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<td>Connor Barrett</td>
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<td>Fr.</td>
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Head Coach: Matt Lottich (Stanford, 2004) – 5th season  
Associate Head Coach: Luke Gore (Bethel [Tenn.], 2001) – 19th season  
Director of Basketball Operations: Jason Karys (Valparaiso, 2017) – 2nd season  
Graduate Assistant: Peter Funk (Valparaiso, 2019) – 2nd season  

(Visit valpoathletics.com to see the roster and full bios for players and coaches.)
Don’t miss Missouri Valley Conference basketball, including postseason tournament action, all season long on these networks.

#0 GOODNEWS KPEGEOL
6-5 | G | R-So.
- Joined the program before the 2020–2021 season as a junior college transfer after averaging 12.0 points and 5.8 rebounds at Southwest Mississippi in 2019–2020.
- Started the 2018–2019 season at Taylor Made Prep in Pensacola, Fla., then transferred to Kansas State at the semester break and sat out the remainder of that season due to transfer rules.
- Was a four-year letter winner at North High School in St. Paul, leading his team to a 22-5 overall mark and 15-1 conference record as a senior.

#1 SIGURD LORANGE
5-11 | G | So.
- Appeared in nine games in 2019–2020 before having his rookie season cut short by an injury.
- Shot a robust 60% (6-of-10) from 3-point land in limited action.
- Played numerous sports including soccer, handball and basketball as a child in Norway.

#2 ZION MORGAN
6-5 | G | R-Sr.
- Joined the program as a junior college transfer after two seasons at Wabash Valley College.
- Started his collegiate career by playing in 27 games and making five starts at UNLV in 2016–2017.
#3 STEVEN HELM
6-2 | G | R-So.
- Spent the last two years in Japan serving a mission for his church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- Started his collegiate career at Carroll College, where he competed in both basketball and track & field.
- Connected at a 47.1 percent clip from 3-point range and a 94.2 percent clip from the foul line during the 2016-2017 season at Carroll.

#4 DANIEL SACKEY
5-9 | G | Jr.
- Ranked fifth in the MVC and second among sophomores at 3.6 assists per game last season.
- Had a team-high 121 assists to go along with 6.3 points per game, 2.5 rebounds per game and 35 steals while averaging 25.5 minutes over 34 contests (25 starts) as a sophomore in 2019-2020.
- Made a buzzer-beater to upstage Canadian powerhouse Carleton in overtime in August 2019, making an appearance on SportsCenter’s Top 10 plays at No. 9 that evening.

#5 DONOVAN CLAY
6-7 | G/F | So.
- Named to the 2020-2021 MVC Preseason Second Team.
- Was third on the team in scoring (9.4 ppg) and second in rebounding (4.6 rpg) while leading the team in blocked shots with 36 in 2019-2020.
- Earned a place on the MVC All-Freshman Team last season.

#10 ERON GORDON
6-3 | G | R-Sr.
- Was one of two players on the team who appeared in all 35 games in 2019-2020.
- Made the go-ahead layup with three seconds left in overtime in Valpo’s 74-73 upset win over Loyola in the MVC quarterfinal to help the Brown & Gold complete an 18-point rally. That was the 25th time since the start of the 1992-1993 season that Valpo prevailed on a game-winner in the final five seconds.
- Became the third Valpo player to hit a game-winner in the final five seconds of a conference tournament or postseason game since 1992-1993, joining Ryan Broekhoff (2013 vs. Green Bay) and Bryce Drew (1998 vs. Ole Miss).

#11 EMIL FRESE-VILIEN
6-10 | C | So.
- Appeared in 16 games and averaged 6.6 minutes per contest while totaling 16 points, four blocked shots, five assists and 15 rebounds (six offensive boards) during his rookie campaign in 2019-2020.
- Started playing basketball in November 2014 after playing badminton during his younger years.
- Played for Denmark at both the U16 and U18 FIBA Euro Championships in 2015 and 2017, respectively.

#12 TYLER FRICKE
6-1 | G/F | Fr.
- Joined the Valpo program as a walk-on for the 2020-2021 season.
- His father, Scott, coached Valpo head coach Matt Lottich at New Trier High School during Lottich’s playing days.
- His brother, Zach, pitches for the Valpo baseball team.
#13 SHELDON EDWARDS
6-4 | G | Fr.
- Averaged 21.2 points and 7.6 rebounds as a senior at Palm Beach Lakes High School in 2018–2019.
- Spent a postgraduate year at TLAP Sports Academy in Port St. Lucie, Fla. during the 2019–2020 season, averaging 32 points per game and five rebounds per contest while turning in two games of 40+ points.
- Favorite NBA player is Steph Curry, but he models his game after the likes of Devin Booker, Jayson Tatum and Bradley Beal.

