89,000 MILES (pg 16)
ALL EYES ON SAM (pg 30)
SAME TEAM, NEW FACES (pg 22)
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MEN’S SCHEDULE

11/01 VS EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE 7:00
11/06 @ MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY 7:00
11/09 VS UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD 7:00
11/13 VS MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE 7:00
11/16 VS UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY 7:00
11/19 VS SAINT MARY’S 6:30 (LAS VEGAS, NV)
11/21 VS ARIZONA STATE or MISSISSIPPI STATE TBA (LAS VEGAS, NV)
11/28 VS NORTHERN IOWA 7:00 (LOGAN, UT)
12/01 @ UC IRVINE 8:00
12/05 @ BYU 7:00
12/08 VS WEBER STATE 2:30 (SALT LAKE CITY, UT)
12/15 VS ALABAMA STATE UNIVERSITY 7:00
12/20 @ UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON 6:00
12/28 VS EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY 7:00
01/02 @ NEVADA 9:00
01/05 VS AIR FORCE 7:00
01/09 VS FRESNO STATE 7:00
01/12 @ WYOMING 4:00
01/16 @ SAN JOSE STATE 8:00
01/19 VS COLORADO STATE 7:00
01/26 @ NEW MEXICO 2:00
01/30 VS SAN JOSE STATE 2:30
02/02 VS UNLV 2:30
02/05 @ FRESNO STATE 8:00
02/09 @ SAN DIEGO STATE 8:00
02/13 VS WYOMING 7:00
02/16 @ AIR FORCE 2:00
02/20 VS NEW MEXICO 9:00
02/23 @ BOISE STATE 2:00
02/26 VS SAN DIEGO STATE 7:00
03/02 VS NEVADA 6:30
03/05 @ COLORADO STATE 7:00
WOMEN’S
SCHEDULE

11/02 VS WESTMINSTER 7:00
11/06 @ WASHINGTON STATE 8:00
11/09 VS NORTHERN NEW MEXICO 2:00
11/14 VS OREGON 7:00
11/20 VS BYU 7:00
11/23 VS USC 3:00 (RENO, NV)
11/25 VS COLORADO 12:00 (RENO, NV)
11/28 @ PORTLAND 8:00
12/05 @ UTA 6:00
12/08 @ NORTH TEXAS 2:00
12/15 VS UTAH VALLEY 2:00
12/22 VS LONG BEACH STATE 2:00
01/02 VS NEVADA 7:00
01/05 @ AIR FORCE 2:00
01/09 @ FRESNO STATE 8:00
01/12 VS WYOMING 2:00
01/16 VS SAN JOSE STATE 11:00
01/19 @ COLORADO STATE 2:00
01/26 VS NEW MEXICO 2:00
01/30 @ SAN JOSE STATE 8:00
02/02 @ UNLV 3:00
02/05 VS FRESNO STATE 7:00
02/09 VS SAN DIEGO STATE 2:00
02/13 @ WYOMING 6:30
02/16 VS AIR FORCE 2:00
02/20 @ NEW MEXICO 7:00
02/23 VS BOISE STATE 2:00
02/26 @ SAN DIEGO STATE 7:30
03/02 @ NEVADA 2:00
03/05 VS COLORADO STATE 7:00
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MEN'S STARTING LINEUP

