2014-2015 Basketball Preview

Utah State University

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Men’s Basketball Recap
BY BRANDON GARDNER

In the 2013-14 season Utah State moved out of the Western Athletic Conference and into the Mountain West. Of the five teams that have joined the MW in the last three years, Utah State had the best conference record for its first season going 7-11 in conference play.

San Jose State also switched over to the MW last year and had one conference win. Both Boise State and Nevada had three wins in their first year, while Fresno State had five. In 2005, Utah State’s first year in the WAC, the team went 11-5 making it to the NCAA Tournament.

Last season the Aggies proved they are a force to be reckoned with in the MW. In conference play they lost by an average of 9.6 points per game and won by an average margin of 11 points per game.

Utah State ranked 12th overall in the country for assists last season, averaging 15.9 a game. The Aggies also ranked second in the nation in 3-point percentage (40.6 percent).

Playing against Colorado State in the win-or-go-home conference tournament, USU trailed 62-51 with 2:40 to go. Utah State came back to pull out a last-second win, 73-69, and advanced to the second round.

Facing off with San Diego State in the second round of the tournament USU didn’t enjoy the same success as it did at home. The Aztecs took control early and won the game, 73-39, ending Utah State’s season.

Despite a losing record in the conference, Utah State nearly upset the No. 7 ranked team in the country San Diego State. Down by three and with 3 seconds left, senior guard Spencer Butterfield drained a shot from beyond the arc to take the game to overtime as The Spectrum rattled with noise.

Utah State went on to lose the game in overtime.

For Senior Night in Logan, USU faced off with Wyoming neither team could pull ahead of the other. With 3:28 left in the game senior Preston Medlin made a 3-pointer that crushed Wyoming’s hopes of a win. Medlin’s shot made it 58-50 and Wyoming went almost 3 minutes without scoring after that.

Utah State went on to win 65-54.

PHOTO BY KYLEE LARSEN

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TRACE CURETON is a transfer student from Sinclair Community College where he was a two-year player. Cureton has an athletic 6-foot-4-inch build and will be playing the wing position at Utah State. VIKO NOMA’AEA played in 14 games as a freshman at Utah State. He is 6 feet 1 inch tall, 170 pounds and plays the guard position. Noma’aea averaged 17 points per game as a senior at Sierra Vista Mountain High School in Las Vegas.

DARIUS PERKINS played two seasons at Miami Dade College before he transferred to Utah State. Perkins is 6 feet 1 inch tall and averaged over 18 points per game last season in junior college while shooting 42 percent from the field. SAM ORCHARD is a redshirt freshman who averaged 16 points per game as a senior at Highland High. Orchard is 6 feet 1 inch tall and 180 pounds. He is described as being a true point guard, always looking to make his teammates better and a hard-nosed competitor.

JULION PEARRE is a true freshman guard who averaged 17 points, six rebounds and three assists per game as a senior in high school. He was a four-year letterwinner at McKinney North High School in McKinney, Texas. At 6 feet 3 inches and 190 pounds, Pearre has good size for a guard.

KONNER FREY is a 6-foot-5-inch, 210 pound forward from Bountiful, Utah. Frey has a year of junior college experience at Northwest College in Powell, Wyoming, where he averaged seven points and three rebounds per game.

LEW EVANS, originally from Salt Lake City, Utah, has to sit out this season after transferring to Utah State from Tulsa. Evan is 6 feet 8 inches and 235 pounds. He played his freshman season at Casper College in Wyoming before transferring to Tulsa. He started 22 games last year and helped Tulsa win the Conference USA title and advance to the second round of the NCAA tournament.

DAVID COLLETTE is a redshirt freshman from Murray, Utah. Collette, a 6-foot-8 inches and 220 pound man, will be playing the forward position for Utah State. He shot 60 percent from the field his senior season at Murray High. He averaged 22 points, eight boards and over three blocks per game as a senior.

JALEN MOORE is from North Logan, Utah, and played high school ball at Sky View. He is 6 feet 8 inches and 215 pounds, entering his second season at Utah State. Moore played in every game last season and averaged five points and two rebounds per game. His father, Jimmy Moore, also played at Utah State. Moore was picked as a breakout player to watch this season by ESPN.

HENRY BOLTON is a true freshman guard from Avalon Park, Florida. Bolton averaged 13 points and eight assists as a senior in at St. Andrews School in Rhode Island. Bolton is 6 feet 3 inches, 190 pounds and described as being a strong point guard with lots of potential for the Utah State program.