#15 LUKE MORRILL
6-2 | G | So.
- Joined the program as a walk-on prior to the 2019–2020 season.
- Saw action in five games, totaling nine minutes and accruing five points and two rebounds during his first season on campus.
- Majoring in computer engineering.

#21 BROCK PAPPAS
6-4 | F | Jr.
- Nursing major who joined the program as a walk-on in 2018–2019.
- His mother, Lisa, has worked on Valpo’s campus for 32 years, currently serving as an administrative assistant in the Department of Education. His brother Bryce and father, Steve, are both Valpo graduates.
- Is the first boys' basketball player in Washington Township High School history to play at the Division-I level.

#22 MILEEK McMILLAN
6-8 | F | Sr.
- Was named to the MVC Most-Improved Team after upping his scoring average from 2.8 points per game as a sophomore to 8.8 points per game as a junior in 2019–2020.
- Started all 34 games that he played as a junior after making just one start and averaging 8.1 minutes per game as a sophomore.
- Over doubled his rebounding average from the previous season, going from 1.5 to 3.2 in 2019–2020. After making 10 3-pointers as a sophomore, he made 40 during his junior campaign and shot 42.3% from distance during conference play.

#23 BEN KRIKKE
6-9 | F | So.
- Appeared in 33 games and made one start during his freshman season.
- Averaged 6.7 points per game and 2.9 rebounds per contest while blocking 15 shots, coming away with 15 steals, shooting 79.2% at the foul line, draining 14 3s and handing out 22 assists.
- Shot 55 percent from the field, finishing fifth in the conference and second among freshmen in field-goal percentage.

#25 NICK ROBINSON
6-5 | G | R-Sr.
- Played in 25 games and made 19 starts last season while missing nine games due to a back injury.
- Joined the program as a transfer in 2018–2019 and sat out due to transfer rules after playing two seasons at Saint Joseph’s and appearing in 62 games, starting 30 times.
- Served as a high school teammate of Valpo’s Zion Morgan at Kenwood.
**#34 JACOB OGNACEVIC**  
6-8 | F | Fr.

- Named to the Associated Press All-State First Team following his senior season at Sheboygan Lutheran in 2019–2020 while also earning Herald Times Player of the Year, All-Big East Conference Player of the Year and Wisconsin Basketball Coaches Association All-State First-Team status.

- Was a finalist for Wisconsin Mr. Basketball.

- Led his team to a 27-2 record and the state championship in Wisconsin Division 5 during his junior season in 2018–2019 and was on the way to a repeat before the 2019–2020 season was cut short due to COVID-19.

**#35 CONNOR BARRETT**  
6-6 | G/F | Fr.

- Spent a postgraduate year at Brewster Academy in New Hampshire during the 2019–2020 season.

- Averaged 11.9 points and 3.7 rebounds per game at Loyola Academy as a high school senior during the 2018–2019 season while knocking down 64 3-pointers and shooting at a 37.9% clip.

- Led his high school team to back-to-back regional championships and sectional final appearances. His winning roots go back to his middle school days, when his team won three straight championships in sixth, seventh and eighth grades.
The campus, community, conference and nation witnessed the 2019–2020 Valparaiso University men’s basketball team accomplish something special in March, but those within the program knew they had something special long before the team arrived in St. Louis for the annual Missouri Valley Conference Tournament.

It all started during the team’s August Foreign Tour, which featured not only four preseason exhibitions on Canadian soil, but also valuable opportunities for team bonding. The players and coaches spent a day of the trip whitewater rafting, and during the excursion players began chanting “one team,” and then “one boat” with each row. That marked the organic birth of the season’s motto.

The concept of unity expressed through the words “one team, one boat” set the stage for the program’s rise. Those words helped the group navigate turbulent waters, both literally in Canada and figuratively throughout the season. The collection of individuals came together for something bigger, and it all culminated with Valpo becoming the first team since the Missouri Valley Conference went to its current tournament format in 1997 to play in the opening round and reach the championship game with three wins in three days.

Creating Championship Culture

As summer practices got underway, the team’s recently-renovated practice facility featured six simple words — or two words, really, repeated three times — etched behind the basket as a reminder of what Valpo Basketball is all about.

