



Great Northwest Athletic Conference

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Women's Basketball: MSU Billings Gets Nod in Preseason Poll (Oct. 16, 2013)

2013-14 GNAC Preseason Coaches' Poll

School	2012-13 Records	Pts
1. Montana State Billings (6)	17-10 (11-7, T-3rd)	94
2. Seattle Pacific (1)	17-11 (10-8, 6th)	80
3. Western Washington (3)	29-4 (17-1, 1st)	78
4. Northwest Nazarene	20-9 (11-7, T-3rd)	69
Simon Fraser	25-6 (15-3, 2nd)	69
6. Alaska Anchorage	17-10 (11-7, T-3rd)	58
7. Central Washington	9-17 (4-14, 8th)	40
8. Saint Martin's	12-16 (5-13, 7th)	29
9. Western Oregon	8-20 (3-15, T-9th)	19
10. Alaska Fairbanks	5-21 (3-15, T-9th)	15

(Note: First-place votes in parentheses. Points awarded on a 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis).

Returning 2012-13 All-GNAC Players:

1st Team – Bobbi Knudsen, MSUB; Megan Hingston, NNU; Katie Benson, SPU.

2nd Team – Erin Chambers, SFU; Jessica VanDyke, CWU; Chelsea Haskey, SMU.

Honorable Mention – Aubree Callen, SPU; Jasmine Parker, CWU; Janiel Olson, MSUB; Kayleen Goggins, MSUB; Chelsie Luke, NNU; Melissa Fowler, WOU.

PORTLAND, Ore. – The return of Bobbi Knudsen, the second-leading Great Northwest Athletic Conference scorer from a season ago, as well as two other 2012-13 all-conference selections helped Montana State Billings earn six-of-10 first-place votes in the 2013-14 GNAC preseason coaches' poll and occupy the top spot with 94 points.

The Yellowjackets, coached by 10th-year head coach Kevin Woodin, finished in a three-way tie for third place a season ago, and suffered a disappointing loss to Seattle Pacific in the first round of the 2012-13 GNAC championship tournament.

With four returning starters amongst the seven letter winners MSUB welcomes back, the Yellowjackets will count on Knudsen's All-American potential to lead them to a first-place finish.

Also back for MSU Billings are Kayleen Goggins and Janiel Olson, two honorable mention All-GNAC picks in 2012-13. Goggins averaged 11.6 points per game last season, while Olson averaged 9.6 points and grabbed 9.0 rebounds.

Seattle Pacific checks in at No. 2 in the preseason poll, capturing 80 points and one first-place vote. Falcon head coach Julie Heisey welcomes back nine returning players,

including 2012-13 first team All-GNAC select Katie Benson amongst her four returning starters.

Benson averaged 16.4 points per contest a season ago, but SPU finished in sixth place in the GNAC standings with a 10-8 mark in conference play.

Aubree Callen, another returning All-GNAC player for SPU, averaged nearly 13 points per game for the Falcons last season.

Despite grabbing three first-place votes, Western Washington finds itself in third place in the preseason poll with 78 points. The Vikings, who won the GNAC championship and advanced all the way to the NCAA DII national semifinals a season ago, suffered significant losses and return just two starters this season.

Katie Colard averaged 7.6 points per game while fellow starter Sarah Hill contributed 6.2 for an offense that led the GNAC with 71.3 points per contest in 2012-13

Joining Colard and Hill will be Sydney Donaldson, who figures to fill in an important starting role in 2013-14.

Carmen Dolfo enters her 23rd season as head coach of the program, and with a career record of 475-173 is 25 victories shy of becoming the first-ever women's coach amongst all Washington colleges to reach the milestone of 500 wins.

Northwest Nazarene and Simon Fraser each received 69 points in the preseason poll, tying for fifth place.

The Crusaders welcome first-year head coach Ryan Bragdon who inherits five returning starters amongst 10 total letter winners. Last season, NNU tied for third place in the GNAC standings before falling to WWU in the semifinals of the championship tournament.

Amongst NNU's returners is 2012-13 GNAC scoring champion Megan Hingston, who averaged 18.6 points a season ago.

Simon Fraser said goodbye to 2012-13 GNAC Player of the Year Nayo Raincock-Ekunwe, who has focused her talents on a professional playing career since graduating. The Clan does welcome back three starters including Erin Chambers, who earned second team All-GNAC accolades with 13.5 points per game as a sophomore.

In sixth place in the 2013-14 preseason poll is Alaska Anchorage, which finished third behind first-year coach Ryan McCarthy last season. The Seawolves welcome back three starters and five returning letter winners, as well as a pair of junior college transfers from Gillette College (Wyo.) including National Junior College Coaches Association of America All-American KeKe Wright.

Central Washington received 40 points in the 2013-14 preseason poll, slotting the Wildcats in seventh place. Third-year head coach Shawn Nelson welcomes back nine letter winners and a full cast of five starters.

Amongst CWU's returners are second team All-GNAC pick Jessica VanDyke and honorable mention selection Jasmine Parker. Joining the Wildcats this season are North Idaho College transfers Mollie Kramer and Angela Woods, as well as Whatcom CC transfer Erika Locker.

CWU finished the 2012-13 season in eighth place, with a disappointing 4-14 record in GNAC play.

Checking in at eighth in the poll is Saint Martin's, which welcomes back second team All-GNAC forward Chelsea Haskey amongst three other starters.

The Saints finished last season in seventh place with a conference record of 5-13 behind 17-year coaching veteran Tim Healy.

Western Oregon has been slotted to finish ninth in the 2013-14 preseason poll, as first-year head coach Holli Howard-Carpenter will fill the void left by seven-year WOU veteran Greg Bruce.

The Wolves finished tied for ninth in last season's standings, with an overall record of 8-20 and a 3-15 mark in GNAC play.

WOU welcomes back five returning starters including senior Melissa Fowler and junior Dana Goularte. Fowler averaged 9.2 points per contest a season ago en route to earning honorable mention All-GNAC accolades.

Rounding out the preseason poll is Alaska Fairbanks, receiving 15 points and landing in 10th place.

The Nanooks finished tied for ninth in 2012-13, with an overall mark of 5-21 and a 3-15 record in GNAC contests.

UAF head coach Cody Bench is in the midst of rebuilding her squad, as the 2013-14 team features just five returning letter winners and seven freshman and sophomores.

Amongst UAF's returnees is Benissa Bulaya, who led the team with 8.8 points per game a season ago.