JOHN BENNETT is a 6-foot-3-inch, 185 pound freshman guard from Palo Alto, California. He attended Pinewood High School where his team was 27-3 on the season. He is described by the coaches as being a great shooter and scored a career-high 42 points in a game his freshman year of high school.

GETTING TO KNOW THE AGGIES

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JOJO MCGLASTON is a sophomore at Utah State from Dublin, California. McGlaston played in 24 games last season and shot 42 percent from behind the 3-point line. He has great size for a guard at 6 feet 5 inches and 185 pounds. He averaged 22 points, seven rebounds and three assists per game as a senior at Dublin High.

SEAN HARRIS is the only senior on the team this year after being granted a sixth year of eligibility by the NCAA. Harris is 6 feet 7 inches and 230 pounds. He is the leader of this season’s Utah State team. He only saw action in 10 games last year, as he was recovering from his second knee injury.

GRAYSON MOORE, the older brother of Jalen Moore, played one season of junior college before transferring to Northwestern Nazarene and later to USU. Moore is 6 feet 7 inches tall and weighs 200 pounds. He averaged 10 points and seven rebounds at Nazarene.

CHRIS SMITH played two years at Yuba College in Marysville, California, before transferring to Utah State this season. Smith is a 6-foot-4-inch, 210 pound guard. He shot 55 percent from the field and 42 percent from the three point line.

ELSTON JONES is a 6-foot-9-inch, 240 pound forward from Goodyear, Arizona. Jones is recovering from a knee injury, which he suffered during his senior season of high school. He averaged 14 points, 14 rebounds and four blocks per game in high school. Coaches have very high expectations for Jones.

BILAL BEGIC is a 7-foot-1-inch, 225 freshman from Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Begic averaged eight points and six rebounds per game in high school. He has good hands and a good mid-range shot.

WOMEN’S TEAM

JULIANNE ANCHLING is coming to Utah State from Trinity Valley Community College. She is 6 feet 3 inches tall and will play a guard/forward combo this season. Anchling is from Faverges de la Tour, France.

STEPHANIE BAIRSTOW is a 6-foot-2-inch tall junior from Brisbane, Queensland Australia. She averaged seven points and four rebounds per game. Her older brother Cameron plays for New Mexico.

MILANNA BARNES is a 6-foot freshman guard from Hyrum, Utah. She is the daughter of Utah State Athletic Director Scott Barnes.

TILAR CLARK is a freshman guard/forward combo from Idaho Falls, Idaho. Clark is 5 feet 11 inches tall and played her high school ball at Skyline High School in Idaho.

TIJAN DJUKIC is a junior from Kikinda, Serbia, she played one season at Miami Dade junior college before coming to Utah State. She is a 6-foot-4 forward and played in 24 games for the Aggies last season.

HANNAH HUTCHINS is a freshman from Leyard, Connecticut. She is 6 feet 4 inches tall and plays center for Utah State. She has a brother and a sister who attend BYU.

LYNETTE JOHNSON is in her sophomore season at Utah State. She played is from Sacramento, California and played in 22 games last season. Johnson is a 5-foot-9-inch guard and averaged 17 points per game in high school.

SIGNE KVRKEBO plays the guard position and is from Bergen, Norway. Kyrkebo is a freshman at Utah State but has experience from high school and played in the European Under 20 league.

LIZ LANDRETH played in 11 games last season as a freshman. She is a 5-foot-10-inch guard and averaged just over one point per game. Landreth is from Meridian, Idaho and averaged 17 points per game as a senior at Capital High School.

MARIAH MILES went to Oral Roberts before transferring to Utah State. She plays the guard position and saw action in 12 games for Utah State last season. Miles is from Geary, Oklahoma and is 5 feet 7 inches tall.

FUNDA NAKKASOGLU is from Hampton, Victoria, Australia. Nakkasoglu is a 5-foot-7-inch guard and has lots of experience. She was the 2011 MVP of the U18 McDonald National Junior Classic Championship. Also played for the Melbourne Boomers of the Women’s National Basketball League (WNBL) for the 2012-13 season.

ELISE NELSON, guard for Utah State, is a senior from Springfield, Oregon. She played in 31 games last season and started 20. Nelson averaged five points and six rebounds while shooting 40 percent on the season.

BAYLEE PECK is a 5-foot-7-inch guard from Leander, Texas. She is freshman and played at Rouse High School, where she was a two-time all-district honoree. She Also played club basketball.

JASMINE PORTER is a senior from Layton, Utah. She played two seasons for San Diego State before transferring to Utah State. Last season she played in 26 games and shot 42 percent while averaging four points per game.