“THE TEAM, THE TEAM, THE TEAM.”

“Our main goal during the offseason was that we wanted our team to be a team,” head coach Matt Lottich said. “We want everyone to be more focused on the team than on themselves. Our saying is ‘team over me,’ and our players have done a great job of implementing that. They have bought into one another, and it’s as close of a team as we’ve had in a long, long time.”
Lottich implemented weekly culture meetings, where players and coaches engaged in conversations about life beyond basketball. They read books about adversity and shared varying perspectives and reactions with one another.

“It’s always good to have a foundation for culture and to make sure that everyone is bought in,” senior Ryan Fazekas ’20 said at the MVC Tip-Off event prior to the season. “We all have the same goal and we’re all fighting for the same thing. We don’t have someone who is lacking and hurts the rest of the team. It’s been a big emphasis and we’ve really enjoyed it.”

BATTLING INJURIES AND AILMENTS

After Fazekas scored a career-high 23 points in a thrilling two-point win over Toledo to open the season, the fifth-year senior had his history of frequent injuries rear its head in only the second game of the season on Nov. 9 at Saint Louis.

The 6-foot-8 sharpshooter from Chesterton, Ind., fell to the hardwood after taking a charge and came down holding his wrist in agony. His diagnosis wouldn’t be released publicly until weeks later, but those who saw it didn’t need to be told — broken wrist.

When he addressed the media later in the season, Fazekas admitted that in the immediate aftermath of the injury, he thought his basketball career had come to an end.

“Before the season started, I told my dad if I can’t make it through a full season without any major injuries, I was going to wrap it up,” Fazekas said. “Sure enough, two games in, I break my wrist pretty badly. That was the icing on the cake for me. I was ready to call it quits.”

Although no one would have blamed Fazekas for hanging up his basketball shoes, he instead sustained his complete commitment to doing everything in his power to help his team. He turned his attention to rest, recovery and eventually rehabilitation. After missing 17 games, Fazekas returned on Jan. 23 at Missouri State, and he remained healthy enough to stay on the court for the season’s duration.

The loss of Fazekas was far from the only obstacle Valpo Basketball faced during the 2019–2020 season. Only two players — Donovan Clay and Eron Gordon — played in all 35 games, while most battled through bumps and bruises along the way.

Just hours before the Feb. 25 home finale against Missouri State, the Valpo coaching staff received word that Javon Freeman-Liberty had been diagnosed with mononucleosis. Despite the team’s leading scorer being suddenly sidelined, Valpo downed MVC preseason favorite Missouri State 89-74. The shorthanded victory was not only a significant one in the conference standings, but also one that reinforced the “one team, one boat” mantra, a “next man up” mentality and the team culture that the program has developed.

GOING BEYOND THE EXPECTED

Each member of the program contributed to creating the culture surrounding Valpo Basketball in 2019–2020, but if there’s one person whose story best exemplifies what the program and University are all about, it’s John Kiser ’20.

Kiser went from a non-scholarship walk-on as a freshman to a member of the MVC All-Tournament Team and a starter throughout his team’s Arch Madness run as a senior. Following his senior year of high school, he had two offers to play college basketball and no Division-I offers before his AAU coach helped him land a workout at Valpo with associate head coach Luke Gore. He was offered a walk-on spot, and a week later, he started summer classes. He jumped at the opportunity to receive a degree from Valpo’s nationally-ranked engineering program while also playing Division-I basketball for a program rich with tradition.

“Coming in, I knew I could possibly earn a scholarship, but I’d have to work for it,” Kiser said. “That taught me that not everything is just given to you in life.”

The mechanical engineering major thrived in the classroom throughout his four years and graduated with a 3.53 cumulative grade point average despite juggling the time demands of a rigorous academic load with those of being a Division-I athlete.

“John has showed what hard work, perseverance and resiliency will do,” Lottich said. “He is the backbone of what we’re trying to encourage our team to be like. It’s great having a player like John Kiser.”

Kiser added another layer to his story with his most resilient accomplishment yet after suffering an ankle injury on Feb. 12 vs. Southern Illinois. When one of the program’s toughest players hit the floor and
needed helped off, everyone in the Athletics-Recreation Center knew it was serious. In the moments following the game, Lottich feared that the career of the player he called his “glue guy” was over.

