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BASKETBALL

WINTER SPORTS SPECIAL EDITION: BASKETBALL PREVIEW



JADUN MICHAEL



VANESSA TAYLOR

Elon University women’s basketball tips off season with young roster

Phoenix takes to the hardwood after new caliber of off-season preparation

Max Wallace
Elon News Network | @Max_C_Wallace

A young Elon University women’s basketball team jumped into its season earlier in November after months of off-season preparation. As the 14-player roster welcomed a total of eight freshmen, two of whom are redshirts, head coach Charlotte Smith said this off-season’s preparation meant more than the years prior.

“The preparation was invaluable,” Smith said. “To be able to practice for 10 practices and play two games, we were able to see a lot.”

Training eight new members for any team is a challenge, but captain of the Phoenix, graduate student center Evonna McGill, said that the most important thing to do was stay patient with them.

“I know there is a lot they have to learn, but they are also willing and hungry,” McGill said. “They are coachable, they listen and they are here. They are ready to go just like us.”

Although McGill is listed at the five spot, also known as the center on the court, Smith said there’s no one she would rather have take point as leader in the locker room.

“We have some outstanding senior leadership, especially in Evonna McGill,” Smith said.

Smith said she also had goals for McGill on the court, specifically to take home a First Team All-CAA honor.

“Before she was ever voted second team, we talked about this in the summer of her being CAA first team,” Smith said. “I know

what I see in her, and I want to get the best out of her.”

Preparation was also difficult for the new members who suited up in maroon and gold. Freshman guard Raven Preston said it was an adjustment to train under Smith — the winningest head women’s basketball coach in program history.

“It is more intense,” Preston said. “You’re competing with the best players every single day, which gets you better. But at first, it was a little shaky.”

However, Smith said she sometimes forgot the team was made up of predominantly freshmen because of how much confidence they brought to the table.

“You would think as first years that they would go in with a lot of nerves and a lot of jitters, and they may have had nerves, but I didn’t see it,” Smith said.

While the growth of the new players made preparation difficult at times, McGill said the team was able to overcome and now looks to take its next step.

“Our biggest hurdle is that we are young, but that is such a small hurdle to get over when you have freshmen that come in, ready, hungry and motivated,” McGill said. “Now is just fixing the little things.”

Once the Phoenix tackled that challenge, the next obstacle it faced was defense. McGill emphasized how important it is to maintain a strong defense.

“We all came here to ball — everybody can score, but you have to be able to play both ends of the court,” McGill said, “Our defense is our main priority right now.”

Even before the season began, McGill said the team had competitive competition circled on its calendar.

“Definitely Drexel and JMU,



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Graduate student guard Lenaejha Evans fights through contact and attempts a layup during Elon’s home opener against High Point University on Nov. 13 at Schar Center. Evans scored a team-high 19 points in Elon’s 60-57 win.

those will be our biggest games,” McGill said. “We just match up in different ways to where the competition is always good.”

The Phoenix is built on competition, graduate student guard Lenaejha Evans said after the team’s 60-57 win over High Point University Nov. 13.

“We like competition,” Evans said. “We like to compete.”

As the season moves into December, Smith said she is pleased with what she has seen so far.

“We feel like we have done a good job of creating an offensive system where we have something for everybody,” Smith said. “We can tap into everyone’s strengths for them to have opportunities to score.”

However, Smith also said there are still kinks in the system.

“Where we fall off a little bit is defensively,” Smith said. “Just trying to extend that intensity for 40 minutes is what we are focusing on.”

No matter what challenges get thrown in the way of the Phoenix, Smith said she will always find a way to rise to the occasion.

“This team is exciting. I wake up excited every morning trying to figure out how I can help them be the best team that they can be,” Smith said.

Currently on a four game win streak, the Phoenix sits 4-2 in the young season. However, it still has a long way to go if it hopes to bring a banner to the Schar Center.

Men’s basketball rebounds and rebuilds in new season

Despite rocky start to season, Phoenix looks to build toward new program with new faces

Mason Willett
Sports Director | @MasonWillett20

Elon men’s basketball knew it had a lot on its plate following an array of changes after its last season: new head coach Billy Taylor, several players transferring out and five new freshmen, including two walk-ons. Taylor said the first thing he wanted to do when he got here was set a new standard for the basketball program.

“We understand that it doesn’t happen on day one, and there’s a lot of work that goes into it,” Taylor said. “But understanding how we get there is important, so laying those foundational pieces so that we can continue to talk about it, reemphasize it and understand what it means, why it’s important, and how we’ll ultimately get to the goals that we want to get to.”

Graduate student guard Torrence Watson was one of the seven players that returned from last season and said the team is working to get better everyday. Watson said the coaches are good about encouraging everyone on the team to work harder.

“I know one thing that we’re focusing on right now is taking a step forward every single day, not taking one step forward and two



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Freshman guard LA Pratt drives with the ball against NC State on Nov. 19. The Phoenix lost 74-63.

steps back,” Watson said. “And I think that’s a big thing because it’s tough right now we got a new team, new coaching staff, didn’t win many games last year, not winning games now, but I think everybody on the team is just grateful to be able to wake up and play basketball every day.”

Watson said the players from the team last year wanted to stay together and keep that same bond.

Watson said leaving wasn’t an option for him because of NCAA rules, so coming back this year, he and Taylor urged the rest of the few returners to come back too.

“The returning guys here just made a pact that, we love each other off the court, let’s do the same on the court, stay together and let’s be better,” Watson said.

Another one of the returners from last season’s team is

sophomore forward Sam Sherry, who said he talked with Taylor and was told the role he could play for the team this year. Sherry has been a starter so far this season and said it feels good to be in Taylor’s starting lineup.

“He had a plan for us and he really trusts us and everything that we do in our abilities on the court, and he loves us as people off the court,” Sherry said. “I think that’s

“ I THINK EVERYBODY ON THE TEAM IS JUST GRATEFUL TO BE ABLE TO WAKE UP AND PLAY BASKETBALL EVERY DAY.