TEAM BY TEAM INFO

MONTANA STATE BILLINGS Yellowjackets - Preseason Rk: 1

Head Coach: Kevin Woodin, Carroll '87 (150-103, 9 years)

Assistants: Nathaniel Harris, Jenny Heringer

2012-13 Record: 17-10

Conference: 11-7, T-3rd

Returning Letter Winners: 7

Returning Starters (4): Bobbi Knudsen (G, 5-8, Sr., 17.8 ppg, 4.0 rpg, 30-114 3-pointers, 6.2 apg, 1.9 1st team GNAC, HM WBCA All-American); Kayleen Goggins (F, 6-1, Jr., 11.6 ppg, 4.7 rpg, 13-40 3-pointers, HM GNAC); Janiel Olson (F, 5-10, Jr., 9.6 ppg, 9.0 rpg, 2.1 spg, HM GNAC); Quinn Peoples (F, 5-11, Jr., 7.1 ppg, 3.0 rpg, 37-128 3-pointers).

Other Returnees: Monica Grimsrud (F, 6-1, Jr., 6.3 ppg, 4.7 rpg, 19-65 3-pointers); Annie DePuydt (G, 5-8, Jr., 5.8 ppg, 3.9 rpg); Austin Hanser (G, 5-7, Sr., 2.7 ppg, 1.6 rpg); Brandy Kumm (G, 5-6, So., 1.2 ppg, 0.6 rpg); Tenika Capouch (F, 5-11, So., 0.8 ppg, 1.4 rpg).

Transfers: Chelsea Banis (C, 6-4, Sr., Fairfield, MT – Montana State).

2012-13 SEASON

With a GNAC record of 11-7 a season ago, the Yellowjackets found themselves in a three-way tie for third place with Northwest Nazarene and Alaska Anchorage. Veteran head coach Kevin Woodin guided his club to an outstanding 11-2 mark at home, and a 6-6 record on the road. The Yellowjackets suffered a disappointing 63-60 loss to Seattle Pacific in the opening round of last season's GNAC tournament.

MSU Billings' sixth place ranking in scoring offense is deceptive, as the spread between the top six teams was just 2.3 points. The Yellowjackets' scoring margin of +6.0 was the third-best mark in the GNAC in 2012-13, and better justifies MSUB's overall success as a team.

The 'Jackets shot just .383 last season with room for improvement on a 3-point percentage of just .292.

MSU Billings based its attack around its ability to defend opponents well and create turnovers. The Yellowjackets' turnover margin of +5.7 was tops in the GNAC by nearly two full points, suggesting its defense provided plenty of scoring opportunities.

As a team, MSU Billings ranked second in steals per game, averaging 9.6. The Yellowjacket defense was craftier than it was physical, as it ranked last in the GNAC in defensive rebounds (22.9) and ninth in blocked shots (2.3).

IMPACT PLAYERS

MSU Billings welcomes back Bobbi Knudsen, a first team All-GNAC and Women's Basketball Coaches Association honorable mention All-American selection from last season and one of the top scoring threats in the conference.

Knudsen's 17.8 points per game was the second-highest figure in the GNAC, while her 6.2 assists per game was the

top mark in the conference. Her average of 34.4 minutes per game was the third most in the GNAC, and her conference-leading assist-turnover ratio of 2.5 displayed her excellent ball-handling skills.

Kayleen Goggins and Janiel Olson, a pair of honorable mention All-GNAC picks in 2012-13, also return for the Yellowjackets this season. Goggins was MSUB's other double-digit scorer, averaging 11.6 per contest while Olson paced the squad with nine rebounds per game.

Quinn Peoples figures to see extended action in 2013-14, after averaging 7.1 points in a dozen starts last season. Monica Grimsrud could also move into a starting role, with 6.3 points and 4.7 rebounds in 10 starts in 2012-13 supporting her case for extended minutes.

Annie DePuydt and Austin Hanser each played key roles off the bench last season, as the duo played in all 27 games and averaged 5.8 and 2.7 points, respectively.

KEY FACTOR

The biggest roadblock MSU Billings faced last season was a lack of size defensively and an established secondary rebounder to compliment Olson.

Enter Chelsea Banis. The senior transfer from Division I Montana State University brings a 6-4 frame to the Yellowjackets that will provide interior strength and defensive depth to their lineup.

With a legitimate candidate for GNAC scoring champion in Knudsen, and Olson on the brink of double-double numbers, Banis could be what it takes to evoke the full potential of the two established veterans and push MSUB up the conference standings.

OUTLOOK

MSU Billings is the favorite to win this year's GNAC title, and if the Yellowjackets can stay healthy they have the core of talent to be one of the best teams in the conference.

The Yellowjackets will receive an immediate test in December in the form of a road trip to Alaska in the first weekend of GNAC play to take on Alaska Anchorage and Alaska Fairbanks.

MSUB's toughest stretch starts with two home games against Simon Fraser and Western Washington, before the 'Jackets hit the road for three straight against SPU, CWU and NNU. The five-game string features four schools picked to finish in the top five.

SEATTLE PACIFIC Falcons – Preseason Rank: 2

Head Coach: Julie Heisey, Northwest Nazarene '89 (177-55, 8 years; Overall, 339-174, 17 years)

Assistants: Steve Steele, Randi Richardson, Sasha Anderson

2012-13 Record: 17-11

Conference: 10-8, 6th

Returning Letter Winners: 9

Returning Starters (4): Katie Benson (F, 6-2, Sr., 16.4 ppg, 7.6 rpg, 26-58 3-pointers, 1st team GNAC); Aubree Callen (G, 5-9, Sr., 12.8 ppg, 5.6 rpg, 43-110 3-pointers, HM GNAC); Suzanna Ohlsen (G, 5-7, Jr., 13.0 ppg, 2.8 rpg, 43-108 3-pointers); Mechela Barnes (G, 5-6, Sr., 6.5 ppg, 3.8 rpg, 13-48 3-pointers).

Other Returnees: Betsy Kingma (G, 5-11, Jr., 10.0 ppg, 3.5 rpg); Maddey Pflaumer (F, 5-11, So., 4.4 ppg, 3.0 rpg); Riley Butler (C, 6-2, Sr., 2.9 ppg, 1.7 rpg); Brianne Lasconia (G, 5-9, So., 1.3 ppg, 1.0 rpg); Molly Grager (C, 6-2, So., .6 ppg, .6 rpg).

Transfers: None.

2012-13 SEASON

Seattle Pacific excelled on its home court last season, posting a record of 10-2 in the friendly confines of Brougham Pavilion. A poor mark of 4-7 on the road however landed the Falcons in the bottom half of the GNAC standings, in sixth place with a record of 10-8 in GNAC play and 17-11 overall.

Head coach Julie Heisey guided her squad to a quarterfinal victory in the GNAC championship tournament, before the Falcons lost to Simon Fraser in the semifinals.

SPU's success a season ago stemmed from its ability to put up points, as the Falcons' scoring average of 71.1 was second only to Western Washington. SPU shot well from the field (.438) and even better from long-distance as the Falcons topped the GNAC in three-point field goal percentage at a clip of .362.