INGRIDA STRIKAS is from Riga, Latvia. She is a 6-foot-1-inch tall senior forward that played in all 31 games last season. She averaged five points and five rebounds per game while shooting 44 percent.

FRANNY VAALU is a two-sport athlete at Utah State, she also plays softball. The 6-foot-2-inch forward averaged eight points on 45 percent shooting and five rebounds per game last season.

MAKENLEE WILLIAMS is 5 feet 11 inches tall and started 20 games last season, averaging 15 points per game. The Syracuse, Utah native also averaged four rebounds per game and shot 46 percent from the field.
The Dee Glen Smith Spectrum has been home to Aggie Basketball since 1970, and with a capacity of 10,270 people, the great part about The Spectrum is that 4,400 of those seats are reserved for students.

With more than 40 percent of its seating dedicated to students, Utah State boasts one of largest basketball student sections in the country.

In comparison, other top student sections like Kansas (25 percent reserved for students) and Duke (12 percent reserved for students), set aside a significantly smaller share of their seats for the student body.

Known as the HURD, the one thing that separates Utah State from other student sections, is the overwhelming organization of the cheers. ESPN has called Utah State ‘the nation’s smartest crowd’ and a lot of that is thanks to the Bangarang game day newsletter that is written by Kyle Heywood, Steve Schwartzman, Lance Rasmussen, and Matt Sonnenberg for every game.

It’s easy to ignore thousands of people yelling different things at you all game, but when 4,400 voices simultaneously call you “stupid” or collectively remind you that you had an air ball in the first half, that is when the crowd really impacts the game.

In the past, there have been many fans trying to standout in the crowd, rather than coming together as one.

“It got away from the we’re here as an anonymous, force of awesomeness, to let’s see if I can find myself on the telebroadcast later,” Rasmussen said.

According to Schwartzman, the only time that it’s appropriate to stand out of the crowd is “during opposing free throws only, when you can break the visual scheme of the blue with some distracting look.”

Being a unity of fans that are all fighting towards the same goal is what Utah State is best at, and it all starts with the basics.

Rasmussen said the four essential parts of going to a basketball game in the spectrum are to “sing the fight song, sing the Scotsman, wear blue, and be loud.”
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The athletics department adopted the phrase “join the climb” last season for Utah State’s transition into the Mountain West Conference. For the USU women’s basketball team that climb was rocky. The Aggies finished the season 15-16 and 8-10 in conference play.

“It’s been a good first-year ride. Our record I don’t think shows how competitive we were. We’re looking forward to the future here,” said USU head coach Jerry Finkbeiner after the Aggies 72-67 loss to Colorado State in the second round of the MWC tournament.

The Aggies earned the eighth seed in the conference tournament and beat New Mexico in the first round before letting a potential upset of the top seed slip away.

USU started off last season 4-0, including a win over in-state rival Utah. However, the Aggies went on a losing skid, dropping nine of 11 games in the middle of the season when conference play started.

“I’m so impressed with the Mountain West. I’m so impressed with the coaching staffs,” Finkbeiner said.

The season was highlighted by the individual effort of senior point guard Jennifer Schlott. The 5-foot-6 guard averaged almost 27 points per game on the season and led the team in assists. Schlott was named as MWC player of the year and was a honorable mention All-American. She was fourth in the nation in scoring.

The most likely replacements for Schlott’s points are junior Mackenlee Williams, who averaged 15.9 points per game; junior Stephanie Bairstow, who averaged 7.5 points per game; and senior Ingrida Strikas, who averaged 5.8 points per game.

Strikas and Bairstow led the Aggies in scoring in their first exhibition game against Western New Mexico with 15 points apiece.

Despite the losing season record, Finkbeiner had some takeaways from last season.

“I just really was proud of these girls as we finished the journey this year in our first year that we were ready to go,” Finkbeiner said. “I think the new kids on the block, it’s all about transitioning into opponents, the routineness of travel, where you’re going, what this gym looks like.”

Though the Aggies had a losing record both in conference and overall, they did have a winning record at home, going 9-5 in the Spectrum.

Utah State lost seven games last season by five points or less. However they started to turn that around at the end of the season when they won three straight close games to finish the regular season then tacked on a one-point win against New Mexico.

“We’ve had six or seven games this year that have been just like (that),” Finkbeiner said, “maybe seven or eight games in conference, where we’ve had control and lost in the last two or three minutes.”

The Aggies were picked to finish eighth in the conference in the pre-season coaches poll.

“This poll just reminds me of the quality of this league and how even it is. I’m very confident that we can improve on that eighth-place vote,” Finkbeiner said. “I think we’re going to be battling for that top half. It’s going to be a fun season, we’re looking forward to it. We’re excited for January when this will all start.”

