2014-15 OVC Women's Basketball Title; Bruins' Luffman Named Preseason Player of the Year

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**BRENTWOOD, Tenn.** - Belmont has been picked to win the 2014-15 Ohio Valley Conference women's basketball title in a preseason poll of the league's head coaches and sports information directors. The Bruins earned 224 points, including 14 first-place votes, while **UT Martin** is selected to finish second with 203 points garnering three-first place nods. **Jacksonville State** picked up two first-place votes and 189 points for a predicted third place finish. **Tennessee Tech** is selected to finish fourth with 169 points while **SIUE** rounds out the top five with 152 points. **Tennessee State** earned a pair of first place votes and 144 points to be picked to finish sixth and **Eastern Kentucky** is selected to finish seventh, picking the final three-first place nods and 138 points. Rounding out the poll are **Eastern Illinois** (92 points), **Murray State** (83 points), **Southeast Missouri** (73 points), **Austin Peay** (71 points) and **Morehead State** (40 points).

Belmont is coming off a season in which it went 14-18 overall and 10-6 in the OVC en route to a first-place finish in the East Division. The Bruins earned the No. 2 seed in the OVC Tournament and fell to UT Martin in the Conference championship final. Belmont earned the league's automatic bid the Women's National Invitation Tournament and fell to Indiana, 48-47. **Cameron Newbauer** enters his second season at the helm of the Bruins and will have all five starters back from last year's squad. Among the starters returning is senior guard/forward **Jordyn Luffman**. The Lawrenceburg, Tenn., native was named the 2014-15 OVC Preseason Player of the Year after averaging 14.3 points and 7.2 rebounds to rank among league leaders. Senior guard **Adrienne Tarrence** will also be back this season after starting 28 of the 32 games she played. The Bowling Green, Ky., native recorded 6.1 point, 3.7 rebounds and a team-leading 120 total assists.

UT Martin went 24-8 overall and 15-1 in the OVC to win its third OVC regular-season title. The Skyhawks also claimed its fourth straight league tournament title with a 78-66 win over Belmont in the championship game. UT Martin made its fourth consecutive NCAA Tournament appearance and nearly knocked off North Carolina, falling to the Tar Heels 60-58. Head coach **Kevin McMillan**, who enters his sixth season at UT Martin, will have to replace the two top scorers in OVC history as **Heather Butler** and **Jasmine Newsome** were lost to graduation. McMillan will have the 2013-14 OVC Freshman of the Year in sophomore forward Ashia Jones coming back. The Covington, Tenn., product led the league with a 58.5 field goal percentage while putting up 13.1 points per game last year. Junior guard Katie Schubert will also be back on the court this year after recording 6.0 points and 4.0 rebounds per game last season. The Skyhawks will welcome six newcomers to the squad in 2014-15, including Mississippi State transfer **Jessy Ward** who sat out last season due to the NCAA transfer rule. Ward joins a cast of newcomers to the court including transfers **Haley Howard** (Butler), **Ashton Feldhaus** (Butler), **Monique Jackson** (Ole Miss) along with signees **DaiJia Ruffin** and **Danielle Woolfolk**.

Jacksonville State is coming off one of the best turnarounds in NCAA Women's Basketball last season. The Gamecocks posted a 14-18 overall record while going 8-8 in OVC play last year after winning just one game in 2012-13. **Rick Pietri**, the reigning OVC Coach of the Year, enters his second season at Jacksonville State and will have all five of his starters back from a year ago. Among the returnees are senior guard **Candace Morton** and **Destany McLin**. Morton, a native of Lexington, Ky., led the team and ranked among league leaders with 16.6 points per game while also bringing down 7.1 boards each time out last season. A product of Athens, Ala., McLin recorded 14.3 points and 6.1 rebounds per game in 2013-14. Jacksonville State will also have four newcomers on the team this year as freshman **Gretchen Morrison**, **Tyler Phelion** and **Leah Strain** as well as senior **Courtney Strain** join the squad.

The 2014-15 regular-season begins on Nov. 14 with Conference play starting Jan. 1. Nine different teams have won a regular-season title with Tennessee Tech leading the way with 18.