While SPU was excellent in terms of rebounding with a margin of +7.8, the Falcons had difficulty limiting opponents offensively. With a scoring defense that allowed 68.2 points per game, SPU found itself in ninth place in the GNAC in that category and with a +2.9 scoring margin.

Ball security was SPU's Achilles heel in 2012-13, as its assist-turnover ratio of 0.8 was sixth in the conference, while its -4.0 turnover margin was the lowest mark by more than two full points.

IMPACT PLAYERS

With a quartet of double-digit scorers from a season ago returning in 2013-14, SPU has the potential to be even better offensively this season.

Headlining the group is Katie Benson, whose average of 16.4 points per game was the fourth-best figure in the GNAC in 2012-13. Benson also created turnovers with 46 steals, and led the team with 24 blocks. The first team All-GNAC selection sunk 26-of-58 shots from beyond the arc, as her .448 percentage was the best on the team.

Suzanna Ohlsen and Aubree Callen, the Falcons' next leading scorers at 13.0 and 12.8 points per game, respectively, also return and provide SPU with depth in the long-range shooting department. The duo made 86 shots – 43 apiece – from three-point range, finishing second and third in the GNAC in 3-point percentage at .398 and .391, respectively.

Callen was SPU's top facilitator on offense, dishing out a team-high 106 assists, which placed her sixth in the GNAC in that category. Ohlsen meanwhile led the team in steals with 51, and was in the top-10 in the GNAC in minutes played per game at 30.9.

Mechela Barnes started 20 games for SPU last season, averaging 6.5 points and contributing 20 steals and 28 assists.

KEY FACTOR

SPU returns four players who started at least 20 games in 2012-13, giving it a significant advantage in terms of experience. Further, with the top two returning three-point shooters in the conference, the Falcons should be more dynamic than ever offensively and increase upon their already strong scoring average.

Another secret weapon for SPU could be Betsy Kingma, who was projected to start as a sophomore last season but was injured after just her second game.

OUTLOOK

GNAC coaches have set high expectations for SPU this season, picking the Falcons to finish second in the preseason poll. SPU should continue to be an offensive powerhouse, and will more than likely improve upon last season's sixth place finish.

SPU faces the Alaska schools at both the front and back of its schedule, making the trip north to start the season and enjoying a two-game home stand for its final GNAC games of 2013-14.

SPU will face three solid teams in a row in Western Washington, Simon Fraser and Montana State Billings, at the end of a seven-game home stretch from mid-December to mid-January.

WESTERN WASHINGTON Vikings – Preseason Rank: 3

Head Coach: Carmen Dolfo, Western Washington '86 (475-173, 22 years)

Assistants: Stacy Turrell, Corinn Waltrip, Erika Ramstead

2012-13 Record: 29-4

Conference: 17-1, 1st

Returning Letter Winners: 7

Returning Starters (2): Katie Colard (G, 5-9, Jr., 7.6 ppg, 2.1 rpg, 60-187 3-pointers); Sarah Hill (F, 6-3, Sr., 6.2 ppg, 6.2 rpg, 1.1 apg).

Other Returnees: Sydney Donaldson (F, 6-0, Jr., 6.2 ppg, 4.2 rpg); Kayla Bernsen (C, 6-3, So., 5.2 ppg, 3.7 rpg); Jenni White (G, 5-5, Jr., 3.9 ppg, 1.7 rpg); Aleisha Hathaway (G, 5-9, So., 1.8 ppg, 1.0 rpg); Marcel Pounds (G, 5-8, Jr., 1.8 ppg, 1.0 rpg).

Transfers: Taylor Peacocke (G, 5-9, Fr., Kenmore, WA – Sacramento State).

2012-13 SEASON

Not much went wrong for Western Washington last season. The Vikings won the GNAC championship tournament and

advanced to the Division II semifinals before falling to eventual national champion Ashland.

Head coach Carmen Dolfo was named GNAC Coach of the Year for her efforts in the 2012-13 season.

The Vikings' perfect 16-0 record at home contributed to an overall mark of 29-4, and WWU lost just one conference game in going 17-1 on the season in GNAC play.

WWU led the GNAC in scoring with 71.3 points per game, and ranked second in scoring defense as it allowed just 59.2 points. WWU shot .451 from the field while limiting opponents to a mark of .362, contributing to a scoring margin of +12.1 on the season.

WWU made up for its turnover margin of +0.3 by leading the conference in blocked shots with 4.4 per game, and finishing second in rebounding margin at +4.5.

The Vikings were also effective from behind the 3-point line, shooting at a clip of .353 while holding opponents to a mark of just .298. In terms of defensive rebounds, WWU finished second in the GNAC with an average of 27.2 per contest a season ago.

IMPACT PLAYERS

Katie Colard is WWU's top returning scorer, as she averaged 7.6 points in 27 starts last season. Colard is a threat from the perimeter, as she drilled 60-of-187 shots from long range last season and shot .360 from the floor overall.

Sarah Hill is another top starter, who averaged 6.2 points in 32 games a season ago. Hill was WWU's best rebounder in 2012-13, as she used her 6-foot-3 frame to haul in 6.2 rebounds per contest and block 26 shots.

Syd Donaldson matched Hill's scoring figure with 6.2 points per game, while shooting better than .500 from the field and averaging 4.2 rebounds in 33 games played.

Kayla Bernsen, who was a key role player for the Vikings a season ago, suffered a knee injury over the summer and will miss the entirety of the 2013-14 season.

Jenni White was another role player last season as a sophomore, as she also came off the bench in all 33 games. White averaged 3.9 points while shooting .449 from the floor and knocking down 25-of-61 3-point shots.

Aleisha Hathaway and Marcel Pounds each saw significant action off the bench in 2012-13, and could be called upon for increased minutes this season.

KEY FACTOR

Western Washington's success in 2012-13 was truly a team effort, as no Viking averaged more than 14.3 points per game and the scoring was spread evenly throughout a dynamic offense with multiple attacking strengths.

This being said, WWU said goodbye to its top three scorers from a season ago, including the number eight scorer in the GNAC in Britt Harris (14.3 ppg) and the conference's top three-point shooter in Corinn Waltrip (74-of-176).

Coach Dolfo welcomes back seven players who experienced a taste of the Division II Final Four last season. The key to a repeat performance this season will lie within the ability of WWU's upperclassmen to instill a winning mindset into its younger players, and step into key leadership roles left open by graduates.

OUTLOOK

While WWU was picked to finish third in the preseason coaches' poll, the Vikings have the talent and experience to make a case to be the top team in the GNAC once again.

