2006-07 Lady Mulerider Basketball Preview

Cautious optimism and a bit of the unknown surround the 2006-07 Southern Arkansas University Lady Mulerider squad. Although the program returns two starters off last season’s 13-15 (8-8, GSC West) team that advanced to the Gulf South Conference Tournament for the third consecutive year, only three other returnees are back, leaving a lot of gaps to fill. Twelfth-year Head Coach Sam Biley and first-year assistant Carrie Slaton feel that they have those holes filled with a talented group of newcomers.

SAU has to replace 38.2 points and 24.5 rebounds per game due to the loss of graduated All-GSC forward Sharonda Davis, fellow senior Latrice Booker, and juniors Takela Gunn and KiKi Junior.

It all begins with returning starting guards Brooke Grigsby and Stefanie White. The other three returnees are senior forwards Beth Grigsby and Kristina Gardner, and sophomore guard Jaclyn Howry. Brooke Grigsby is a 5-9 senior from Marmaduke and White is a 5-7 junior out of Hot Springs (Fountain Lake). Beth Grigsby, the other half of the Grigsby twins, is a 6-0 senior from Marmaduke, Gardner is a 5-11 senior out of Meridian, Miss., via Shelton State (Ala.) Community College, and Howry is a 5-9 sophomore from Texarkana (Genoa Central).

Brooke Grigsby will continue her role as shooting guard. The leading returning scorer (6.9 ppg) off last year’s team, Grigsby’s consistent work ethic and determination makes things happen around her.

White (5.4 ppg), a hard worker at both ends of the floor, will man the point again. A good ball-handler who sees the floor well, she led the team in assists in 2005-06 with 56.

Beth Grigsby (3.1 ppg) and Gardner (2.4 ppg) bring experience to the forward position, and both will see increased playing time. Howry adds depth to the guard spot.

Seven newcomers, and one returnee from the 2004-05 team, dot the rest of the roster. LaShardae Harper, a 5-8 sophomore guard from Lewisville (Lafayette County HS), returns after sitting out last year. The seven other new faces on the team are all true freshmen, three of them from Hot Springs, including Keysha Hill, a 5-6 guard, Blair Jordan, a 5-7 guard, and Kayla Jones, a 6-0 center. Hill and Jones prepped at Hot Springs High School, while Jordan attended Lake Hamilton. Other freshmen are Dione Stephens and Goldie White, who both played at Hampton High School. Stephens is a 5-5 guard from Harrell, and White is a 5-8 guard from Hampton. Shardae Thompson and Alexis Johnson are the two remaining freshmen on the team. Thompson is a 5-11 forward out of Star City, while Johnson is a 5-7 guard out of Camden who prepped at Strong High School.

Goldie White should provide immediate offense to the team, and Jones is expected to help fill the gap in the middle.

Southern Arkansas opens its season on the road with a couple of exhibition games against Northwestern State (La.) University and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, both NCAA Division I teams. The Lady Muleriders tip off their regular season at Southeastern Oklahoma State on November 15, and hold their home-opener on November 21 against Texas Woman’s. SAU will participate in two classics, the Delta State Margaret Wade Memorial Classic on November 24-25 in Cleveland, Miss., and the West Florida Holiday Classic in Pensacola, Fla., December 29-30. Southern Arkansas will face another Division I opponent December 9 when they travel to Louisiana-Monroe. The Lady Muleriders open GSC play on January 6 at home against Christian Brothers.