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### **2014-15 All-OVC Preseason Women's Basketball Team**

The 2014-15 Preseason All-OVC team is headlined by Belmont senior guard/forward **Jordyn Luffman** who was selected as the Preseason Player of the Year after earning All-OVC first team honors last year.

The preseason squad features players from nine different teams. Jacksonville State is only team that has multiple selections. Austin Peay, Eastern Illinois, Jacksonville State, Morehead State, Murray State, SIUE, Tennessee State and UT Martin each have one honoree.

Luffman was an All-OVC first team pick last season. The Lawrenceburg, Tenn., native led the team and ranked among league leaders with 14.3 points per game in 2013-14. She also brought down 7.2 boards per outing to finish seventh in the league last year. Luffman made 83.7 percent of her free throw attempts last year while also recording 66 assists and 33 steals.

Earning Preseason All-Conference team honors this year after being named to the All-OVC second team last season were Eastern Illinois' **Sabina Oroszova** (16.9 ppg, 10.6 pg), Jacksonville State's **Candace Morton** (16.6 ppg, 6.1 rpg), Morehead State's **Almesha Jones** (14.7 ppg, 6.0 apg), Tennessee State's **Chelsea Hudson** (15.9 ppg, 8.4 rpg) and UT Martin's **Ashia Jones** (13.1 ppg, 58.5 FG%).

Rounding out the preseason squad are Jacksonville State's **Destany McLin** (13.8 ppg, 81.5 FT%), Austin Peay's **Tiasha Gray** (15.1 ppg, 2.2 spg), Murray State's **Keiona Kirby** (18.3 ppg, 4.9 rpg) and SIUE's **Tierny Austin** (13.2 ppg, 6.9 rpg).

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## **2014-15 OVC Women's Basketball Predicted Order of Finish**

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

<b><u>Order of Finish</u></b>	<b><u>Points</u></b>
1. Belmont (14 first-place votes)	224
2. UT Martin (Three first-place votes)	203
3. Jacksonville State (Two first-place votes)	189
4. Tennessee Tech	169
5. SIUE	152
6. Tennessee State (Two first-place votes)	144
7. Eastern Kentucky (Three first-place votes)	138
8. Eastern Illinois	92
9. Murray State	83
10. Southeast Missouri	73
11. Austin Peay	71
12. Morehead State	40

(\*Schools were not allowed to rank their own team. 11 points awarded for a first-place vote, 10 for second, etc.)

## **2014-15 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: Jordyn Luffman, Belmont**

<b><u>NAME, SCHOOL</u></b>	<b><u>POS.</u></b>	<b><u>HT.</u></b>	<b><u>CL.</u></b>	<b><u>HOMETOWN</u></b>	<b><u>KEY STATS FROM 2013-14</u></b>
Jordyn Luffman, Belmont*	G/F	6-1	Sr.	Lawrenceburg, Tenn.	14.3 ppg, 7.2 rpg
Sabina Oroszova, Eastern Illinois#	F	6-2	Sr.	Bratislava, Slovakia	16.9 ppg, 10.6 rpg
Candace Morton, Jacksonville State#	G	5-8	Sr.	Lexington, Ky.	16.6 ppg, 6.1 rpg
Almesha Jones, Morehead State#	G	5-6	Sr.	Cincinnati, Ohio	14.7 ppg, 6.0 apg
Chelsea Hudson, Tennessee State#	F	6-0	RSr.	Midland, Texas	15.9 ppg, 8.4 rpg
Ashia Jones, UT Martin #%	F	6-1	So.	Covington, Tenn.	13.1 ppg, 58.5 FG%
Destany McLin, Jacksonville State	G	5-9	Jr.	Athens, Ala.	13.8 ppg, 81.5 FT%
Tiasha Gray, Austin Peay	G	5-8	Jr.	Clarksville, Tenn.	15.1 ppg, 2.2 spg
Keiona Kirby, Murray State	G	5-9	Sr.	Jackson, Tenn.	18.3 ppg, 4.9 rpg
Tierny Austin, SIUE	G	5-9	Sr.	Rockford, Ill.	13.2 ppg, 6.9 rpg

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

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

% - OVC All-Newcomer team in 2013-14