WWU opens the conference season on the road against Seattle Pacific and Montana State Billings, the two teams picked to finish ahead of it in the preseason poll. The Vikings never play more than two GNAC games on the road in a row, while they enjoy a four-game midseason home stand against the Alaska schools, MSUB and SPU.

NORTHWEST NAZARENE Crusaders - Preseason Rank: T-4

Head Coach: Ryan Bragdon, University of Washington '01 (0-0, first year)

Assistants: Elpidia Allen

2012-13 Record: 20-9

Conference: 11-7, T-3rd

Returning Letter Winners: 10

Returning Starters (5): Megan Hingston (G, 5-9, Sr., 18.6 ppg, 8.7 rpg, 1.2 apg, 1st team GNAC, HM WBCA All-American); Chelsie Luke (G, 5-9, Sr., 14.7 ppg, 5.4 rpg, 44-140 3-pointers, HM GNAC); Kylee Schierman (G, 5-10, Sr., 5.5 ppg, 5.6 rpg, 12-53 3-pointers, GNAC Newcomer of the Year); Taylor Simmons (G, 5-8, So., 5.4 ppg, 2.3 rpg, 2.3 spg); Ellen Ferrenburg (F, 6-1, So., 4.7 ppg, 3.0 rpg).

Other Returnees: Veronika Skokankova (F, 6-0, Sr., 5.6 ppg, 3.2 rpg); Leslie Warwick (F, 5-11, Sr., 1.7 ppg, 2.1 rpg); Kaya Schumann (G, 5-9, Jr., 1.7 ppg, 0.7 rpg); Katie Swanson (F, 6-3, So., 1.4 ppg, 2.0 rpg); Cierra White (G, 5-7, So., 2.3 ppg, 1.4 rpg).

Transfers: None.

2012-13 SEASON

Turning in a conference record of 11-7 a season ago, Northwest Nazarene found it tied for third place in the GNAC standings. The Crusaders beat Alaska Anchorage in the quarterfinals of the 2012-13 GNAC championship tournament, before falling to eventual champion Western Washington in the semifinals.

The Crusaders' scoring average of 69.8 points per game was the third-highest total across the GNAC last season, and NNU's +5.5 scoring margin was one of the keys to its winning record.

NNU shot decently from the field at a clip of .404, but had less success from beyond the 3-point line with a mark of

.300. The Crusaders averaged just 4.3 3-pointers per game, tied for the lowest total in the GNAC.

Rebounding was crucial to the Crusaders' success, as NNU led the conference with an average of 15.1 offensive boards per contest. It's interior strength, combined with a solid +4.0 turnover margin were the biggest factors contributing to NNU outscoring its opponents.

A poor assist-turnover ratio of 0.7 suggested that NNU had ball control issues as it was eighth in the GNAC in that category.

IMPACT PLAYERS

Megan Hingston is back for her senior season after leading the GNAC in scoring a year ago with a mark of 18.6 points per game. Hingston was also NNU's top rebounder, finishing fourth amongst conference competition with 8.7 boards per contest. The Women's Basketball Coaches Association honorable mention All-American guard was one of just three players to shoot better than 50 percent from the field, and her offensive rebound average of 3.8 was third-best in the conference.

Chelsie Luke, another double-digit scorer also returns this season after averaging 14.7 points and 5.4 rebounds in 2012-13. Luke set the standard at the free throw line for NNU, as her .894 mark was the second-highest in the GNAC.

Kylee Schierman made her presence known in her first year in the GNAC in 2012-13, scoring 5.5 points per game and leading the Crusaders with 22 blocks to earn GNAC Newcomer of the Year honors.

Taylor Simmons was a standout freshman a season ago, averaging 5.4 points in 11 starts, while leading the team with 68 steals.

Veronika Skokankova provides further depth after playing in 28-of-29 contests and averaging 5.6 points, while sophomores Katie Swanson (6-foot-3) and Ellen Ferrenburg (6-foot-1) provide the Crusaders with valuable interior size.

KEY FACTOR

Ryan Bragdon enters his first season as a collegiate head coach, and has inherited a program with the potential to compete with the top teams in the conference. While Hingston will be called upon to carry the majority of the workload for NNU this season, her supporting cast must shore up its efforts in several key areas for the Crusaders to be successful.

Namely, the Crusaders will look for a secondary sharpshooter to partner with Luke from beyond the arc. 2012-13 senior Heather Adams led the squad from downtown, making 46-of-124 shots, and Simmons and fellow sophomore Cierra White could be called upon to help patch the void Adams left upon graduation.

Simmons, Luke and Schierman, the Crusaders' top three returning distributors, each had sub-1.0 assist-turnover ratios a season ago. NNU will have to handle the ball better in order to pick up key victories this season, as it ranked ninth in assists per game last year with just 11.6.

OUTLOOK

GNAC coaches have selected NNU to finish in fourth place this season, as the Crusaders matched Simon Fraser with 69 points in the preseason poll.

NNU's first nine non-conference games are at home, before the Crusaders take to the road to challenge Western Oregon and Saint Martin's in the first week of GNAC play. The Crusaders' toughest stretch comes in the form of a 10-day period in early February in which it faces Western Washington, Montana State Billings and Seattle Pacific, with the latter two being road contests.

SIMON FRASER Clan – Preseason Rank: T-4

Head Coach: Bruce Langford, Simon Fraser '79 (305-70, 12 years)

Assistant: Emily Wright

2012-13 Record: 25-6

Conference: 15-3, 2nd

Returning Letter Winners: 9

Returning Starters (3): Erin Chambers (G-F, 6-1, Jr., 13.5 ppg, 4.4 rpg, 69-177 3-pointers, 2nd team GNAC); Katie Lowen (G, 5-6, Jr., 6.7 ppg, 2.3 rpg, 28-90 3-Pointers); Chelsea Reist (F, 6-2, Sr., 5.2 ppg, 1.7 rpg).

Other Returnees: Kia Van Laare (G, 5-7, Sr., 4.9 ppg, 1.7 rpg, 31-113 3-pointers); Meg Wilson (F, 6-1, So., 3.2 ppg, 2.3 rpg); Marie-Line Petit (G, 5-6, Sr., 2.5 ppg, 1.4 rpg); Rebecca Langmead (F, 6-5, Sr., 2.4 ppg, 2.0 rpg); Belce Yoruk (G, 5-7, So., 1.2 ppg, 0.7 rpg); Michelle Spacek (G, 5-7, So., 0.4 ppg, 0.2 rpg).

Transfers: None.

2012-13 SEASON

In his 12th season at the helm of the Simon Fraser program, Bruce Langford guided his team to the championship game in the GNAC tournament last season. The Clan lost to Western Washington, but with a 25-6 overall record including a 15-3 mark in conference play, SFU enjoyed a successful overall year.