Colorado State, who both won the conference outright and the conference tournament was picked first in the poll.

— dahdahjm@gmail.com

PHOTO BY KYLEE LARSEN
Men’s Basketball head coach Stew Morrill and Women’s Basketball head coach Jerry Finkbeiner are preparing to continue legacies of success in the Utah State basketball programs.

Coach Morrill is at the start of his 29th season as a collegiate head coach and his 17th year at Utah State. He is Utah State’s most-winning coach, as he exceeded E. Lowell Romney’s 225-win record on Jan. 17, 2008, with an 82-78 win against Boise State.

Morrill began his coaching career as an assistant coach at Gonzaga from 1975-78. He then moved to Montana, where he worked as an assistant until 1986 and took over Montana’s program in 1987. He moved to Colorado State in 1992 and became the head man at USU following the 1998 season.

After stints in the Big West and Western Athletic Conference, the Mountain West became the third conference Morrill has led USU into beginning with the 2013-14 season.

In 16 years, he has led the team to 14 straight 21-win seasons, which is a school record. Before his current run, Utah State never had more than three 20-win seasons.

In the 2010-11 season, Morrill lead the Aggies to their fourth-straight regular season WAC Championship. Under Morrill, Utah State has advanced to the NCAA tournament eight times.

During his collegiate playing career, Morrill was named All-American at Ricks Junior College and a two-time All-Big Sky selection at Gonzaga. After college, he played professionally in Europe.

Morrill was born in 1952 in Provo, Utah. He earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Gonzaga University in 1974. He and his wife, Vicki, have four grown children: sons, Jesse and Allan, and daughters, Nicole and Tiffany.

Coach Finkbeiner is entering his fourth year as the Utah State Women’s basketball head coach. He is the ninth head coach and second male coach since the women’s basketball program was started in 1990. He is only the second coach to hold the position since the program was reinstated in 2003.

Last season, Finkbeiner led the team to a 15-16 record. The Aggies advanced to the second round of the Mountain West Championship tournament.

In Finkbeiner’s first season, USU had an 18-14 record, finished second in the WAC standings for a consecutive season and ranked second in the nation in free-throw percentage.

Finkbeiner is from Southern California. He attended Southern Nazarene in Oklahoma from 1975-80. He was selected as a Christian Collegiate All-American in 1978. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in physical education and received his master’s degree in physical education from Northwest Missouri State University. He and his wife, Reva, have five children. His son, Ben, is an assistant coach for Utah State.

— olivia.webb@aggiemail.usu.edu
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We all know that the leaves have fallen; air is slowly freezing as each day passes in Logan. But this also means that some of the greatest sporting events at USU are about to unfold in the Spectrum. That’s right, it’s basketball time baby, and that means that the orange and yellow seats will soon be filled with heckling students roaring the Scotsman and the “I Believe” chant. However, is that all? Are there better traditions that have been lost in time?

### Against which opponents?

Aggie basketball has quite a long list of traditions, but we all know the most infamous aspect of Spectrum magic is the student section. Gaining national attention from ESPN and universities throughout the nation, the Spectrum is known for its intense home court atmosphere. In 2012, when BYU got off their bus the night before the big game, they were greeted by a throng of students ridiculing the Cougars. A banner was unrolled over the top of the entrance with the words, “Welcome to Hell.” The Spectrum has never been so famous as to possess teams and especially rivals?

### History of the Spectrum

#### BYU vs. UNLV

Among the greatest sporting events at USU are those against BYU and UNLV. Student Section

#### BYU vs. UNLV

There is bad blood between USU and BYU dating back to the 1980. The Running Utes came to Logan in the 1987 season, continuing the 100-plus year in-state rivalry. When Danny Conway made the first USU bucket for the game, toilet paper rolls came shouting out of the crowd and covered the court in white streams. Interrupting the game. This event has gone down in history as legendary. Student involvement in these games might have led the Utes to never want to play in the Spectrum again. Although the Aggie’s record against the U is only 42-52 with home wins just being 27-20, the Utes have not had a win in the Spectrum since 1996 until the rivalry was discontinued in the 2011 season.

#### Against which opponents?

There is another rivalry lurking, just waiting to be renewed. USU and UNLV go way back to 1983. The Aggies used to match up against the Rebels at least 2 times a season until the year 1996 due to conference changes. Now the two schools are back together matching up head to head. There is bad blood between USU and UNLV. It was especially apparent in 1990 when the Aggies traveled to Las Vegas and after a tough loss, a brawl ensued between the players. The fight escalated to the point that even Utah State’s own Coach Smith was struck by a Rebel player. If that doesn’t scream rivalry, I don’t know what does.