But as he had time and time again, Kiser bounced back. He missed just two games before returning to play in the final three games of the regular season and the four MVC Tournament games. He did so despite battling through pain, playing on two ruptured ligaments in his ankle. Not only did Kiser play, but he did so at the highest level of his career, making key contributions in the quarterfinal upset of Loyola before scoring a career-high 17 points in the semifinal triumph over Missouri State.

NEVER GIVE UP

One life lesson Matt Lottich’s program taught players and fans alike over the course of the season can be captured in three simple words — never give up.

The team made improbable comebacks seem ordinary. Like everything else associated with Valpo Basketball in 2019–2020, it all started in Canada. The team trailed 90-80 with 4:56 to go in an Aug. 11 exhibition against Concordia before closing with 14 straight points to win 94-90. During the season, Valpo erased double-figure deficits to win six more times.

Valpo came from double figures down to tie or take the lead 11 times in 2019–2020. In the first four years of Matt Lottich’s coaching tenure, Valpo has trailed by double figures and won on 15 occasions and led by double figures and lost just once.

The team’s final and most notable comeback came in the MVC quarterfinal, when Valpo climbed from 18 behind to knock off Loyola 74-73. It was the fourth time in the long history of the MVC Tournament that a team trailed by 18 or more and rallied to emerge victorious.

“It’s the heart of this team,” junior Daniel Sackey said. “Everyone on this team has a big heart. Everyone is so selfless. Out of respect for our seniors, respect for ourselves and respect for our program, we knew we had to at least go out with a fight. That’s what we did, and we ended up coming out of it with a win.”

Visit the full story at valpoathletics.com to read more about the memorable MVC quarterfinal upset of Loyola at Arch Madness and a glance at the program’s bright future.
when we support the home team, we all win.
FORMER VALPO STUDENT-ATHLETES
COMBAT COVID-19 AS FRONTLINE WORKERS

In the months since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States, former Valparaiso University student-athletes working in the medical field across the country have gone beyond the expected in their efforts to combat the virus and treat patients in need of their care.

Numerous former Valpo student-athletes transitioned from their normal areas of medical expertise to assist on COVID-19 units and worked additional hours to help the fight against the virus.

Tristan De La Rosa ’18 serves as an emergency-room nurse in Garden Grove, California at the biggest trauma hospital in Orange County, located next to Disneyland. The former Valpo football player has worked at least four shifts per week since the beginning of March, including 10 16-hour shifts. At one point, he worked 11 shifts consecutively.

“At the height of the pandemic, our whole hospital was maxed out, so we had to hold patients in the ER,” De La Rosa said. “We had patients in the lobby, and we did everything...”

Nick Davidson ’17
we could because the hospital was completely full with nowhere to place them. We were putting up tents and rolling out tarps. Our staff members couldn’t see their families, but fortunately I live on my own so I didn’t have to worry about that. It was also very sad that we couldn’t allow patients’ family members to come in, but we had to do everything we could to keep them safe.”

Former Valpo women’s soccer player **Tess Barrett ’19** recently reached the one-year mark at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago, where she works in a gastrointestinal surgical oncology unit. The unit was briefly transformed into a COVID-19 unit, while Barrett and other nurses also spent time floating around the hospital to assist other COVID-19 units.

“It was pretty intense; the time as a whole was unpredictable,” Barrett said. “We’re fortunate to have so many resources at Northwestern; we had good amounts of PPE (personal protective equipment) and tons of support from our staff. We all had to work together as a team, and it was a whole new ballgame, whether you had 30 years of experience or six months of experience.”

After starting her nursing career in an adult emergency room, **Alyssa Meade ’17 Clark** pursued her passion of pediatric care at the Children’s Hospital of Michigan in downtown Detroit. Clark is currently pursuing her doctorate of nursing at the University of Michigan. During the pandemic, the former Valpo bowler moved to a sister hospital that serves adult patients, Sinai Grace Hospital in Detroit.

“They were hit pretty hard and needed extra help,” she said. “It was an eye-opening experience to transition to the adult hospital and see first hand what it was like dealing with the virus and how much it was impacting everyone. I was honored to be able to help, and thankfully after about a month and a half, it started to get better. This challenging time showed how much everyone can come together. A few of my coworkers and I made the transition together, and everyone was so appreciative of our help. It was a crazy experience that exemplifies the importance of teamwork.”