TORRENCE WATSON
ELON GRADUATE STUDENT GUARD

huge to have that chemistry with a player and in a coach, so I think that’s great.”

The team has had a chance to play some high level games and played in the Asheville Championship tournament Nov. 11 and 13. Taylor said it has been beneficial to play against some local teams as the team looks to continue to build this program.

“I love the opportunity to play against especially guys that are doing the right way, good programs. So to play N.C. State, and Radford, and UNCG and High Point, that means a lot,” Taylor said. “I think it means a lot to our fan base as we continue to build the program. So it’s exciting to play against some of these programs here locally, and hopefully we’ll be able to establish ourselves with someone who’s really formidable to play against.”

Elon basketball welcomes young, freshman talent

Five freshmen gain experience
fast within rotation

Mason Willett
Sports Director | @MasonWillett20

This season has seen several new faces to the Elon men’s basketball team — with five of them being freshmen, including two walk ons. Head coach Billy Taylor said freshman Max Mackinnon is a big part of what Taylor wants to build for Elon’s program.

“Max has been huge. He’s had a huge impact on our team. He’s a guy that can touch the paint with a basketball,” Taylor said. “So whether it’s dribble, drives or post-ups, he’s not afraid to be called out and he can go and finish so I guess another ball handler that can make plays and make decisions.”

Mackinnon is from Brisbane, Australia, and said adapting his game to American style has been one of his biggest challenges.

“It’s a different game style coming from Australia to college basketball, so I’m just trying to get used to it all and just what to do in just trying to learn the game and get used to it,” Mackinnon said.

Taylor said he has seen Mackinnon’s struggle to adjust to playing in America, but despite the style change, he has been effective for the team.

“Every time he steps on the floor, there’s a huge learning curve in terms of how teams are playing and style of play, physicality, kind of intensity, emotion,” Taylor said. “So he’s learning all that right now, but he’s given us a lot of good things on the floor and I know he’s going to continue to get better for us.”

Freshman forward Deandre Smart from Savannah, Georgia, has shown great ability inside the paint, according to Taylor.

“At first, I was really nervous,” Smart said. “I didn’t know what to expect, what was going to happen, but I just went out there and just played as hard as I could.”

Smart’s teammates are also excited for his potential, as junior forward JaDun Michael said Smart stood out to him in practices even before the season started as a player that will be great for the next few years.

“He’s a freshman. So of course he makes little, small mistakes where he just — in terms of physicality — wants to get better. It’s just hard to teach what he has. And I think once he begins to understand the importance of each possession, especially in a college game, I think he’ll be one of those guys it’s just like ‘Wow, he’s really good,’” Michael said.

But during Elon’s game against North Dakota State University, Smart went down with a knee injury. Soon after, it was found that it was an ACL tear. Taylor said losing him was a big loss for a team already without a lot of size.

“It’s huge. I mean, obviously someone who was a double figure scorer and was leading rebounder,” Taylor said. “So you take a guy like that out of the lineup in a season where we’re a little bit short handed anyway, to lose somebody like that who was really having a meaningful freshman. Impact was tough, but he’ll bounce back or recover, and we’ll come back over the next year.”

As the season continues, Taylor said these freshmen will look to grow, as the process to develop a winning program won’t happen overnight.

“It’s through recruitment and coaching and development. So it’s just all part of the journey, and it’s a tough part right now,” Taylor said. “But thankfully, we have support administratively, support from the fans that are showing up, and I know more will show up as we continue to put a good product on the floor. So we’re just working to build toward it.”

Head coach Charlotte Smith leads
young team with eight freshmen

Arianna Tristani
Elon News Network

Starting 4-2 on the season, Elon women’s basketball has created a solid foundation to further team development and success — with eight freshmen added to the roster this year. Freshmen Raven Preston and Chloe Williams’ journeys to getting on the roster differ, but the foundation of hard work and relentless determination remains consistent.

Preston, the 5’11 guard from Greensboro, has already broken a team record this season for the most rebounds for an Elon freshman with 15.

According to Preston, the upperclassmen on the roster have created an environment of mutual respect and admiration for each other, which translates to chemistry and success on the court.

“Knowing that it’s not about me personally, and that it’s about the team’s journey to win championships means so much to all of us,” Preston said.

Williams, also a 5’11 guard but from Wake Forest, emphasized how she appreciated how supportive the team and coaching staff were to her even before accepting her on the roster.

“Throughout my recruitment process, I ended up getting hurt. Seeing the program always support me and show love for me prior and after the injury was amazing,” Williams said. “They were always in my corner but never promised me anything and always pushed me to work hard. It was like they could see me coming here and making an impact in my freshman year and years on after that.”

Williams said now, after gaining a lot of playing time so far this season, it has made her confidence rise even more.

“Seeing that my coaches and

teammates trust me to have the ball in my hands in some crucial moments in the game — it’s crazy and it means so much,” Williams said.

Head coach Charlotte Smith has the highest praise for her eight freshmen along with all of the upperclassmen leadership — led by captain and graduate student Evonna McGill. McGill averages 12 points per game and five rebounds, and also leads her team in holding the younger players accountable.

Williams said McGill has been more than a leader for the younger girls on the team.

“Evonna is that tough love sister, like she’s gonna give it to you real. She’s gonna tell you how you get here, but I feel like it’s the best type of love because she’s only looking out for you. She wants what’s best for you and the whole team,” Williams said.

The freshmen as well as Coach Smith said they are aware that they are going to lose so much of that senior leadership next season, but Williams emphasized that the large freshman class will bond to prepare for the future.

“We’re going to lose some great seniors next year. But the fact that we have so many freshmen coming in together, it’s going to build chemistry over the years so we can be proud as a group and continue to be successful,” Williams said.

The environment of the Elon women’s basketball team this year is simple and easily gained, according to Preston. When asked what teammate specifically she was inspired by and looked up to, her response was instantaneous.

“That’s an easy question,” Preston said. “All of them.”

BY THE NUMBERS

5

Freshmen joined Elon’s men’s basketball team this year.