But, the best was yet to come. When UNLV came to Logan later in the season, the Aggies returned the favor. The students composed many rauccous chants, signs and a famous prank known as the “water bomb” ensued. Just before the second half began, greenish blue water exploded from the floor vents under UNLV’s bench and soaked their head coach. Now that the Mountain West has linked these two schools together again, the rivalry will hopefully pick up where it left off.

#### BYU vs. UNLV

There is one rivalry that almost doesn’t need to be mentioned because the tension can be felt in the air between these 2 in-state rivals. The BYU Cougars have been playing basketball against the Aggies for over 200 games and lead with a record of 137-92 since the first game in 1905. However, since 1956 the Aggies record against BYU in the Spectrum is 30-18. The pranks and chants between these two schools have been ruthless and continue to get more heated as the years go on. A particular chant that has been popular against the Cougars is “Waste of Mom’s time against the Utah State’s head coach. Now that the Mountain West is back together matching up head to head.

#### Against which opponents?

There are many other traditions that have been lost in recent years such as Wild Bill who was nationally recognized for his anti-free-throw antics. The 300-pounder that would be half shirtless and dressed up from a pirate to cupid, distracting any fouled player shooting free throws. As of 2011 Wild Bill has retired, but still attends games as often as time permits, just not in character.

With so much tradition on being the wildest, most rambunctious, or just insane student body around, what will be done this season? What will the season of 2014-15 be remembered for, maintaining the Spectrum’s reputation as Hell.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPENCER BUTTERFIELD:
Butterfield finished 10th all-time in three-pointers made for USU in two years with the team. Butterfield signed a contract with Melilla in the Spanish League. Butterfield is just the latest of Aggies to play overseas joining Jaycee Carroll, Gary Wilkinson and Tai Wesley.

“It’s a huge blessing. I’m very grateful that I get to play the sport I love and have a chance to travel a little bit. I’m not ready to give basketball up, so it’s good to keep playing still,” Butterfield said.

JENNIFER SCHLOTT:
After receiving all-American honorable mention and Mountain West player of the year last year Jennifer Schlott was signed to a training camp with the Indiana Fever. After the training camp contract ran up Schlott elected to sign a one-year contract with Tapiolan Honka in Finland.

“I’m really excited to be able to keep pursuing my basketball career in Finland. It’ll be such a fun, new experience for me. I’m very fortunate for this opportunity and can’t wait to get over there and start playing,” Schlott said.

PRESTON MEDLIN:
Medlin finished fourth in school history in three pointers made with 213 and is tied for the sixth spot on Aggies’ career three-point shooting percentage list at 41.5 percent. Medlin signed with BK Saldus in the Latvian Basketball League. He joins follows former Aggies Jaycee Carroll, Gary Wilkinson and Tai Wesley by playing overseas.
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## Men's

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<th>Opponent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fri., Nov. 14</td>
<td>Weber State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed., Nov. 19</td>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues., Dec. 2</td>
<td>BYU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur., Dec. 18</td>
<td>Cal State Bakersfield</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri., Dec. 19</td>
<td>Idaho State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat., Dec. 20</td>
<td>South Dakota State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat., Dec. 27</td>
<td>Wayland Baptist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed., Dec. 31</td>
<td>San Jose State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat., Jan. 10</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat., Jan. 17</td>
<td>Air Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed., Jan. 28</td>
<td>Wyoming</td>
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<td>Wed., Feb. 4</td>
<td>Boise State</td>
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<td>Wed., Feb. 11</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat., Feb. 21</td>
<td>Fresno State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues., Feb. 24</td>
<td>UNLV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat., Mar. 7</td>
<td>Colorado State</td>
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## Women's

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Opponent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thur., Nov. 20</td>
<td>UVU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat., Dec. 6</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun., Dec. 14</td>
<td>Northern Colorado</td>
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<td>Mon., Dec. 22</td>
<td>BYU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat., Jan. 3</td>
<td>Boise State</td>
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<td>Wed., Jan. 7</td>
<td>Fresno State</td>
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<td>Wed., Jan. 21</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
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<td>Sat., Jan. 24</td>
<td>UNLV</td>
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<td>Sat., Jan. 31</td>
<td>San Diego State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat., Feb. 7</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed., Feb. 18</td>
<td>San Jose State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat., Feb. 28</td>
<td>Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues., Mar. 3</td>
<td>Wyoming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>