After completing her nursing degree, former Valpo women’s basketball player **Annemarie Hamlet ’17 Hanson** accepted a position at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in downtown Chicago. She works as a registered nurse in oncology and cancer care on the stem-cell transplant floor. In late March, she volunteered to leave her floor and assume a position on a COVID-19 floor, where she worked for two months.

“At the beginning, it was nerve-racking because all of us were throwing ourselves into the unknown,” Hanson said. “It made sense for me to volunteer to move floors since I live with my husband (former Valpo baseball player Jake Hanson ’16) and we don’t have children at home. I didn’t have to worry about spreading the virus to high-risk family members. Nobody was ready for it at first, but Northwestern did a great job supplying us with what we needed.”

**Nick Davidson ’17** has spent the last three years working in the cardiac intensive care unit at Ascension St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis. The former Valpo basketball player has contributed to heart transplants, kidney transplants and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO), a treatment that is used for COVID-19 patients with severe respiratory distress.

“We take blood that would normally go into the patient’s lungs, put it through a massive filter and give it back to them,” Davidson said. “It’s one method we can use to give our patients’ lungs a rest. It’s been interesting to see how much better we are at treating COVID-19 patients compared to where we were at the beginning of the pandemic. In the state of Indiana and across the country, we’ve gotten a lot better at recognizing the symptoms and giving people the treatment that they need.”

**Carly Trepanier ’19** has worked as a nurse at Advocate Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn, Illinois, for just over a year. She specializes in stroke patients and the older adult population on the medical surgery and neurosurgery floor. Advocate Christ Medical Center is a 700-bed hospital, and at one time they had nearly 300 COVID-19 patients, so about half of their units were dedicated strictly to COVID-19.

“My unit never turned into a COVID unit, but we took the responsibilities of other units that were instead treating COVID patients,” Trepanier said. “I also picked up a lot of extra shifts on the COVID units to help the staff there. It was pretty intense at that time. Nobody was allowed in the room besides the nurse, so the nurse had to do everything from taking out the trash to cleaning the patient to bringing food in, and we were only allowed to go in for a maximum of 10 minutes at a time. After my first day on the COVID unit, I went home and broke down because I felt so terribly for my patients. Since then, it’s gotten a lot better and we have a better handle on the situation.”

**Kayla Krueger ’20** works as a nurse on the behavior floor of OSF Heart of Mary Medical Center in Champaign, Illinois. The former Valpo women’s golfer has seen the pandemic’s impact on the mental health of her patients.
"I work most often with mentally-ill patients as opposed to physically-ill patients, so the impact on my work has been different," Krueger said. "All of the time in isolation and quarantine has caused many patients’ anxiety and depression to skyrocket. Some patients are fearful of the virus, some are distressed about the social isolation and others have financial-related stress due to the pandemic. Our job is to help them get back on their feet. We also work with social workers to help our patients find jobs and find ways they can improve their mental health outside of our hospital setting."

After completing her nursing degree, former Valpo softball player Sam Stewart ’17 accepted a position at Silver Cross Hospital in New Lenox, Illinois, where her mother has worked for over 10 years. Stewart is a nurse on a post-operative surgical unit providing orthopedic care.

"At the beginning of the outbreak, they completely stopped surgeries," Stewart said. "They dedicated the whole floor above mine to COVID-19 patients, and we ended up having to take the patients they couldn’t take. We started seeing neuro and stroke patients. Now, we’ve gotten back to some level of normalcy."

Former Valpo swimmer Lauren Nettenstrom ’04 works on the research side of the medical field, and her work has had a direct impact on COVID-19 research. She serves as an instrumentation technologist at Carbone Cancer Center Flow Cytometry Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Flow cytometry is a cell analysis technique that detects and measures the physical and chemical characteristics of a population of cells or particles.

“These instruments are very important because we don’t know much about COVID, and research is happening at such an accelerated pace,” Nettenstrom said. “People who were focused on different viruses or different parts of the immune system are turning their attention to COVID. What part of the immune system do we need to target with the vaccine? What type of vaccine would be useful? It’s been interesting to see all the collaboration. We have 200 different labs at the university that are using our lab and our core facility. We make sure to keep our instruments going so they’re functioning properly and the researchers can get high-quality data.”