BY THE NUMBERS

463

Points have been scored so far this season, with an average of 66.1 points per game.



Freshman forward Deandre Smart prepares to take the court for the Phoenix at the Asheville Championship on Nov. 11. Elon lost 77-64 in the opening round to East Tennessee State University.



Freshman guard Raven Preston handles the ball on the perimeter during Elon’s season opener against Wake Forest on Nov. 7 at the Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum. Preston scored nine points in Elon’s 76-56 loss.

BY THE NUMBERS

8

Freshmen joined Elon women’s basketball team this year.

BY THE NUMBERS

394

Points have been scored so far this season, with an average of 65.7 points per game.

GRADUATE STUDENT STEPS ON COURT FOR FINAL YEAR

Evonna McGill leads a team of new faces onto the basketball court for her final year

Mason Willett
Sports Director | @MasonWillett20

With her final season on Elon's women's basketball team underway, graduate student Evonna McGill continues to be a leader on the court, even as she prepares for her future off of it. But McGill said she has come a long way with Elon since transferring from University of North Carolina Asheville and meeting Elon women's basketball head coach Charlotte Smith.

"Ever since I've been here, Coach Smith and her staff have just given me so much room and instill so much confidence in me to grow in ways I never even knew I could grow," McGill said. "They have taught me so many things; they taught me patience, they taught me to get out of my shell, they taught me that I'm more than just a big in the post, I'm somebody who can contribute in many different ways."

McGill has stepped up as a leader this year, as the team has six new freshmen and two red-shirt freshmen. She said it's a challenge at times to go through practices with patience but remembers she's there to set an example.

"Definitely a challenge being that they are young, so they're fresh out of high school, but at the same time, they are so ready, they're hungry, they're motivated, they're not set in their own ways. So it makes it easier for me to have patience and makes it easy on them to be open," McGill said.

Smith said she is trying to teach McGill to become a leader, as there are big expectations with the amount of young girls on the team.

"There's the saying, 'Heavy is the head that wears the crown.' And right now she's wearing the crown because she's captain of the team. And so that's been a transition for her and a growing and a growth process for her," Smith said.

Smith said that she is trying to teach McGill how to



Graduate student center Evonna McGill attempts a jump shot during Elon's game against No. 10 N.C. State on Nov. 10 at Reynolds Coliseum. The Phoenix lost 89-55. JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

communicate and hold the younger girls accountable.

"They say that leaders emulate the behaviors that they desire. And so it's my job to emulate being a great leader so she has something to watch. But it's also my job to teach her how to lead and have those conversations. 'This is where you could be a little bit better in terms of communication. This is where you hold people accountable,'" Smith said.

Smith said that McGill has done a great job helping lead the team so far and that she has seen McGill be tough on the team in practice but also be caring throughout.

"She's not afraid to hold people accountable. That's the one thing that I can depend on to be vocal in terms of when things are not going right. And then she's also nurturing and loving as a leader in being patient with the younger players, especially when it comes to potential

“THEY HAVE TAUGHT ME SO MANY THINGS; THEY TAUGHT ME PATIENCE, THEY TAUGHT ME TO GET OUT OF MY SHELL, THEY TAUGHT ME THAT I’M MORE THAN JUST A BIG IN THE POST, I’M SOMEBODY WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS.”

EVONNA MCGILL
GRADUATE STUDENT CENTER AND CAPTAIN

position breakdown, which we do every day. So she's the leader of the post," Smith said.

Freshmen Raven Preston and Chloe Williams said McGill's leadership style has helped them settle in with the team. Preston said that having McGill on the team gives her someone to look for on and off the court for guidance.

"Just having a good mentor and somebody we can look up to helps a lot, and being a friend on and off the court helps too, because this is sometimes hard. So having somebody that's been through it, and has been through the system and program before just makes life a whole lot easier," Preston said.

Williams said McGill is more than just a teammate to her and the rest of the team — she's a sister. Williams said McGill has the perfect leadership style that the women's team needs to get better.

"Evonna is that tough-love sister, she's going to give it to you real," Williams said. "She's going to tell you how you get to here, but I feel like it's the best type of love because she's only looking out for you, but she wants what's best for you and the whole team."

As for McGill, she said that her final year came fast, but having a fifth year of eligibility due to the pandemic has allowed her to play out one more season with the team. She said playing her final first game of the season at home was a great moment to look back on her years here.

"Honestly, it is very sweet. Like, people say all the time, 'the time goes by so quick.' It really did," McGill said. "COVID was — I'm not going to say it was a blessing because it took away a lot — but COVID gave me the opportunity to not only transfer from my old school but also gave me an extra year to really take in everything I was taking for granted and just be able to go hard this year."

Regarding her future, McGill said she has many different things on her mind, but right now, she is focused on this season.

"I have thought about that for a long time, and it's still up in the air whether I want to be a graduate assistant or I want to go out into the work field. Whether I want to not get my master's. I'm just focusing on a season and not really stressing myself out too much about what's next," McGill said.

McGill said she hopes the finale of her five-year career will be a championship win, and she thinks this team can do it.

"We may be young, but our team has so much potential," McGill said. "If anybody comes out to the games they will see our team is different, they're hungry. We work together. I have a lot of high hopes for this team."



Graduate student center Evonna McGill attempts a jump shot during Elon's game against No. 10 N.C. State on Nov. 10 at Reynolds Coliseum. The Phoenix lost 89-55. JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Graduate students share connection beyond the court

Sean Halloran and John Bowen III reignited their friendship to play basketball under Billy Taylor's leadership

Hope Valenti
Elon News Network | @hopevalenti12

After each match, the Elon men's basketball team leaves the game on the court, putting it in the back of their minds until the next practice. But graduate students Sean Halloran and John Bowen III return to their apartment and rewatch footage, analyzing each pass and decision.

Their shared dream of one day coaching in the NBA fuels their post-game ritual. The two first played together at Belmont Abbey College, where they were trained by men's basketball head coach Billy Taylor. When presented the opportunity to reunite at Elon for the 2022-23 season, both said it was an easy decision.