STARTERS

John Knight III
No. 3 Guard
Sophomore 6'2

Sam Merrill
No. 5 Guard
Junior 6'5

Brock Miller
No. 22 Guard
RS Freshman 6'6

Neemias Queta
No. 23 Center
Freshman 6'11

KEY RESERVES

Quinn Taylor
No. 10 Forward
Senior 6'8

Dwayne Brown Jr.
No. 2 Guard/Forward
Senior 6'6

Diogo Brito
No. 24 Guard
Junior 6'5

Tauriawn Knight
No. 1 Guard
Freshman 6'1

WOMEN'S STARTING LINEUP

STARTERS

Eliza West
No. 1 Guard
Junior 5'5

Olivia West
No. 3 Guard
Junior 5'6

Rachel Brewster
No. 22 Guard
Senior 5'11

Shannon Dufficy
No. 5 Guard/Forward
Junior 6'2

KEY RESERVES

Hailey Bassett-Meacham
No. 12 Guard/Forward
Junior 6'2

Deja Mason
No. 44 Center
Senior 6'4

Marlene Aniambossou
No. 24 Forward
Junior 6'1

Lindsey Jensen-Baker
No. 11 Guard
Junior 5'9
### 2018-19 Women's Basketball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Hometown</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Eliza West</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>5-5</td>
<td>Mount Martha, Victoria, Aust.</td>
<td>The Peninsula School</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Olivia West</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Launceston, Tasmania, Aust.</td>
<td>Templeton College</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Steph Gorman</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
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<td>Wodonga, Victoria, Aust.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shannon Dufficy</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Guard/Forward</td>
<td>6-2</td>
<td>Preston, Victoria, Aust.</td>
<td>Our Lady of Mercy College</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Lindsey Jensen-Baker</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>Smithfield, Utah</td>
<td>Sky View HS</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Hailey Bassett-Meacham</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Guard/Forward</td>
<td>6-2</td>
<td>Layton, Utah</td>
<td>Layton HS</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Roxani Bountouka</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>Forward</td>
<td>6-2</td>
<td>Thessaloniki, Greece</td>
<td>Hellenic College of Thessaloniki</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Laura Doulton</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>6-2</td>
<td>Spring, Texas</td>
<td>Oak Ridge HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Rachel Brewer</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>Melbourne, Victoria</td>
<td>Reynella Secondary College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Marlene Aniamambou</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>6-1</td>
<td>Caluenu, Benin</td>
<td>Notre Dame des Apotres/Frank Phillips College</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Emmie Harris</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Forward</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Danville, Ky</td>
<td>Boyle County HS</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Emma Dudley</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>6-1</td>
<td>Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.</td>
<td>Santa Fe Christian HS</td>
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<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Taylor Franson</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Forward</td>
<td>6-1</td>
<td>American Fork</td>
<td>Utah/American Fork HS</td>
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<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Deja Mason</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>6-4</td>
<td>San Antonio, Texas</td>
<td>Greenwood HS</td>
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### 2018-19 Men's Basketball

<table>
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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Height</th>
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<th>School</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Klay Stall</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Chandler, Ariz.</td>
<td>Basha HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tauriawn Knight</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>6-1</td>
<td>Oklahoma City</td>
<td>Edmond Santa Fe HS</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Deanye Brown Jr.</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Guard/Forward</td>
<td>6-6</td>
<td>Conway, Ga.</td>
<td>Rockdale County HS/Northern Oklahoma University</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>John Knight III</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>6-2</td>
<td>Jackson, Miss.</td>
<td>Gallaway HS/Southwest Missouri CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Crew Ange</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>Wolfe City, Mass.</td>
<td>Knoxville Union Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sam Merrill</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>6-6</td>
<td>Honolulu, Utah</td>
<td>Bountiful HS</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Quinn Taylor</td>
<td>Senior</td>
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<td>6-9</td>
<td>Houston, Texas</td>
<td>Langham Creek HS</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Justin Bean</td>
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<td>Forward</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Moore, Okla.</td>
<td>Bountiful HS</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Roche Grootnami</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Forward</td>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>Paramaribo, Suriname</td>
<td>Covenant Christian Academy/College of Southern Idaho</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Abol Porter</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
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<td>6-3</td>
<td>Farmington, Utah</td>
<td>Davis HS</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Ben Fakuro</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>Forward</td>
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<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>Barker College</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Brock Miller</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
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<td>6-6</td>
<td>Sandy, Utah</td>
<td>Brighton HS</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Neemias Quota</td>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>Burntora, Portugal</td>
<td>Benfica SL B</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Diego Brito</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>6-5</td>
<td>Povo de Varos, Portugal</td>
<td>Mountain Mission School (Va.)</td>
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### Statistics

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<td>Rebounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blocks</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steals</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking for housing?

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Her dark skin stands out in stark contrast to the crowd of white students around her. Statistically, maybe one in a hundred of them looks like her. She’s also taller than most of the men she walks by.

When she first arrived on the campus of Utah State University from her native country of Benin, in Africa, she wondered if she was the only black person on campus. In her words, Utah was very much a “white people state.”

Once through the crowd, Marlene Aniambossou makes her way to a locker room in the Dee Glen Smith Spectrum. There she will join the rest of her teammates on USU’s women’s basketball team. With them, she feels a sense of belonging. Not because any of them look like her — Aniambossou is the only African woman on the team — but because they are alike in another lonely way. Most of them are more than 10,000 miles from home too.

In that locker room, Aniambossou can look one way and see Roxani Bountouka, who is from Thessaloniki, Greece. Glancing in the opposite direction will give her a view of two Australian players, Eliza West, Eliza West (no relation), Steph Gorman, Shannon Dunphy and Rachel Brewster.

Seven of the Aggies’ 14 roster spots are taken up by players who hail from outside the borders of the United States. Only two are from Utah itself. And those seven women travelled a combined 89,340 miles — a distance that would take you around the Earth three and a half times — to play basketball in Logan, Utah.