SFU finished last season averaging 69.5 points per game, but it was the Clan's defense that was the biggest difference maker in 2012-13. SFU allowed just 56 points per contest, which led to a scoring margin of +13.4, both being the top marks in the GNAC.

The Clan was the best shooting team from the field at .453, while holding opponents to a mark of .374, second best behind WWU.

SFU also controlled the ball well, notching an assist-turnover ratio of 1.1 and a positive turnover margin at +1.8. The Clan didn't create turnovers particularly well with 9.1 steals per game, but they made up for it with a strong effort of 4.2 blocks per contest, the second most in the GNAC.

Long-range shooting wasn't necessarily SFU's strength as the Clan was average in three-point field goal percentage at .330. However, its GNAC third-best average of 7.2 three-pointers per game suggests the sheer quantity of shots it took made up for a less-than stellar percentage.

IMPACT PLAYERS

Erin Chambers, who earned second team All-GNAC honors last season, is the Clan's top returner as she averaged 13.5 points per contest in 2012-13. Chambers' ability from the perimeter was a key weapon that provided diversity for SFU last year, as she drilled 69-of-177 shots from downtown and posted the fourth-best percentage in the GNAC at .390.

Another top returning starter for the 2013-14 season is Katie Lowen, who averaged 6.7 points, dished out 78 assists and created 50 steals for the Clan last season. Lowen also made 28-of-90 shots from long-range during her sophomore campaign.

Chelsea Reist started all 31 games as a junior last season, averaging 5.2 points per contest while shooting .500 from the field and .821 from the free-throw line.

Rebecca Langmead played in all 31 contests last season, coming off the bench as a key figure with 1.3 blocks per game, the second-highest mark in the conference. Her 6-foot-5 presence in the paint was one of the keys to SFU's second-best rebounding defense of 33.6 per game.

Kia Van Laare was another important role player last season, appearing in all 31 games off the bench for SFU. As a junior, she made 31-of-113 shots from 3-point range, while averaging 4.9 points and 1.7 rebounds per game.

Marie-Line Petit provides further depth for the Clan, as she averaged 2.5 points as a reserve and contributed 57 assists and 21 steals in her junior campaign.

KEY FACTOR

To return to the GNAC championship game this season and remain near the top of the conference standings, SFU will have to replace the 2012-13 GNAC Player of the Year Nayo Raincock-Ekunwe. As a senior, she was the third-leading scorer in the GNAC, while leading the conference in rebounds with 12.4 per contest. Now playing professionally, she was the only GNAC player last season to average a double-double.

Not only did the Clan lose one of the most dynamic offensive weapons in the conference, but also said goodbye to one of its top perimeter shooters in Kristina Collins, who made 62-of-180 3-pointers in her senior year in 2012-13.

For the Clan to repeat their success of a season ago, several players will have to step into the void left by Raincock-Ekunwe and Collins. Look for both Van Laare and

Langmead to receive an increased workload in support of Chambers and Lowen.

OUTLOOK

SFU has been picked to finish tied for fourth with Northwest Nazarene, as each received 69 points in the GNAC preseason coaches' poll. The Clan will be put to the test right away, hosting preseason favorite Western Washington in their first GNAC game. Five of SFU's final seven conference games are on the road, including games against the Alaska schools and WWU to close the 2013-14 regular season.

ALASKA ANCHORAGE Seawolves - Preseason Rank: 6

Head Coach: Ryan McCarthy, Northwest Nazarene '06 (17-10, 1 year)

Assistants: Alex Carlson, Shaina Afoa

2012-13 Record: 17-10

Conference: 11-7, T-3rd

Returning Letter Winners: 5

Returning Starters (3): Kylie Burns (F, 5-9, Sr., 10.6 ppg, 7.3 rpg, 26-82 3-pointers); Jessica Madison (G, 5-8, So., 9.6 ppg, 3.4 rpg, 36-114 3-pointers, GNAC Freshman of the Year); Jenna Buchanan (G, 5-8, So., 7.6 ppg, 4.2 rpg, 29-85 3-pointers).

Other Returnees: Alli Madison (G, 5-8, Jr., 9.5 ppg, 3.6 rpg); Alyssa Hutchins (G, 5-7, So., 2.0 ppg, 0.4 rpg).

Transfers: KeKe Wright (F, 6-0, Jr., Las Vegas, NV – Gillette); Christina Davis (G, 5-6, Jr., Las Vegas, NV – Gillette); Emily Craft (C, 6-2, Jr., Mountain View, WY – Central Wyoming).

2012-13 SEASON

Behind first-year coach Ryan McCarthy, UAA posted a solid 17-10 overall record with a mark of 11-7 in GNAC play a season ago. The Seawolves made it to the GNAC championship tournament, falling to Northwest Nazarene in the opening round 65-60.

The Seawolves averaged 69.7 points per game in 2012-13, finishing among four teams that were separated by less than one point in that category. One area UAA will seek to improve in is second-chance points, as the Seawolves ranked dead last in the GNAC in offensive rebounds per game with 35.3.

UAA was respectable from three-point range last season, shooting over 34 percent from beyond the arc and leading the GNAC with an average of 8.2 threes per game. The Seawolves converted free throws at a solid clip of 76 percent, third best in the conference.

The Seawolves' above-average scoring and below-average defense (64.6 points allowed) landed the team in the second tier in terms of scoring margin at +5.1. UAA did well protecting the ball, with a conference third-best turnover margin of +3.3, but with a rebounding margin of -1.5 the Seawolves got beat too often on the boards.

IMPACT PLAYERS

After finishing in the middle of the pack a season ago, UAA will have to replace Sasha King and Alysa Horn, its pair of second team All-GNAC selections who graduated last year. The Seawolves do return senior Kylie Burns, who joined King and Horn as the team's three players to average a double-digit scoring figure.

UAA also welcomes back a pair of sophomores in 2012-13 GNAC Freshman of the Year Jessica Madison and Jenna Buchanan, who both saw action as starters in their freshman campaigns. Madison averaged 9.6 points, sunk 36-of-114 shots from long distance and posted the second-best free-throw percentage on the squad with a mark of .829. Buchanan was a catalyst both offensively and defensively for the Seawolves, as her 51 assists were second-most on the team and her 31 steals were third-most.

Junior guard Alli Madison provides further depth and experience as she averaged 9.5 points and had 36 assists and 14 steals a season ago. Transfer Emily Craft adds her 6-foot-2 frame and double-digit scoring potential to the Seawolves' lineup, after averaging 10.4 points and seven rebounds as a sophomore at Central Wyoming College.