"It was a no-brainer to finish how I started — with coach Taylor and Sean," Bowen said. "It's almost surreal. I never thought I would get the chance to do this again."

While it was always a part of Halloran's plan, Bowen didn't even consider returning to school after graduating. He had entered the real world for a year, working as a youth director at a church, coaching junior leagues on the side. But he couldn't help but feel as if something was missing.

"I had lost my love for the game," Bowen said. "And I really started to regret my decision."

The two first met during Halloran's freshman year at Belmont Abbey in 2018. Despite Bowen being his RA, the connection was instant. They soon realized their shared interests and aspirations, quickly growing close.

"He was always more of a brother than authority figure," Halloran said. "It was funny to see this giant 6'9 goofball at the Abbey. There were all these monks and nuns on campus — and then I was sharing a suite with John."

“ I WOULDN'T WANT TO DO IT WITH ANYONE ELSE. WE'RE REALLY CLOSE, BUT HE'S A SUPER SMART GUY. WE STUDY TOGETHER AND GIVE EACH OTHER POINTERS ON OUR GAME — WE REALLY JUST PUSH EACH OTHER TO BE OUR BEST.

SEAN HALLORAN
GRADUATE STUDENT

But after one season, both Taylor and Bowen left Halloran and the Abbey behind. Taylor returned to his previous position as assistant coach at University of Iowa. Bowen transferred to University of North Carolina at Wilmington for the remainder of his collegiate career, graduating in 2021.

While their time as teammates was short lived, their friendship was not.

"It was hard losing both of them," Halloran said. "They were



Graduate student Sean Halloran shoots a three in transition during the second half on Nov. 27 against Radford University.

JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

my favorite part of the Abbey. But we always stayed in contact. John and I would text sometimes and watch each other play every once in a while."

Halloran and Bowen were reunited at Taylor's first press conference as head coach at Elon. After being recruited by their former coach, neither knew that the offer had been extended to the other. The meeting solidified their decision to accept.

"The entire coaching staff and Sean have been like family," Bowen said. "Playing here, with them, at the DI level is a dream come true."

Halloran and Bowen said they have been inseparable since, spending just about every waking moment together. In addition to sharing an apartment, they have the same practice and class schedule. Both are receiving their master's degree in business analytics with plans to pursue coaching careers. The two say the arrangement is mutually beneficial as they support one another in every realm of their lives.

"I wouldn't want to do it with anyone else," Halloran said. "We're really close, but he's a super smart guy. We study together and give each other pointers on our game — we really just push each other to be our best."

On the court, Halloran and Bowen's dynamic transfers to their roles of point guard and forward respectively. Even in the middle of a play, Halloran and Bowen will be calculating the necessary steps to achieve a victory. They both said with just a look, they can communicate what they need from one another. Knowing Taylor's coaching style allows them to play how he wants and act as leaders for their younger teammates.

"We want to be role models for them," Bowen said. "It's about getting out of your head and looking at the bigger picture rather than your own stats. We've both learned that and want to make sure they know it too."

Halloran said they have both grown as players and individuals since last playing together. They're more selfless in their decisions, and have begun looking at the game through the view of coaches in addition to being players.

"It's teaching me how to teach others," Halloran said. "I just want to help build the basketball program back up. There's a lot of potential there."

Bowen said he has high expectations for the future of the men's basketball team under Taylor's leadership. Despite a rough start for the team, both he and Halloran are optimistic that the coach will turn the season around.

"The guy is a basketball guru," Bowen said. "He cares about his players and wants us to be our best. I have full confidence that we can pull off something great."

Looking back, Halloran and Bowen both said they are grateful for the opportunity to play at Elon and have no reservations about their decision. After losing a year to the pandemic, it's the conclusion they've been searching for.

"Being here, it's brought my love for the game back," Bowen said. "It's funny how life comes full circle. Doing what I love with who I love — it's all ending how it should have. It was meant to be."

BY THE NUMBERS

12.4

points per game is Sean Halloran's average through the first seven games of the 2022-23 season.

BY THE NUMBERS

4.4

points per game is John Bowen III's average through the first seven games of the 2022-23 season.



ELLA PITONYAK | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Graduate student forward John Bowen III shoots during the first half against East Tennessee State University on Nov. 11.

2022-23 ELON BAS

WOMEN'S SCHEDULE

DECEMBER

12/02	HOWARD - 7 P.M.
12/15	RICHMOND - 11 A.M.
12/18	DAVIDSON - 2 P.M.
12/20	LOYOLA CHICAGO - 12 P.M.
12/21	CENTRAL FLORIDA - 12 P.M.
12/30	NC A&T - 6 P.M.

JANUARY

01/01	HAMPTON - 2 P.M.
01/06	HOFSTRA - 7 P.M.
01/08	MONMOUTH - 2 P.M.
01/13	DELAWARE - 7 P.M.
01/15	NORTHEASTERN - 1 P.M.
01/20	UNC WILMINGTON - 7 P.M.

01/22

STONY BROOK - 2 P.M.

01/27

DELAWARE - 7 P.M.

01/29

DREXEL - 2 P.M.

FEBRUARY

02/03	NC A&T - 7 P.M.
02/05	CHARLESTON - 2 P.M.
02/10	WILLIAM & MARY - 7 P.M.
02/17	MONMOUTH - 7 P.M.
02/19	CHARLESTON - 2 P.M.
02/24	WILLIAM & MARY - 7 P.M.

MARCH

03/02	UNC WILMINGTON - 7 P.M.
03/04	TOWSON - 1 P.M.
03/08	CAA CHAMPIONSHIP - TBD

HOME

AWAY

KETBALL CALENDAR

MEN'S SCHEDULE

NOVEMBER

11/30 HIGH POINT - 7 P.M.

DECEMBER

12/03 UNCG - 4 P.M.

12/11 JOHNSON&WALES - 2 P.M.

12/15 PRESBYTERIAN - 12 P.M.

12/18 VALPARAISO - 2 P.M.

12/20 INDIANA - 7 P.M.

12/29 DREXEL - 4 P.M.