“Before,” Eliza West said, “I was just trying to be the best basketball player and just trying to play for my home club and then hopefully make an Australian program. But once I found out about college in America that became my number one goal.”

The U.S. does not lack teams for college-aged players. In the 2017-18 season the NCAA set new records for Division I women’s basketball teams (349), total games played (5,283) and total attendance (6,567,490) according to their report for the season.

“Here it’s a huge thing,” Bountouka said. “So, I really like it here because more people are interested. There is more organization. We don’t have college teams or high school teams, we have clubs.”

College programs in the U.S. can provide women with a springboard to launch a professional career, just like the men’s Division
I programs. Aniambossou’s plan is to eventually make it to the WNBA. It’s something she takes seriously, and it requires a level of commitment she wouldn’t have had back in Benin.

“Back home you just play for fun, you just do whatever you want,” Aniambossou said. “When I came here, I set goals. I needed to improve myself. I wasn’t this athletic when I was back home, I was just playing around. But when I came here I took things seriously and kept working on myself.”

It isn’t just the chance to turn pro that draws international players. Bountouka said she is unsure about what she plans to do with her basketball career but didn’t think twice about her decision because in addition to furthering her playing career, she would also get free access a high-level education that wouldn’t be available otherwise.

“In Greece there aren’t many opportunities in basketball or studies at this time,” Bountouka said. “So, the whole package was great, so I just had to take it, it was obvious.”

While traveling abroad to play basketball and have a quality education fully paid for are two huge positives, there is still the negative of being so far away from home.

“Coming over here, I was obviously really nervous,” Dufficy said. “It was a big change, moving far away from home.”

That sacrifice is not lost on the American-born players.

“It’s really interesting to me because I’m a homebody and I go home quite a bit,” said junior forward Hailey Bausset-Mancham, who grew up in Layton, Utah. “I think it’s awesome how they took the risk to come all the way to America.”

The differences are small but numerous. Bountouka said “almost everything” is different from her native Greece. Little things like clothes, behaviors, and mannerisms.

In addition to the American culture, many of these players have had to adjust to small-town life. Players like Bountouka and Brewster come from big cities in Australia. USU women’s basketball head coach Jerry Finkbeiner compared Australian cities like Melbourne and Sydney to U.S. cities like Chicago and Los Angeles.

However, Finkbeiner said living abroad in a small town could be more beneficial than going big-city America.

“I think the small-town nature makes it nicer for these kids to come over,” Finkbeiner said.

“The small-town nature of people and safety and those kinds of things are a pleasant surprise and the comfort zone goes up really quick.”

Over the summer, though, the coaching staff did even more to expedite the process of acclimating their players both to Utah life and to each other. This bonding time became known as “Aggie Adventures.” Each weekend the team would go somewhere to do nothing more than have a good time together. Whether it was golfing, horseback riding or hiking, these women got to know each other through experience.

Now, a team that was once separated by nearly 90,000 miles is closer than ever before.

“We all get along like we’ve all grown up together,” Dufficy said. “You go in the locker room and, apart from the accents, you wouldn’t know the difference between where anyone’s from.”
In his first year at the helm of the Utah State men's basketball program, head coach Craig Smith will be looking to do a pair of things - win basketball games, and establish an identity as a team.

Both of those goals go hand-in-hand, and both are easier said than done.

For Smith and the Aggies to accomplish these goals, an incoming class of five newcomers is going to have to rise up to the occasion.

With last year’s leading rebounder and second-leading scorer Koby McEwen gone, Utah State has some openings in the backcourt. A pair of Aggie newcomers are hoping to establish themselves as playmakers with the ball in their hands during their first season in Logan.

Nobody has a better opportunity than incoming junior college transfer John Knight III, who will be competing for immediate playing time at the point guard position. It hasn’t taken long for Knight III to establish himself as one of the premier athletes on the team. Knight III’s unique blend of size, proven production and athleticism has Smith and his staff excited for the future.

“John Knight III is a freakish, freakish athlete,” Smith said. “He can really play off of two feet. When he just attacks and explodes to the rim, he can really finish. He just hangs and hangs on the way up, and he has such ferocity at the rim.”

Knight III will have three years of eligibility left as an Aggie after spending the first year of his college career at Southwest Mississippi Community College. Knight III put up 14.3 points per game for the Bears in 2017-18, to go along with 4.0 rebounds and 3.9 assists per contest.

Not only can the 6-foot-2 guard put the ball in the hole, but he’s a tenacious defender as well.

“He can really get into the ball,” Smith said. “He’s so athletic sliding. He can really get into the ball and find the ball with his length, athleticism and strength.”