Visit valpoathletics.com to read the full story.
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grace White</td>
<td>G/F</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Cara VanKempen</td>
<td>G/F</td>
<td>6-0</td>
<td>So.</td>
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<td>Fr.</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>G</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>Jr.</td>
<td>Aurora, Ill./Montini Catholic</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shay Frederick</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>Jr.</td>
<td>Greenville, Wis./Hortonville</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>R-Sr.</td>
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<td>Ella Ellenson</td>
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<td>Sr.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Carie Weinman</td>
<td>G</td>
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<td>R-Jr.</td>
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<td>Leah Earnest</td>
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<td>Fr.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Lauren Gunn</td>
<td>G/F</td>
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<td>Fr.</td>
<td>Fishers, Ind./Lawrence North</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Zoe MacKay Zacker</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>So.</td>
<td>St. Charles, Ill./Montini Catholic</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Caitlin Morrison</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6-2</td>
<td>R-Sr.</td>
<td>Glenview, Ill./Glenbrook South</td>
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<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Jayda Johnston</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6-0</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>Roseville, Minn./Roseville Area</td>
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</table>

**Head Coach:** Mary Evans (Georgia Southern, 2000) – 3rd season  
**Assistant Coaches:** Gabby Johnson, Dani Franklin and Mark Schwitzgable  
**Director of Basketball Operations:** Kaylin Speedy  
**Strength and Conditioning Coach:** Alex Curtis  

(Visit valpoathletics.com to see the roster and full bios for players and coaches.)
#1 Grace White
5-10 | G/F | Sr.

- Averaged 7.6 points and 4.2 rebounds per game last year in her first season at Valpo, ranking second on the team in rebounding.
- Set season highs across the board in a win at Eastern Illinois with 20 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists.
- Named MVC Newcomer of the Week March 9, averaging 17 points per game over the regular season’s final two games.

#2 Cara VanKempen
6-0 | G/F | So.

- Appeared in 20 games off the bench for Valpo last season as a rookie.
- Scored a season-best nine points, hitting three 3-pointers and grabbed four rebounds in an overtime win over Bowling Green.
- Chipped in six points and tied for team-high honors with four rebounds in MVC win at Evansville.

#3 Ava Interrante
5-9 | G | Fr.

- Comes to Valpo from McHenry [Ill.] H.S., where she earned Honorable Mention All-State and All-Area honors.
- Received All-Conference accolades twice.
- Helped the Warriors win a pair of regional championships and two conference titles.
#4 ILYSSE PITTS  
5-7 | G | Jr.
- Saw action in 28 games off the bench last year as a sophomore, averaging 15 minutes per game.
- Ranked third on the team with 52 assists and led Valpo in assists on five occasions.
- Scored season-high eight points in MVC home win over Indiana State.

#5 SHAY FREDERICK  
5-7 | G | Jr.
- Started all 29 games for Valpo as a sophomore last year, averaging 10 points and 4.3 assists/game.
- Led the team in assists 21 times and recorded 126 total assists, 10th-most in a single season in program history.
- Scored in double figures 14 times, including a career-high 22 points in MVC home win over UNI.

#10 SYRIA BUTLER  
5-6 | G | Fr.
- Comes to Valpo from Thornton [Ill.] H.S.
- Earned All-Conference honors while playing for the Wildcats.
- Averaged 15 points and five assists per game as a senior.

#11 MARLEE PROFITT  
6-2 | F | R-Sr.
- Averaged 5.2 points and 2.6 rebounds per game in 18 games off the bench last season, shooting 66.1% from the floor.
- Scored in double figures twice, including a career-best 17-point effort in Valpo’s win over Chicago State.
- Made key plays late in victories at Toledo, at Illinois State and at Southern Illinois.

#13 ELLA ELLENSON  
6-2 | F | Sr.
- Averaged 4.1 points per game off the bench in 27 games last year, hitting at a 42.2% clip from the 3-point line.
- Led Valpo in blocked shots nine times.
- Scored in double figures in four of the season’s final eight games, including a season-high 15 points against Drake and a 12-point effort at nationally-ranked Missouri State.

#15 CARIE WEINMAN  
5-9 | G | R-Jr.
- Three-time MVC Newcomer of the Week and member of the MVC All-Newcomer Team in her first season at Valpo, leading the Valley with 2.2 steals per game.
- Averaged 9.9 points per game as well and scored in double figures 10 times.
- Scored 20 points, including six 3-pointers, in road win at Toledo and a season-high 21 points in MVC road win at Loyola.
#22 LEAH EARNEST  
5-10 | G/F | Fr.  
- Comes to Valpo from Stevens Point Area [Wis.] Senior High, where she was a two-time First Team All-State honoree.  
- Program’s all-time leading scorer and rebounder, finishing career with 2,084 points and more than 1,000 rebounds.  
- Led program to conference and regional championships in each of her final three seasons.