12/31 DELAWARE - 2 P.M.

JANUARY

01/04 UNC WILMINGTON - 7 P.M.

01/11 NC A&T - 7 P.M.

01/14 CHARLESTON - 4 P.M.

01/16 UNC WILMINGTON - 7 P.M.

01/21 TOWSON - 4 P.M.

01/26 HOFSTRA - 7 P.M.

01/28 DREXEL - 4 P.M.

FEBRUARY

02/02 STONY BROOK - 7 P.M.

02/04 NORTHEASTERN - 2 P.M.

02/08 NC A&T - 7 P.M.

02/11 WILLIAM & MARY - 2 P.M.

02/13 HAMPTON - 9 P.M.

02/16 CHARLESTON - 7 P.M.

02/18 MONMOUTH - 2 P.M.

02/23 WILLIAM & MARY - 7 P.M.

02/25 DELAWARE - 7 P.M.

MARCH

03/03 CAA CHAMPIONSHIPS - TBD



ERIN MARTIN AND JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS
ERIN MARTIN | DESIGNER

THE BILLY TAYLOR ERA

Men’s basketball head coach Billy Taylor starts his inaugural season at Elon University this year

Caleigh Lawlor
Elon News Network | @caleighlawlor

As the men’s basketball team enters the 2022-23 season, a new era of Phoenix basketball is beginning. Nicknamed the “Billy Taylor Era” by Elon Athletics after new head coach Billy Taylor, the Phoenix is looking to have a successful season this year.

Taylor is the 19th person to be named head coach in Elon University men’s basketball history. He replaced former head coach Mike Schrage, who left after three seasons at Elon for Duke University, where he serves as special assistant to the head coach.

Taylor has 14 years of head coaching experience — with 11 at the Division I level — played basketball for Notre Dame when he was in college and has advanced to the National Colonial Athletic Association Men’s basketball tournament at the Division I level seven times.

Despite a rough start to the season, Taylor looks forward to building the program, which he said he knows takes time.

“Thankfully, I’ve been a head coach before,” Taylor said. “I’ve been through the development of programs, it takes time. While I wish there was a magic wand, it just takes time to build the program. It’s through recruitment and coaching and development. So it’s just all part of the journey, and it’s a tough part right now.”

According to Taylor, developing a team starts with setting out the standards and ideas for what they want to be in order to be successful.

“I think it’s important for us to lay the foundation of what we want our program to be,” Taylor said. “So we spent a lot of time through the summer through our fall workouts talking about our core values so we would really hone in and try to emphasize what are our values, what are the things that you know, every day is going to be important and valuable to us becoming a championship level program.”

According to multiple team members, Taylor’s coaching style establishes a good relationship

with the team that makes them feel trusted on and off the court.

Sophomore forward Sam Sherry said Taylor’s coaching is about rebuilding the program but also building a relationship with his athletes.

““

WHILE I WISH THERE WAS A MAGIC WAND, IT JUST TAKES TIME TO BUILD THE PROGRAM.

BILLY TAYLOR
ELON MEN’S BASKETBALL HEAD COACH

“I thought he had a plan for us and he really trusts us and everything that we do, in our abilities on the court, and he loves us as people off the court,” Sherry said. “And I think that’s huge to have that chemistry with a player and with a coach. So I think that’s great.”

Junior guard JaDun Michael said

that unlike other coaches, Taylor wants his players to be the best version of themselves, which helps his game.

“When you meet Taylor, I think the first thing you realize is just how genuine of a person he is,” Michael said. “It’s very rare, especially a player-to-coach relationship, that you meet someone who really wants the best for you. A lot of times coaches, they say they want the best for you, but as soon as things aren’t working out on the court, you tend to see that fade away, ... but Taylor, no matter what’s going on the court, he’s there for you.”

Michael said Taylor’s vision for the team to play better and faster by building a strong defense and scoring more points than they have in the past. Taylor said he’s not trying to mend the program but continue to lay the foundation for how players want their team to win.

“We’re trying to establish a culture around the program. And it’s not really fixing them, per se. No one needs to be fixed. We just try to instill our values and lay a foundation that we believe will be successful for our guys,” Taylor said. “We have our values that we talk about, we have

behaviors and beliefs that we stress to our guys and we have good guys and they’re doing their best. They’re good people off the court, on the court. We’re making progress in that area.”

Taylor said that there’s a few words that the team knows they should be trying to focus on.

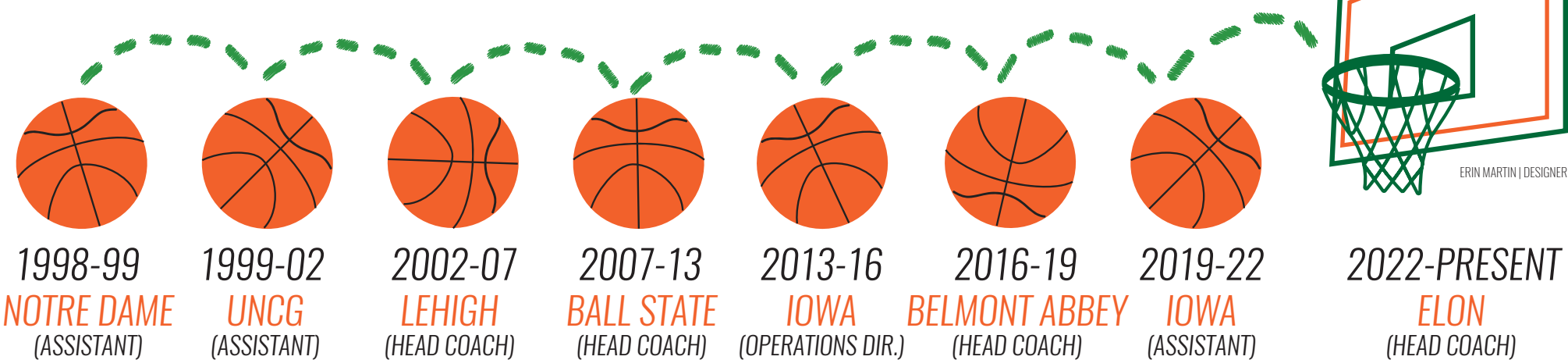
“We have some words that we talked about. Being selfless, being accountable, loving each other and being tough,” Taylor said. “So those are our four values that we talked about quite a bit and we defined that out for our guys so they know exactly what that means.”