When asked about what Aggie fans can expect from him in 2018-19, Knight III did not hesitate.

“It’s going to be plenty of athleticism and exciting dunks that bring everybody out of their seats,” Knight III said. “That’s the strength in my game - I can really get to the basket. Going downhill, it’s hard to stop me.”

Joining Knight III in the backcourt this year will be Tauriawn Knight. The 6-foot-1 guard will be joining the Aggies straight out of high school after originally committing to play for Smith at South Dakota before Smith took the USU job.

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“We think very, very highly of (Knight),” Smith said. “He’s a very loyal person and he’s a tough kid. He’s got a big heart. Tauriawn, quite frankly, was very under-recruited coming out of high school. He was coming to South Dakota and we built a great relationship with him. For us, character matters. When you really believe in someone, like we do in him, you really want to coach him and having him move here really made sense.”

The feeling of loyalty is mutual.

“What led me to come here is that Coach Smith is outgoing and loyal,” Knight said. “He trusts in all of his players and he believes in all of us. I already had a connection and a bond with him. This is going on my third year knowing him. I trust in him and I didn’t want to go to any other program except his. He was my guy, and he was loyal to me. I want to be loyal to him.”

Knight put up great numbers in high school. He led Edmond Santa Fe High School (Edmond, Okla.) to the 6A Oklahoma State Championship game after averaging 19.2 points per game his senior season, to go along with 3.8 rebounds and 3.6 assists per game. Knight finished his career at ESFHS as the third-leading scorer in school history, and he will use his scoring abilities from both guard positions for Utah State in his freshman season.

“I expect to bring a lot of energy,” Knight said. “I can get to the hole. I expect to bring a lot of energy, and I’m going to bring it in every game and every practice.”

“The duo of Knight and Knight III will have the opportunity to make plays with the ball in their hands, especially as they share the backcourt with Sam Merrill and his catch-and-shoot prowess.

“I think it’s going to be really difficult for teams to stop us,” Knight III said. “Once I get into the paint two times in a row, the guy’s going to have to help. That will leave Sam (Merrill) open for the three, and he’s probably one of the best shooters in the country. That’s going to be hard for teams to stop.”

Utah State’s literal biggest addition in 2018-19 is Neemias Queta. The 6-foot-11 post player has made the jump from Barreiro, Portugal to USU’s campus, bringing with him a wealth of experience against some of the top competition in the world. Queta spent the summer playing with Portugal’s U20 national team in the European Championships, and he played well. Queta recorded a team-high 10.9 rebounds per game as well as 14.3 points per contest and an incredible 2.9 blocks per game, good for the best mark in the entire tournament.

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With the Aggies lack of depth at the post positions, Queta will be asked to step in alongside fellow big man Quin Taylor and contribute immediately. Queta’s 7-foot-5-inch wingspan will aid in the process, undoubtedly.
"Neemias has great speed," Smith said. "He runs well, he slides well and he communicates well. He has a very good feel for the game. Obviously, there are some things he's got to get better at, and he will. Neemias has a tremendous attitude, he's so coachable."

Queta's experience playing against world-class talent will help him to adjust to the Mountain West, a conference loaded with talent at the post positions. As Queta prepares to battle with star big men such as the Martin twins from Nevada, or Jalen McDaniels of San Diego State, he will draw on the things that he learned this past summer.

"We are very privileged to be able to do what we like and to represent our country doing it," Queta said. "It's good because you're playing against great players from other countries, and you get to learn from them and their culture, too."

Joining Queta as new faces in the frontcourt will be Ben Fukira and Roche Grootfaam. Fukira, a native of Sydney, Australia, will have a full four years of eligibility after averaging over 12 points and 10 rebounds per game at Baker College. The 6-foot-10-inch and 260-pound big man possesses a wingspan that tops out beyond 7-feet, and he moves exceptionally well for a man of his size. Fukira's intellect and maturity were praised by Smith.

"Ben Fukira is eighteen years old going on thirty six," Smith said. "What I mean by that is that if you name it, he can sit and have a conversation about you with it. It doesn't matter who you are. He can sit and talk away, and he's very engaging. He is a great teammate. Ben brings a different level of physicality to our team."

Grootfaam joins the Aggies after spending two years at the College of Southern Idaho. He won't see the court in 2018-19 - Grootfaam will redshirt after injuring his knee in his final game as an Eagle. Nevertheless, the hard-working post player will have the chance to make his presence felt as he demonstrates his leadership while he heals. The 6-foot-8-inch Grootfaam averaged 7.6 points per game in his final year at CSI. Grootfaam is a perfect example of the player that Smith has sought to develop at Utah State - one who embodies Smith's "get after their ass" (G.A.T.A.) team motto.