#23 LAUREN GUNN  
5-9 | G/F | Fr.  
- Comes to Valpo from Lawrence North [Ind.] H.S., where she helped her team claim the Indiana Class 4A state championship as a senior.  
- Named Class 4A Mental Attitude Award recipient following last season’s championship.  
- Helped the Wildcats earn sectional, regional and semi-state titles in each of her final two seasons.

#24 ZOE MacKAY ZACKER  
5-10 | G | So.  
- Saw action in 11 games off the bench as a freshman last season.  
- Scored two points and tallied a pair of steals in season-high nine minutes of action in win over Chicago State.  
- Made pair of key plays late in come-from-behind MVC home win over Loyola, taking a charge with 12 seconds to play to give Valpo possession and then deflecting Loyola’s final inbounds pass.

#40 CAITLIN MORRISON  
6-2 | F | R-Sr.  
- Started all 29 games last season for Valpo, averaging 6.8 points per game.  
- Ranked sixth in the MVC and led Valpo with 30 blocked shots, moving into sixth place on Valpo’s career chart in the category by the end of the season.  
- Scored in double figures nine times, eight of which came within MVC play and highlighted by a career-high 15 points at home against Bradley.

#41 JAYDA JOHNSTON  
6-0 | F | Fr.  
- Comes to Valpo from Roseville Area [Minn.] H.S., where she was a two-time Honorable Mention All-State choice.  
- Helped Raiders win the sectional title and finish in fourth place at state as a sophomore, earning a spot on the All-State Tournament Team.  
- Finished prep career with more than 1,000 career points.
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#RINGTHEBELL – THE STORY OF THE 2019–2020 VALPO WOMEN’S BASKETBALL SEASON

Quite simply, the 2019–2020 season was a huge step forward for the Valpo women’s basketball program. You could see it anecdotally watching the team play, as second-year head coach Mary Evans and her staff refused to let their players settle for anything than their best, showing their total commitment to help the team reach its full potential.

You could see it analytically as well. The Brown and Gold enjoyed the largest jump in RPI ranking of any Division I team in the nation, set multiple school records and established themselves as a force to be reckoned with in the Missouri Valley Conference.

But it all boils down to wins. And Valpo had those in spades as well, ending the truncated season with 17 victories — the program’s winningest campaign since 2006–2007.

The wins came in non-conference play, where Valpo posted an 8-3 record — the best pre-conference mark in program history. The wins came away from home, as Valpo went 9-5 in true road games — the most road wins since the 2001–2002 team won nine true road games. And the wins came when the schedule shifted to Missouri Valley Conference action, as Valpo finished 9-9 in MVC play — its first .500 or better record in league play since 2008–2009 — in a conference which finished the season ranked eighth nationally in RPI.

Along the way, there were some memorable victories, three of which are highlighted here.

TOLEDO – NOV. 27, 2019 – TOLEDO, OHIO – W 61-54

Having dispatched one MAC program three days earlier, the task got tougher as Valpo hit the road right before Thanksgiving. The Brown and Gold were heading to Savage Arena — the rafters containing the long and storied history of the Toledo women’s program, including a second-round WNIT appearance the previous year, and the seats containing crowds which perennially ranked among the top attendances nationally.
None of that mattered on the court to Valpo, however. A back-and-forth first half saw Toledo carry a one-point lead into halftime. The Rockets scored two baskets in the first 49 seconds of the third quarter before the Valpo defense showcased how far it had come since last season — a theme that would carry throughout the year. Toledo scored just two points over the final nine minutes of the period as Valpo flipped a four-point deficit into a nine-point lead with one quarter remaining.

Meanwhile, while the Valpo defense took care of business on one end, Carie Weinman enjoyed a breakout game on the offensive end of the court. Playing in just her sixth game after sitting out the previous season, Weinman was on fire throughout the win, going 6-of-8 from behind the 3-point line and scoring a game-high 20 points — 11 of which came in the aforementioned third quarter.

Despite all that, the result was still in doubt heading into the final minutes, as Toledo crept to within two points with three minutes to play. Again, however, on a team on which anyone could step up at any moment, Valpo got a pair of clutch plays from Marlee Profitt. Seeing regular playing time for just the third game as she continued to battle back from another ACL tear, Profitt found herself on the court down the stretch and came up with baskets on back-to-back possessions to keep Toledo at bay and help Valpo clinch its second consecutive win.