KEY FACTOR

In adding transfer KeKe Wright from Gillette College (Wyo.), the Seawolves scored a National Junior College Coaches Association of America All-American who led the region in scoring at 17.7 and ranked fourth in rebounds with 8.9. Wright's knack for scoring should help boost a Seawolf offense that averaged 69.7 points per game, just 1.7 off conference leader Western Washington (71.3). If her success carries over this season, it could boost UAA up from the middle of many offensive categories.

Wright didn't make the journey to Alaska alone, as fellow teammate at Gillette Christina Davis also brings her talents to Anchorage for the 2013-14 season. Davis' contribution of 9.1 points and an average better than 2.0 in rebounds, assists and steals helped Gillette reach as high as No. 11 in the NJCAA top-25.

Look for the chemistry of Wright and Davis to bring a spark to UAA's program that could prove to be what the Seawolves need to move towards the top of the conference standings.

OUTLOOK

Despite a record well-above .500 last season, UAA's finish in a tie for third was its lowest since the 2005-06 season (the last time UAA had a losing record). The Seawolves will seek to replicate their performances from the 2008-09 and 2011-12 seasons, when they finished atop the GNAC, with a combination of returning starters and fresh energy from its transfers.

UAA has been selected to finish sixth in the GNAC preseason coaches' poll, receiving 58 total points.

An immediate test lies within the Seawolves' schedule, as they host the top-two GNAC preseason teams in Montana State Billings and Seattle Pacific to open conference play. UAA will face the same two teams again to close the season, that time with the road factor making the challenge even more difficult.

CENTRAL WASHINGTON Wildcats - Preseason Rank: 7

Head Coach: Shawn Nelson, Carroll '96 (18-34, 2 years; Overall, 220-104, 10 years)

Assistant: Carly VanDyke

Grad Assistant: Alysha Green

2012-13 Record: 9-17

Conference: 4-14, 8th

Returning Letter Winners: 9

Returning Starters (5): Jessica VanDyke (G, 5-9, Sr., 12.7 ppg, 4.9 rpg, 65-198 3-pointers, 2nd Team GNAC); Jasmine Parker (F/C, 6-2, So., 8.3 ppg, 6.7 rpg, 2.3 bpg, HM GNAC); Amber Moser (F/C, 6-0, Jr., 4.4 ppg, 2.9 rpg, .65 apg); Hannah Shine (G, 5-11, So., 4.8 ppg, 3.8 rpg, 21-69 3-pointers); Ally Schmitt (G, 5-8, Jr., 7.8 ppg, 3.5 rpg, 4.7 apg).

Other Returnees: Courtney Johnson (F, 5-11, Jr., 8.6 ppg, 3.6 rpg, 24-53 3-pointers); Daisy Burke (G, 5-6, Sr., 5.7 ppg, 1.6 rpg); Nina Caldwell (F, 5-10, So., 1.0 ppg, 1.0 rpg); India Matheson (C, 6-1, So., .6 ppg, 1.4 rpg).

Transfers: Mollie Kramer (G, 5-9, Jr., Colton, WA – North Idaho); Erika Locker (G, 5-10, Jr., Ferndale, WA – Whatcom); Angela Woods (G, 5-8, Jr., Seattle, WA – North Idaho).

2012-13 SEASON

Central Washington struggled to build momentum during GNAC play a season ago, posting a 4-14 record to finish in eighth place. The Wildcats fared better outside of conference play, finishing 5-3 in non-GNAC contests for an overall record of 9-17.

While CWU maintained a positive scoring margin, its average of 64.9 was more than five points lower than the next closest team (MSUB 69.0) which notched the Wildcats in the bottom tier of the conference.

The Wildcats were decent in terms of rebounding, averaging 38.2 per contest while allowing 35.5, the fourth fewest in the GNAC. CWU's defensive struggles were reflected in its opponents' shooting percentage from the field however, as the Wildcats' allowance of a .422 opponent field goal percentage was the worst in the conference.

Ball security also proved to be an issue at times for CWU, as the Wildcats recorded a negative turnover margin at -0.3 a season ago. CWU's conference-low average of seven steals per game contributed to its failure to generate turnovers.

IMPACT PLAYERS

Jessica VanDyke, CWU's lone double-digit scorer, returns for her senior year and will be the Wildcats' anchor offensively. VanDyke's 2.5 3-point field goal average per game last season was the second-highest figure in the

GNAC. Overall she shot .328 from beyond the arc, and the Wildcats will continue to utilize her long-range abilities this season.

Jasmine Parker, another returner, used her 6-foot frame to lead the team in rebounds as a freshman last season with 6.7 per game. Additionally, Parker led the conference in blocks per game with 2.3, a full block higher than the next best average.

Courtney Johnson was the Wildcats' top shooter in terms of field goal percentage, as her mark of .472 was tied for sixth-best in the GNAC in 2012-13. Her 8.6 scoring average was second-best on the team, while her .453 mark from downtown was tops on the squad.

Ally Schmitt equips CWU with another veteran, and her average of 4.7 assists per game last season was fourth-highest in the GNAC. Schmitt also set an example from the free-throw line, shooting .757, and her 1.4 assist-turnover ratio was third-best in the conference.

Angela Woods, who averaged 8.3 points per game for North Idaho Junior College a season ago, brings her talents to the Wildcat program. Woods led her team in perimeter shooting, sinking 54-of-161 shots from long distance for a clip of .335. Teammate Mollie Kramer made the journey west as well, giving CWU a pair of upperclassmen with chemistry between them.

KEY FACTOR

With both of its 2012-13 All-GNAC selections returning this season in VanDyke and Parker, CWU has the potential to turn around its record in a big way.

CWU will combine a solid core of four seniors who have experience within the program with a trio of junior college transfers and the sophomore standout Parker.

Look for Woods to provide a second option from the perimeter in addition to VanDyke, which could help push the Wildcats' offense into the upper half of the GNAC.

If CWU can boost its scoring margin by a few points, it will have the opportunity to compete with the top teams in the conference.

OUTLOOK

CWU has been picked to finish seventh in the preseason coaches' poll. The Wildcats begin their conference schedule on the road, playing Saint Martin's and Western Oregon during the first week of GNAC play.

CWU's toughest stretch comes towards the end of its conference schedule, when the Wildcats hit the road to face three teams picked to finish in the upper half of the GNAC standings in Seattle Pacific, Montana State Billings and Northwest Nazarene.