"He's a G.A.T.A. guy," Smith said. "He's tough, he has relentless pursuit of the ball and great competitive spirit. He's a tough guy, and I think that he can play an undersized five or a big four. He's really stout and he's stuck together."

With the 2018-19 approaching and the opportunity to fly under the radar in the Mountain West, the Aggies are going to rely on some key contributions from a spread of newcomers. They can't wait for the opportunity.

"It's coming fast," Queta said. "We've worked hard, and we're ready for it."
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A cell phone buzzes.

The phone’s owner, a young man with slicked back blonde hair, pulls it out of his pocket and reads the words he’d hoped to never see.

Sam Merrill was less than a month removed from the loss to New Mexico in the Mountain West Conference Basketball Tournament that had sent him and the rest of the Utah State Aggies back to Logan.

The Aggies had made the semifinal of that tournament for the first time in program history thanks in large part to Merrill. That performance, and the rest of his strong sophomore campaign, had pushed Merrill forcibly into the minds of Utah State and Mountain West basketball media and fans. However, despite leading the team in points and assists that season, the label of “best” and “face of the team” still eluded the young shooting guard.
It was Merrill's backcourt partner, Koby McEwen who had garnered outside attention last season and Ialen Moore — an Aggie legend — the year before that. McEwen was a four-star recruit outside of Canada who had played his high school ball at a basketball academy. And it was from him that Merrill had just received a text. McEwen was letting his teammates know that he was transferring from Utah State.

Merrill stared at the message displayed on the screen. That short burst of words carried a lot with them. It meant more than just USU losing the 15-pts, 3.2 assists and 5.4 rebounds per game McEwen brought to the table. More than losing a backcourt partner. It meant that for the first time in Merrill's career, his teammates and the Utah State program and fans would turn to him, a 22-year-old kid who grew up two hours south of Logan in the Salt Lake City suburb of Bountiful.

To this point, the young man felt he hadn't received all the recognition he probably deserved. But that wasn't what had carried him this far. The former two-star recruit had only one goal through high school and heading into college: to win on the biggest stage, the NCAA Tournament. All eyes on Sam.

It didn't take USU's new head coach Craig Smith to look at Merrill and go, "He's an all-around player and I think that's what he's been since he's gotten here." USU senior forward Quinn Taylor said: "It's just taken a little bit of time for everyone else to see that." Merrill was right there with him. Through two seasons, Merrill recorded more than 800 points, 200 rebounds, 200 assists and 60 steals. No one in Utah State history had done that through their freshman and sophomore seasons. Ialen Moore didn't do it. Neither did Jaycee Carroll, Tai Wesley, nor the great Wayne Estes. And not Koby McEwen either. No one did it except this kid from Bountiful.

"He's an all-around player and I think that's what he's been since he's gotten here," USU senior forward Quinn Taylor said: "It's just taken a little bit of time for everyone else to see that." Merrill said he has yet to see Merrill have a bad practice or workout, and that he leads the team by example in that regard. However, Smith had to urge Merrill to be a more vocal leader on the court, especially since the team only returned three players besides Merrill.

"The first practice we had this summer I didn't think he was talking enough," Smith said. "So I pulled him aside after practice and said 'Sam this team really needs your voice, you're our best player.' Ever since that point, he's like 'Alright guys, let's huddle up' or he could be guarding a guy in the corner and there's a ball screen in the middle of the floor and he's yelling out the ball screen." Merrill knows he will have to take center stage if he ever wants to achieve his goal of making it to March Madness and winning at the illustrious tournament. And he knows he will have to be the catalyst for the team's success.

"That's pressure that I put on myself," Merrill said. "I expect to have a good year and I know that I have to have a good year for us to have a good year. I've put in the work this summer and I'm still putting in the work so I can live up to my own expectations."

In addition to pushing himself, Merrill has been pushing his teammates to meet his standards of excellence as Taylor attested to.

"One of the good things Sam has done is he's gonna work as hard as he can and he's gonna make sure everyone else is also," Taylor said. "He's willing to get on people for not going hard and really hold everyone to the same standard that he's performing at."

With the off-season nearly over, Merrill has had sixth months to acclimate to his new role. He works as hard as ever. Meanwhile, McEwen puts in his reps in the practice facilities at Marquette University. Nearly 1,500 miles apart, a quiet trade-off has taken place between the two, a passing of the torch. Utah State is Sam Merrill's team now.
The Air Force men’s basketball team is coming off a 12-19 season, with a 6-12 record in Mountain West Conference play. The Falcons return two of their top three scorers from last season.