LOYOLA – JAN. 24, 2020 – ARC – W 66-64

If you were at the ARC on the night of Friday, Jan. 24, you might be forgiven if you had just stayed sitting (or more likely, standing) at your seat for a few minutes after the final buzzer. After all, it took some time to process what had just occurred on the court in front of you.

What had occurred? Only one of the most epic rallies in program history. After scoring just 19 points in the first half and trailing the Ramblers 57-46 with the clock ticking under three minutes to play, Valpo completely turned the tables, out-scoring Loyola 20-7 over the final 2:52 to stun a Ramblers team which entered the game with a 13-4 record and with a perfect 8-0 mark on the road.

A comeback and run like that takes many heroes. But Shay Frederick's play down the stretch was perhaps one of the best one-minute stretches ever seen at the ARC. The now junior assisted on a Grace White 3-pointer with 52.2 seconds to play, making it a one-possession game for the first time in the second half. She then took over herself to score seven points in a stretch of 14.5 seconds — a layup with 19.7 seconds remaining, two free throws at 12.0 and another layup while being fouled with 5.2 on the clock, what would be the game-winning 3-point play. In all, the 14-point fourth quarter capped a 21-point night for Frederick to tie her career high, while Caitlin Morrison added 13 points as well — just two off her career best.

Once again, though, heroes on the 2019-2020 Valpo women's basketball team could come from anywhere. And in this victory, a hero stepped up off the bench. Now sophomore Zoe MacKay Zacker, who had played just 19 minutes all year entering the game and had not appeared in a game with a final margin closer than 19 points, was called upon for defensive purposes in the final couple minutes. In the game with Valpo trailing by one, Loyola owning possession and 12 seconds to play, MacKay Zacker stepped up and drew a charge as Loyola was attempting to inbound, returning possession to Valpo. Then, after Frederick's 3-point play, MacKay Zacker deflected the Ramblers' ensuing inbound pass to disrupt Loyola's final set play.

In all, Valpo overcame a deficit of 14 points, its largest come-from-behind victory since 2013. The 13-point deficit it faced early in the fourth quarter was the largest it has overcome since the women's game moved to four quarters. But both of those notes pale in comparison to the memory of the epic manner of the storming back in the final three minutes.

AT SOUTHERN ILLINOIS – MARCH 7, 2020 – CARBONDALE, ILL. – W 69-58

The 2019-2020 season was a turnaround season across the board — a turnaround not just from the previous season, but from the results of the last decade-plus. But the in-season improvement from Valpo was palpable as well, and no game showcased that improvement better than what turned out to be the season finale at Southern Illinois.

Back in early January, Valpo opened the MVC slate at home against Southern Illinois and fell by 16 points to the Salukis, after which Evans talked about she wasn't “… quite sure we were ready for the physicality of this game.” Two months later, facing SIU on the road in the regular season finale, Valpo was ready to battle SIU in every aspect of the game.

And battle they did. SIU scored the first six points of the game, and from there, the fight was on, as that was the largest advantage for either team in the first three quarters. It was a two-point Valpo lead at the end of the
first quarter, a one-point advantage to SIU at halftime. Weinman then knocked down a 3-pointer in the waning seconds of the third quarter to put Valpo on top by two with 10 minutes to play.

A quick spurt to start the fourth quarter provided the separation Valpo needed to take control. Profitt, playing major minutes for just the second time since her return from injury, drilled a 28-foot 3-pointer with the shot clock winding down on Valpo’s first possession of the period. A putback from White was followed by another triple from Grace Hales, as Valpo opened the quarter with a quick 8-2 run to push the lead to eight points with eight minutes left.

From there, a pair of strengths which had shone throughout the season came to the forefront again: defense and free throw shooting. The defense held SIU without a field goal for a stretch of over five and a half minutes in the fourth quarter, keeping the Salukis at bay. Valpo then secured the game with its reliability at the charity stripe, hitting 9 of 10 from the foul line in the final two minutes to close out the win.

The win gave Valpo its best MVC record in three years as a conference member and secured what would have been a bye into the quarterfinals of Hoops in the Heartland. Valpo also secured a 5-4 record on the road in conference play, its best conference road record since the 2006-2007 season, and closed out a 6-3 mark for the program in the second half of MVC play.

Visit the full story at valpoathletics.com to read more about these three wins, some other big victories from last year, and thoughts from Evans, Hales, Frederick and Stoller on the wins.
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