Taylor said both the Elon administration and fans are helping with building a championship-worthy team, so having them continue to show up and grow in numbers can help lead to the team’s successes.

“Thankfully, we have support administratively,” Taylor said. “Support from the fans that are showing up and I know more will show up as we continue to put a good product on the floor. So we’re just working to build towards it.”

Taylor will be showcasing these values in Elon’s next game at 7 p.m. Nov. 30 against High Point.

TAYLOR’S COACHING EXPERIENCE:



ERIN MARTIN | DESIGNER

Kamryn Doty returns for redshirt freshman season



Redshirt freshman point guard Kamryn Doty dribbles the ball up the floor during Elon's game against No. 10 N.C. State on Nov. 10 at Reynolds Coliseum. Elon lost 89-55.

JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon women's basketball player comes back after missing the 2021-22 season with torn ACL

Chase Strawser
Elon News Network | @chase_strawser

Kamryn Doty missed her true freshman season with the Elon women's basketball team because of a torn ACL. Now, she returns eager and prepared to take on a more prominent role for the Phoenix basketball team.

Doty, now a redshirt freshman, has become a captain, starter and key contributor after her first season with the Phoenix was spent on the sidelines. Doty has helped Elon start the 2022-23 campaign with an impressive 4-2 record and, currently, a four-game win streak.

"I've been really comfortable. ... I am really confident in myself, my abilities and my work ethic," Doty said. "Being challenged is a good thing. ... Taking on the role of being a freshman but also being a point guard and one of the captains has been very exciting."

Head coach Charlotte Smith has witnessed firsthand Doty's resilience and efforts to return to the court despite her previous injury. Smith said Doty had overcome the most challenging part of the process, the mental battle.

"She's done an extremely great job of positioning her mind to be successful and realizing that I am strong enough to come back," Smith said. "That it's OK to go out there and play full strength

and not be concerned about being injured again. So she's gotten over that mental hurdle."

As a leader herself as team captain, Doty looks up to Smith and has used her guidance to come back prepared to play this season.

"She's one of the greatest, everything that she said I take into consideration, and I've always looked to her for advice, whether it's basketball or not," Doty said. "The biggest thing between us is trust, and I feel like if we have trust, then a lot of stuff as possible."

“

I AM REALLY
CONFIDENT IN MYSELF,
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CHALLENGED IS A
GOOD THING.

KAMRYN DOTY
REDSHIRT FRESHMAN STARTING
POINT GUARD

The year Doty spent recovering from injury allowed her to learn from her teammates and grow into the role of a starting point guard. Smith has seen her progression and said it allows her to produce impressive work on the court.

"Being a point guard is a huge

responsibility because not only are you thinking about yourself, you're having to think about other people," Smith said. "I feel like she's done a tremendous job of getting acclimated to being not only the point guard on the team, but the captain, another leader for our team, and getting our team into the flow of our offense."

With a return to the Schar Center, Doty has also returned to practice. Doty is excited to be back with the team but said that the difference from her high school playing experience is noticeable.

"The biggest thing is pace and definitely taking care of your body considering there's a lot of hours being put in every week," Doty said. "Pace is definitely huge, every workout is intense, fast-paced, and there's not a lot of time to slow down."

Only six games into the season, Doty still has most of the season to look forward to as she joins the team fully recovered.

Her return has been a highlight for others on the team as they have shown early success. Currently, Doty averages 6.5 points, 2.2 rebounds and 2.7 assists per game.

"She's done a good job of understanding what we're looking for in our Phoenix offense. And that's all we can ask of her right now at this point, and just be patient with her in regards to coming back for strength in terms of her speed," Smith said.

Doty will return alongside her teammates for a Dec. 2 match against Howard University in Washington, D.C. The Phoenix will look to continue its win streak.



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Doty defends a three-point shot during Elon's season opener against Wake Forest University on Nov. 7 at the Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum. Elon lost 76-56.



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Doty handles the ball during Elon's home opener against High Point University on Nov. 13 at Schar Center. Doty scored two points in Elon's 60-57 win.



ELON UNIVERSITY DANCE TEAM PREPARES FOR BASKETBALL SEASON AND BEYOND

With a nationals bid already under their belts, dancers hit the court for their most rigorous season

Max Wallace
Elon News Network | @Max_C_Wallace

The basketball season brings more to the court than just the game — it also spotlights the university’s dance team. The basketball season presents the most rigorous season for the dance team, as they perform during timeouts, halftime and on the sideline.

One member of the dance team, sophomore Juliette Baudoin, said preparation for this season was intense.

“We learn a new halftime routine for pretty much every game,” Baudoin said. “We also practice our technique, and we do conditioning at the beginning of every practice to help keep us in shape.”

However, there is more to the preparation than just perfecting the dance routines, according to sophomore Kayla Daignault.

“The first hour or so of practice is conditioning, and that’s super important because we need to build our stamina for the routines,” Daignault said. “We need to be in our best cardiovascular shape, so we do a mix of running and then strength and conditioning workouts and then we always stretch.”

This season, the team used a new method of preparation via the STEEZY Studio, an online dance application where choreographers showcase their routines. Daignault said it was the first year the team had access to this program, which she said enhanced its ability to learn new performances. Daignault said each video is 45 minutes to an hour long that walks the team through the choreography.

After the long exercise, the team huddles up, goes over the positives

and wraps up the practice with its signature “rise up” chant. Daignault said it is important to connect after a long, physical practice.

“People shout out specific people themselves or the whole entire team,” Daignault said. “This is a great way to end practice with a full heart and mind.”

As the basketball season begins, Baudoin said the team has a few new tricks up its sleeve.

“We’re going to be doing a ton of new routines for all the basketball games,” Baudoin said.