Air Force will bring in five freshmen this season, while returning six sophomores, six juniors, and one senior. The team returns four players that started more than 10 games last year.

The Falcons averaged 68.5 points per game while allowing 72.4 points to opposing teams last season.

Junior forward Scottie Lavelle led the Falcons in scoring last season with 12.2 points per game in just over 26 minutes per game. Junior forward Ryan Swan will also return for the Falcons after finishing last season third on the team in scoring at 9.2 points per game in 18 starts and 21.2 minutes per game.

Air Force lost their first matchup with Utah State last year in Logan 71-49. The Falcons managed to beat the Aggies at home one month later 75-65.

The Air Force women’s basketball team is coming off a bad season, finishing 6-25 after starting the season on a 17 game losing streak. The Falcons return just two players that started more than one game last season.

Air Force will begin the season with one senior, two juniors, seven sophomores, and ten freshmen on the roster. The team will need contributions from everyone in order to compete in the Mountain West after losing three of their top four scorers.

Sophomore guard Kaelin Immel is the key return for Air Force. She finished last season averaging a team high 15 points per game while starting in all 31 games the team played. Senior guard Vanessanna Itugbu is also a notable returning player for the Falcons, having started 13 games and playing just over 18 minutes per game.

The Falcons began last season on a long losing streak of 17 games and were unable to get their first win until January 24 in conference play when they beat Utah State at home 57-50. Utah State would avenge the loss by beating the Falcons one month later in Logan 57-55.
Boise State

Boise State is one of USU’s biggest rivals, and recent history has lived up to the hype. It’s never an easy game against the Broncos. After losing a close one 71-67 in Boise last season, the Aggies were able to bounce back and split the season series by earning a 71-65 victory in Logan. The two teams then faced off once again in Las Vegas at the Mountain West Basketball tournament, there Utah State pulled off a thrilling 78-75 upset to advance to the MWC semi-finals for the first time since joining the conference. Experienced head coach Leon Rice loses three veteran starters from last year’s squad, including Chandler Hutchinson, who led the team in scoring, assists, rebounds and steals last season.

2017-18 RESULTS AGAINST USU
01/17 vs USU - W 71-67
02/10 @ USU - L 65-71
03/08 3/8 MWC 2nd round - L 75-78

RETURNING STARTERS
F - Zach Haney
G - Justinian Jessup

SCHEDULE
02/26 @ Boise State

STATISTICS
78.2 Points Per Game
69.1 Points Allowed Per Game
38.5 Rebounds Per Game
13.3 Assits Per Game
46.1 Field Goal Percentage
37.9 3 Point Percentage

WOMEN

The Boise State women’s basketball team is going to be the clear favorite in the Mountain West this year, after winning both the regular season and conference tournament titles last season with a 23-10 (14-4) record. The talent on this team is remarkable, as they return four starters, three of whom were sophomores last season. This group of returning starters includes All-Mountain West honorees Riley Lupfer and Marta Hermida. Along with returning talent, the Broncos welcome in several new faces, including Oregon transfer Mallory McGwire and Kansas transfer Jayde Christopher. They also add the 72nd ranked recruit in the ESPN 100 Jade Loville, and Spanish junior national team member Sofia Galeron. This team will be tough to beat in the Mountain West.

2017-18 RESULTS AGAINST USU
01/17 @ USU - W 64-42
02/10 vs USU - W 68-60

RETURNING STARTERS
G - Marta Hermida
G - Riley Lupfer
G - Braydey Hodgins
G - Ellie Woerner

STATISTICS
68.4 Points Per Game
61.8 Points Allowed Per Game
38.3 Rebounds Per Game
14.9 Assits Per Game
42.6 Field Goal Percentage
34.6 3 Point Percentage

SCHEDULE
02/23 @ USU
The Cougars return the vast majority of production from their 2017 roster which went 24-11 and saw an appearance in the NIT. Most of the lost production comes via junior guard Elijah Bryant's decision to enter the NBA draft early (ultimately going undrafted and signing with an Israeli League team).

BYU's top returning players are forward Yoeli Childs and T.J. Haws. Childs also tested the waters of the NBA draft, but withdrew his name after he wasn't invited to the NBA Draft Combine in May.

Both Haws and Childs will be juniors this season and will likely lead the team on offense. Haws, who averaged 11.7 points in a team-high 35 starts, will be the first player the team turns to to fill the backcourt void left by Bryant, the team's leading scorer last year (18.2 points). Childs will retain his role as the primary frontcourt presence. In 2017, he led the team in rebounds (8.6) and blocks (1.8).