SAINT MARTIN'S Saints - Preseason Rank: 8**Head Coach:** Tim Healy, Washington State '78 (215-235, 17 years)**Assistants:** Kaitlin McBride**2012-13 Record:** 12-16**Conference:** 5-13, 7th**Returning Letter Winners:** 9**Returning Starters (4):** Chelsea Haskey (F, 6-1, Sr., 14.0 ppg, 6.3 rpg, 16-46 3-pointers, 2nd team GNAC); Jordyn Richardson (G, 5-9, Jr., 6.4 ppg, 1.9 rpg, 41-111 3-Pointers); Jori Skorpik (G, 5-2, Jr., 3.0 ppg, 2.3 rpg, 2.3 apg); Mackenzie Taylor (F, 5-10, So., 5.9 ppg, 5.9 rpg, 1.5 spg).**Other Returnees:** Brooke Paulson (F, 5-10, Jr., 8.2 ppg, 2.9 rpg, 21-64 3-Pointers); Angela Gelhar (G, 5-6, Jr., 5.3 ppg, 1.6 rpg); Ciara Pedroni (F, 6-2, So., 4.1 ppg, 4.7 rpg); Krista Stabler (G, 5-6, So., 3.8 ppg, 1.2 rpg); Hattie Kosko (F, 6-1, So., 1.5 ppg, 1.2 rpg); Lauren Tigue (F, 6-0, R-So., 0 ppg, 0 rpg).**Transfers:** Liz Mills (F, 5-11, Jr., Covington, WA – Sacramento State).**2012-13 SEASON**

A scoring offense that ranked last in the GNAC with 55.1 points per game led to a 5-13 conference record for Saint Martin's as the Saints landed in seventh place last season.

SMU was competitive overall with a 12-16 record, despite a scoring margin of -5.9.

The Saints were good from 3-point range, notching a percentage of .332, but shot just .368 overall from the floor, the lowest in the GNAC.

SMU struggled inside last season, ranking ninth in rebounding offense at 35.3 per game, while allowing opponents 39. The -3.4 rebounding margin was the worst in the conference.

The Saints showed promise in the steals department, as their average of 9.5 was the third-highest total across the GNAC. Blocks were another category SMU excelled in, averaging 3.0 in 2012-13.

Ultimately, a lack of scoring depth crippled SMU last season, as just two players averaged more than 6.4 points per game.

IMPACT PLAYERS

Chelsea Haskey, who led the squad with 14 points and 6.3 rebounds per contest, provides SMU with a legitimate senior leader and all-conference caliber player. Haskey also notched 28 steals and 23 blocks in 2012-13, and her field-goal percentage of .470 was eighth-best in the GNAC.

MacKenzie Taylor provides depth in the rebounding department, as she hauled in 5.9 per game while also averaging 5.9 points last season.

Jori Skorpik facilitated the Saints' offense in 2012-13 as the point guard, dishing out 62 assists and contributing 43 steals, both team-highs.

Jordyn Richardson is the Saints' top returning shooter, as she nailed 41-of-111 shots from long-distance for a percentage of .369. Richardson turned in 6.4 points per game as a sophomore in 2012-13.

Brooke Paulson, who averaged 8.2 points a season ago will look to continue her success from beyond the arc and take more shots this season. In nine starts, she sunk 21-of-64 attempts from downtown, and also shot 71 percent from the free throw line.

Krista Stabler figures to see more playing time this season, after appearing in 27 games – starting one – as a freshman last year.

Liz Mills played in six contests at Sacramento State a season ago, bringing Division I experience to the Saints' lineup.

KEY FACTOR

SMU head coach Tim Healy is in the midst of a developing squad, with Haskey being his lone senior.

The team will look to provide secondary scoring threats in the form of Richardson and Paulson, while Taylor will be called upon to anchor the Saints' defensive effort.

Plenty of young players should see significant time this season as SMU will look to balance valuable experience across its young lineup.

OUTLOOK

SMU is slated to finish eighth in the GNAC preseason coaches' poll.

The Saints begin their 2013-14 conference schedule at home with games against Central Washington and Northwest Nazarene the first weekend.

Four of SMU's final six contests are on the road, and the Saints will face the three teams picked to finish in the top three spots in the preseason poll over that stretch in Montana State Billings, Seattle Pacific and Western Washington.

WESTERN OREGON Wolves – Preseason Rank: 9**Head Coach:** Holli Howard-Carpenter (0-0, first season)**Assistants:** Katie Girten, Nia Bravo, Justin Davidson**2012-13 Record:** 8-20**Conference:** 3-15, T-9th**Returning Letter Winners:** 9**Returning Starters (5):** Melissa Fowler (F, 5-10, Sr., 9.2 ppg, 5.7 rpg, 2.6 apg, HM GNAC); Mariah Durian (G/F, 6-0, So., 11.5 ppg, 4.7 rpg, 34-106 3-pointers); Dana Goularte (F, 6-0, Jr., 9.7 ppg, 5.7 rpg, 2.4 spg); Amber Reade (G, 5-8, Jr., 5.1 ppg, 3.4 rpg, 1.6 spg); Chantel Divilbiss (G, 5-7, Sr., 6.6 ppg, 1.6 rpg, 24-65 3-pointers).**Other Returnees:** Stacey Aldrink (F, 6-1, Jr., 0 ppg, .5 rpg); Whitney Rodriguez (C, 6-2, So., 3.3 ppg, 4.8 rpg); Kelsey Henry (F, 6-1, So., 3.9 ppg, 2.5 rpg); Andi Maleike (G, 5-8, So., 1.8 ppg, 1.1

rpg); Katie Goddard (G, 5-10, So., 2.6 ppg, 1.6 rpg); Elise Miller (G, 5-6, Jr., Milwaukie, OR - Clackamas).

Transfers: None.

2012-13 SEASON

With an overall record of 8-20 and a mark of 3-15 in GNAC play, Western Oregon finished in a tie for last place in 2012-13. The Wolves struggled on the road, failing to win a conference game away from their own hardwood as they went 0-9.

WOU was one of just two GNAC teams to average less than 60 points per game at 59.3, and it allowed 66 for a scoring margin of -6.7. The Wolves didn't shoot well from the floor with a percentage of .378, but showed some promise from long range at a clip of .331.

Defensively, no GNAC school was better than WOU in terms of defending perimeter shots, as the Wolves' opponent three-point percentage was a conference-low .291. WOU was also solid in terms of defensive rebounds, averaging 25.6 per contest, the third-best mark in the conference.

Ball security proved to be a major issue for WOU last season, as the Wolves' 0.6 assist-turnover ratio was tied for the lowest in the GNAC. WOU fared decently in terms of creating turnovers with 8.7 steals per game, but its turnover margin of -1.6 suggests that the Wolves gave away too many opportunities.

A lack of interior size caused WOU to be outrebounded a season ago, with a rebounding margin of -2.9 on the season. Wolves opponents grabbed 40.3 rebounds per game last season, the second-highest figure in the GNAC.

IMPACT PLAYERS

The good news for WOU is that two of its top-three scorers last season were underclassmen, including scoring leader Mariah Durian. Durian produced 11.5 points per game and shot .340 from the field as a freshman. She also made 34-of-106 shots from 3-point range, while landing fourth in the GNAC in free throw percentage at a clip of .887.