Daignault said that as the season progresses, the practices begin to get more rigorous.

“It’s definitely intense now, and then it gets more intense and becomes a bigger commitment towards nationals,” Daignault said. “It’s only up from here.”

However, basketball season is just one aspect of the team’s season, and Baudoin said the team prepares year round for events such as the National Dance Alliance camp in August, sports events throughout the school year and nationals in April.

“Our normal practice schedule is three times a week where we practice for both football games and basketball games,” Baudoin said.

This year, the team placed first in the Division I Game Day and Team Dance competitions at NDA camp in Myrtle Beach. The stellar performance propelled the team to its second straight gold bid, the most prestigious award at NDA camp, that punched the dance team’s ticket back to nationals in 2023. Baudoin said the team was over the moon with excitement when they heard the news.

“We were all screaming and crying, and we were so happy,” Baudoin said. “We were so grateful and so happy that all of our work had paid off.”

In just their second year on the team, Baudoin and Daignault said they have made many friends



ERIN MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

(From left) Senior Sarina Jackowski, senior Devyn Battaglia and junior Sophia Gallagher lead the Elon dance team during an Oct. 1 football game against the University of Richmond.

“

WE’RE ALL BEST FRIENDS, WHICH MAKES IT SO MUCH EASIER, AND WE’RE ALL SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND ARE ABLE TO UNITE AND COME TOGETHER.

JULIETTE BAUDOIN
SOPHOMORE

and lifelong memories, including national recognition after a gold medal finish in last year’s national dance competition. Daignault said she will never forget the moment the team received first place in last year’s nationals.

“I’ll never forget sitting on that stage,” Daignault said. “Then we went onto the beach afterwards and took all of our pictures and it was just such a surreal moment because all of our work paid off.”

Baudoin said her favorite part of the dance season is the preseason in August.

“I loved all of our bonding that we got to do during preseason, especially since classes hadn’t started yet. So we’re able to just focus on dance and focus on bonding together,” Baudoin said.

The bonds the team built last season were one of the main reasons it was able to receive gold at nationals last year, Baudoin said, and the Phoenix looks to build its team connection to try and repeat this season.

“Our camaraderie among the team is just amazing, we’re all so close and so supportive of each other, so we’re looking to repeat that this year,” Baudoin said. “We’re all best friends, which makes it so much easier, and we’re all supporting each other and are able to unite and come together.”

As the season begins to pick up, Daignault said she is most excited for this year’s national competition.

“I think we have what it takes to show them how it’s done again and defend our title,” Daignault said.



TOP ELON PLAYERS TO WATCH

RAVEN PRESTON

GUARD - 5'11

12.7 PPG - 1.3 ASSISTS

8.2 REBOUNDS

GREENSBORO, N.C.

CAA ROOKIE OF THE WEEK



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

LENAEJHA EVANS

GUARD - 5'7

11.3 PPG - 0.7 ASSISTS

3.8 REBOUNDS

CONWAY, S.C.

PLAYED AT RIDER UNIVERSITY



MAX MACKINNON

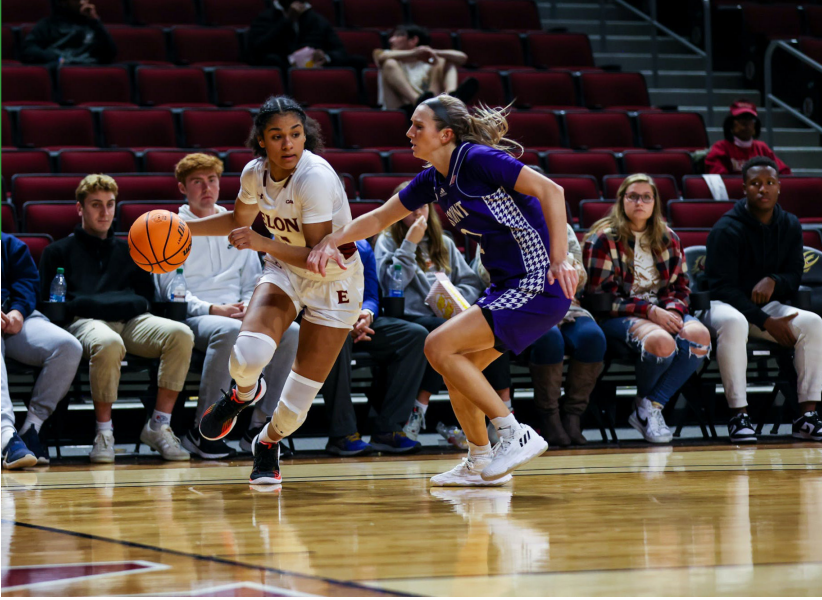
GUARD - 6'5

7.9 PPG - 1.6 ASSISTS

3.9 REBOUNDS

BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

11 POINTS AGAINST NC STATE



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

SAM SHERRY

FORWARD - 6'10

5.1 PPG - 1 ASSISTS

3.4 REBOUNDS

MECHANICSBURG, P.A.