With so many players returning, BYU doesn't have many new players. The most notable incoming players are simply ones who weren't able to compete last season for various reasons. Nick Emery is the more prominent one. The junior averaged 14.7 points through his first two seasons and will provide 3-point shooting for BYU, who lost their best two outside shooters in Bryant and Payton D斯塔普.

Emery withdrew from the team prior to the start of the Cougars season in 2017 citing personal reasons and will be ineligible to play in the first nine games of the Cougars season for NCAA violations. Utah State is the 12th team on BYU's schedule.

BYU ended up going a decent 16-14 behind the scoring prowess of senior guard Cass Devashrayee who averaged a team-high 19.1 points per game. However, Devashrayee will be one of the Cougars two top-three scorers not returning for the 2018 season.

Brenna Chase is the only player that averaged double-digit scoring last season who will return this year. Chase scored 13.5 points per game (second on the team) and was the most prolific 3-point shooter, making 69 on the year, which is ninth-most in the program's history.

One of the other top returners is center Sara Hamson. The 6-foot-7 junior led the NCAA in blocks per game with 4.3. Hamson also averaged 7.7 rebounds to go with 5.6 points. Guard Paisley Johnson and forward Shalae Salmon will also be prominent in the rotation.

2017-18 RESULTS AGAINST USU
12/02 @ USU - W 75-66

STATISTICS
74.3 Points Per Game
67.8 Points Allowed Per Game
32.7 Rebounds Per Game
15.2 Assists Per Game
48.5 Field Goal Percentage
33.5 3 Point Percentage

RETURNING STARTERS
G - T.J. Haws
F - Yoeli Childs
G - Jashire Hardnett
F - Luke Worthington

SCHEDULE
12/05 @ YU

2017-18 RECORD W: 24 L: 11

11/20 @ USU

RETURNING STARTERS
G - Brenna Chase
C - Sara Hamson

SCHEDULE
11/20 @ USU

2017-18 RECORD W: 24 L: 11

11/06 vs USU - L 76-69

STATISTICS
66.6 Points Per Game
62.9 Points Allowed Per Game
38.4 Rebounds Per Game
14.8 Assists Per Game
41.2 Field Goal Percentage
33.5 3 Point Percentage

RETURNING STARTERS
G - Brenna Chase
C - Sara Hamson

SCHEDULE
11/20 @ USU

2017-18 RECORD W: 16 L: 14

11/06 vs USU - L 76-69

STATISTICS
66.6 Points Per Game
62.9 Points Allowed Per Game
38.4 Rebounds Per Game
14.8 Assists Per Game
41.2 Field Goal Percentage
33.5 3 Point Percentage

RETURNING STARTERS
G - Brenna Chase
C - Sara Hamson

SCHEDULE
11/20 @ USU

2017-18 RECORD W: 24 L: 11

11/20 @ USU

REVIEWING STARTERS
G - T.J. Haws
F - Yoeli Childs
G - Jeshire Hardnett
F - Luke Worthington
COLORADO STATE

MEN

2017-18 RECORD W: 11 L: 21

Last year can only be summed up as tumultuous for the Rams. Allegations of abusive behavior by head coach Larry Eustachy hung over the team for the majority of the season. Eustachy officially resigned in March, and he's not the only piece not returning this year for Colorado State. Leading scorer Prentiss Nixon is gone, as is do-it-all forward Che Bob and Raquan Mitchell, a former 3-star recruit who factored to become a major contributor before announcing his intention to transfer. A team that went 11-21 overall and 4-14 in MW play is staring at a long hill back to the top of the conference. Of the 14 players on the roster, only four are freshmen or sophomores. The Rams' season will rely heavily on the returning production of the frontcourt duo of Deion James and Nico Carvacho. The two combined for 19.6 points and 15.6 rebounds per game. Incoming transfers Hyron Edwards and Kris Martin will need to start contributing immediately, and CSU will need several upperclassmen to make a surprising leap. Anthony Bonner, who averaged 8.9 points and 2.7 rebounds per game last season, is the logical choice. Behind him, none of Lorenz Jenkins, Logan Ryan, Juan Sabino II, or Robbie Berwick averaged more than 14 minutes per game. They'll have to factor in much heavier than that, otherwise, Colorado State could be in for a long season near the bottom of the MW standings.