Dana Goularte saw regular playing time during her sophomore campaign last season, starting 22 contests and averaging 9.7 points. The forward also led the team in blocks with 28, co-led the team with 5.7 rebounds per contest, and was amongst team leaders in shooting percentage with a mark of .398.

Melissa Fowler brings senior leadership to the Wolves in 2013-14, after starting 25 games last season and averaging 9.2 points. Her rebounding effort of 5.7 mirrored Goularte's team-leading figure, and Fowler was WOU's leading shooter from the floor with a percentage of .464.

Amber Reade started 25 contests as a sophomore last season, averaging 29 minutes and 5.1 points per game. The

guard was a pickpocket last year, racking up 42 steals and dishing out 39 assists for the Wolves.

Chantel Divilbiss fills an ever-important senior leadership role, after starting 16 games last season and scoring 6.6 points per game. The guard has good touch from long range, converting 24-of-65 shots from beyond the arc last season.

Another young player who figures to see increased action this season is Katie Goddard. As a freshman, she played in 27 games, averaging 2.6 points and showing potential from long-distance with nine threes in 29 attempts.

KEY FACTOR

First-year head coach Holli Howard-Carpenter inherits a program that lost just one senior and has the potential to be a surprise contender in 2013-14. WOU will count on Fowler and Durian to step into leadership roles and propel its offense towards a positive scoring margin.

The Wolves already have a solid foundation defensively, and if they can create sustained success on that front, a boost in offensive production should be all WOU needs to move upwards in the GNAC standings.

Look for Divilbiss and Goddard to provide solid secondary options from the perimeter, with Goularte continuing to be a significant presence inside.

OUTLOOK

In order to prove GNAC coaches wrong, the Wolves will have to improve on last year's finish, as WOU has been selected to finish ninth in the preseason poll. WOU's toughest stretch this season figures to be three straight games against Western Washington, MSU Billings and Seattle Pacific – the three top preseason teams – in late February.

ALASKA FAIRBANKS Nanooks - Preseason Rank: 10

Head Coach: Cody Bench, Alaska Fairbanks '05 (12-67, 3 years)

Assistant: Amy Senefelder, Taylor Altenburg, Mason Campbell

2012-13 Record: 5-21

Conference: 3-15, T-9th

Returning Letter Winners: 5

Returning Starters (2): Kelly Logue (G, 5-9, Jr., 7.2 ppg, 4.3 rpg, 2.6 spg, 2.5 apg); Benissa Bulaya (G, 5-6, Jr., 8.8 ppg, 3.3 rpg, 3.5 apg).

Other Returnees: Ruth O'Neal (F, 5-9, Sr., 4.4 ppg, 4.0 rpg); Samantha Thornton (F, 5-11, Sr., 6.3 ppg, 3.7 rpg); Brianna Kirk (G, 5-8, So., 3.3 ppg, 3.2 rpg).

Transfers: Delisa Chapman (F, 6-0, Jr., Palmdale, CA - College of the Canyons); Candace Prestwich (G, 5-6, Jr., Murray, UT - College of Southern Idaho); Ashlyn Neal (G, 5-8, Jr., Sanger, CA - Reedley).

2012-13 SEASON

Alaska Fairbanks finished tied for last place in the GNAC with a record of 5-21 and a 3-15 mark in conference play in 2012-13.

Fourth-season head coach Cody Bench saw her team suffer from a lack of offense, as the Nanooks averaged 63 points per contest while allowing 73. The -10 scoring margin was the lowest in the GNAC, as UAF shot just 37 percent from the field.

Defensively, the Nanooks showed promise as they led the conference in steals, averaging 10.5 per game. UAF was also a solid rebounding team, posting the second-highest conference mark in offensive boards at 14.6 per contest.

The Nanooks did not shoot well from three-point range, as their .249 percentage was the lowest in the GNAC. Defending against the long-range shot proved problematic as well, as UAF allowed opponents to shoot .338 from beyond the stripe.

Poor shooting from the foul line (.624) and the field overall (.374) factored into the Nanooks' below-average offensive output.

IMPACT PLAYERS

The Nanooks are without their top two scorers from last season as April Fultz (12.0) and Taylor Altenburg (9.9) both graduated. UAF also said goodbye to its top two sharpshooters, as Jacqueline Lovato (39-153 3 pointers) and Marissa Atoruk (32-101 3 pointers) are gone as well.

UAF welcomes back Benissa Bulaya, the Nanook who saw the most time on the court last season with an average of 29.7 minutes per contest. Bulaya averaged 8.8 points and provided a team-high 88 assists a season ago while her .478 shooting percentage from the field was fifth-best in the GNAC. The junior guard also logged 52 steals and grabbed 3.3 rebounds per game for the Nanooks.

Kelly Logue provides UAF with another returning starter, as she averaged 7.2 points while landing third in the GNAC in steals with 63 and grabbing 4.3 rebounds per game. Logue finished behind only Bulaya in assists with 61 as she averaged nearly 29 minutes on the hardwood per game.

Samantha Thornton and Ruth O'Neal are the Nanooks' lone seniors, and will be asked to step into leadership roles this season. In 2012-13, Thornton started 10 contests, averaging 6.3 points and 3.7 rebounds, while posting 17 blocks. O'Neal played in all 26 games, starting four and averaging 4.4 points and 4.0 rebounds.

KEY FACTOR

Dalisa Chapman, a transfer from the College of the Canyons could be a top player for UAF this season, as her 12.2 points per game and nearly nine rebounds earned her All-Western State Conference honors in 2012-13. If Chapman can replicate her nine double-doubles from a season ago with her new team, the Nanooks have a good chance to improve upon last season's lacking offensive output.

Another transfer, Ashlyn Neal from Reedley College in California, should have an immediate impact on the offense as she was the third-leading three-point shooter in the Central Valley Conference at 33.3 percent.

Bulaya and Logue are the lone Nanooks with two years of collegiate experience, and the juniors will be called upon to mentor UAF's young lineup.

Look for both Chapman and Neal to compliment Bulaya and Logue and provide potential for a more dynamic scoring threat.

Coach Bench will seek energy from the Nanooks' recruiting class, as the 2013-14 roster features six true freshmen who could all see playing time.

OUTLOOK

The Nanooks have been picked to finish 10th in the 2013-14 preseason coaches' poll, with little depth and experience to convince GNAC coaches a significant improvement can be made. UAF will count on its fresh faces of all ages to develop a renewed mindset of confidence.

UAF is tasked with hosting Seattle Pacific and Montana State Billings to open GNAC play, and will face a tough three-game road trip in mid-February at Western Oregon, Saint Martin's and Alaska Anchorage.