13 POINTS AGAINST RADFORD

THE PENDULUM

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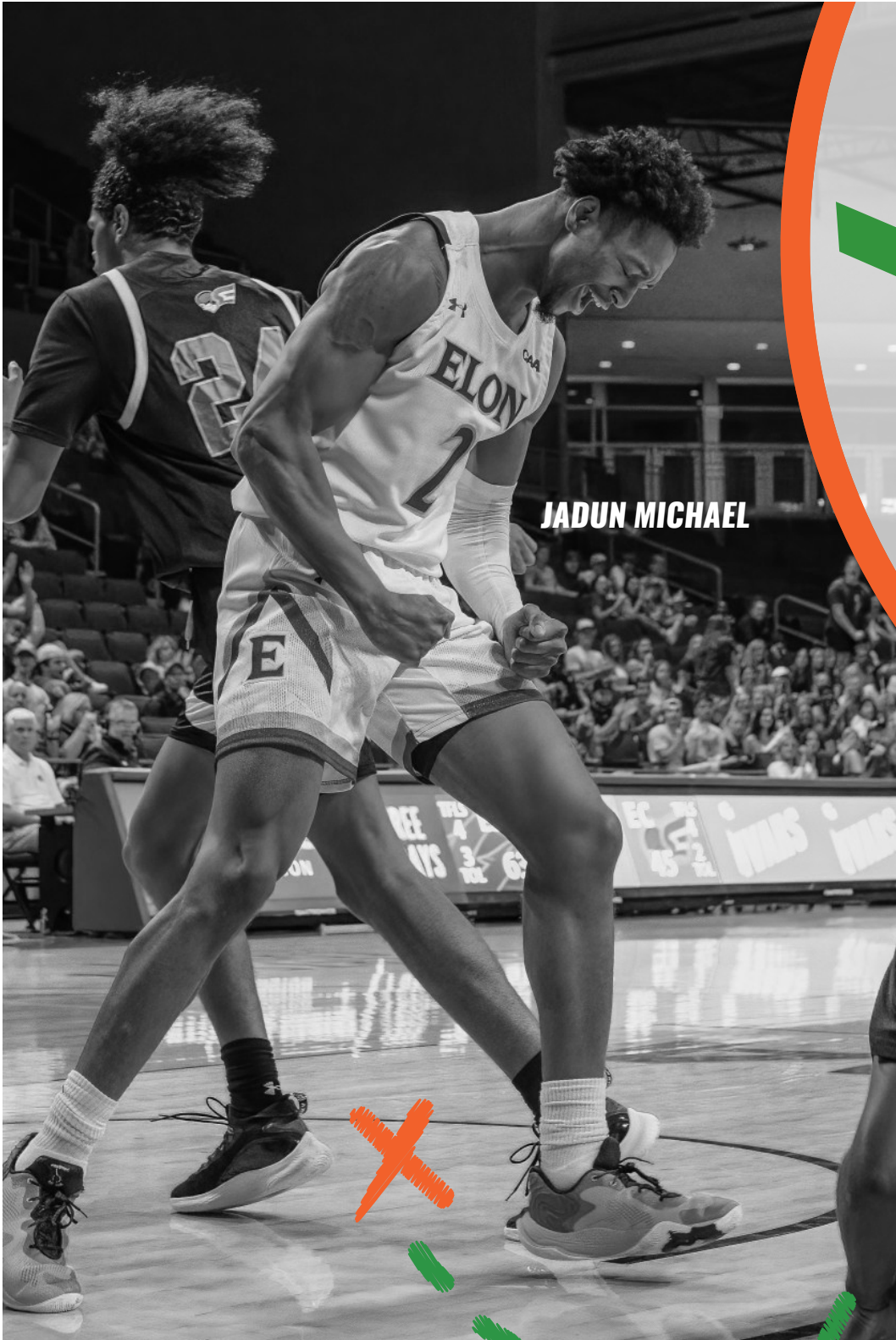
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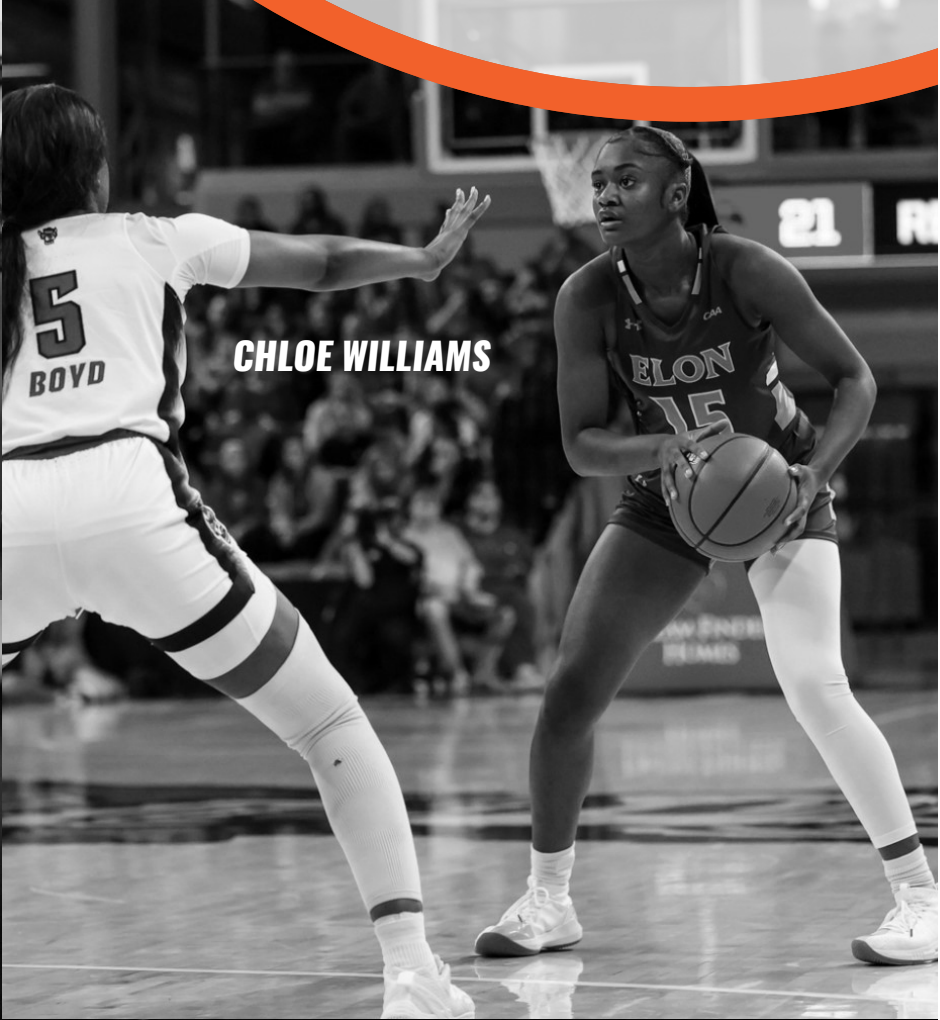
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