2017-18 RESULTS AGAINST USU
01/10 @ USU - W 84-75
03/07 MWC 1st round - L 65-76

SCHEDULE
01/19 @ USU
03/05 @ COLORADO STATE

STATISTICS
72.3 Points Per Game
79.3 Points Allowed Per Game
37.5 Rebounds Per Game
12.8 Assists Per Game
41.8 Field Goal Percentage
32.9 3 Point Percentage

RETURNING STARTERS
C - Nico Carvacho
G - Anthony Masinton-Bonner

WOMEN

The Rams dominated the conference from 2014 through 2017, taking the regular season title every season, but won the conference tournament only once in the same span. Last season was a step back for CSU, as the Rams finished 11-7 in MW play and 21-12 overall. With the departures of their top two leading scorers, Hannah Tvrdy and Stine Austgulen, it appeared CSU could again struggle to reclaim their conference prowess. That is, until the Rams reloaded during the offseason with a plethora of plug-and-play transfers. Sophomore Tori Williams comes from Utah after receiving Pac-12 All-Freshman honors, along with fellow former Ute Megan Jacobs. Redshirt senior Roichelle Marble joins CSU after appearing in 88 games for Wisconsin over the previous three seasons. Another redshirt senior, Tatia Neubert returns as CSU’s leading scorer, while Grace Colaivalu and Lore Devos return after promising freshman seasons. Colorado State has gone 115-46 in five seasons under head coach Ryun Williams, but has reached the NCAA tournament only once. This year’s squad, revitalized by talented transfers, has their eyes set on that elusive goal.

2017-18 RECORD W: 21 L: 12

2017-18 RESULTS AGAINST USU
01/10 vs USU - W 56-45

SCHEDULE
01/19 @ COLORADO STATE
03/04 @ USU

STATISTICS
61.2 Points Per Game
57.6 Points Allowed Per Game
36.5 Rebounds Per Game
11.4 Assists Per Game
68.2 Field Goal Percentage
32.9 3 Point Percentage

RETURNING STARTERS
G - Sofie Tryggedsson
G - Grace Colaivalu
Fresno State is coming off a season in which they won 20 games for the third straight season and finished fifth in the Mountain West with a 21-11 record. Led by first year head coach Justin Hutson, Fresno will look to put an imprint on the team coming from perennial Mountain West contenders San Diego State where he spent the last 6 years as an assistant coach. This season however, might be more challenging for the Bulldogs as they won’t be returning three of their five starters from last season. They also lost five of their top seven scorers, including their second leading scorer Bryson Williams, who transferred to UTEP. They do have some good talent on the roster, leading scorer DeShon Taylor returns for his senior season hoping to improve on his 17.8 ppg average from last season, which was good enough for fifth in the conference. Also returning is walk-on turned starter Sam Bittner, poised to keep his spot as starting small forward. Incoming 7-1, 3-star freshman Assane Diouf hopes to make an impact in the team as their most likely choice at center. Fresno State hopes to build off a good season last year with some key wins coming against Colorado State, San Diego State, and New Mexico. Both matchups with the Aggies should be entertaining as Fresno will look to average their two losses against Utah State last season.

DeShon Taylor returns for his senior season hoping to improve on his 17.8 ppg average from last season, which was good enough for fifth in the conference. Also returning is walk-on turned starter Sam Bittner, poised to keep his spot as starting small forward. Incoming 7-1, 3-star freshman Assane Diouf hopes to make an impact in the team as their most likely choice at center. Fresno State hopes to build off a good season last year with some key wins coming against Colorado State, San Diego State, and New Mexico. Both matchups with the Aggies should be entertaining as Fresno will look to average their two losses against Utah State last season.

This is a year of optimism for the women’s program. Unlike the men’s, this women’s team is returning all five of their starters from last year, including leading scorer Candice White who averaged 18.9 ppg. Coach Jaime White is coming into her fifth year with the program, looking to rebound off what was her worst season with the team last year, finishing with a record of 17-15. This was still good enough to finish 5th in the conference last season. In both of last year’s matchups with the Aggies the home squad stole a win, with the matchup in Fresno ending in a one-point victory for the Bulldogs. Coming into the season, the team only brings one freshman onto the roster, ESPN 3-star forward Gabby Standifer. The roster mostly being made up of upperclassmen (five juniors and three seniors) should give the Bulldogs a lot of needed leadership in a season where they look to turn the program around and make it to the tournament for the first time since 2014.
After a bit of a Cinderella run in the 2018 NCAA tournament where the Wolfpack made it all the way to the Elite 8, expectations are through the roof for Nevada this season. Head coach Eric Musselman took over a squad which went 9-22 before he arrived in 2015 and quickly turned it into a national powerhouse. Now, entering his fourth season as head coach, the Wolfpack will be the hands down favorite to win the Mountain West this season.

What’s even scarier for their MWC opponents this year is that Nevada returns four of its top five scorers, rebounders and passers from that squad. Starters Lindsey Drew, Jordan Caroline, and Caleb and Cody Martin are back for another go, though they will have to replace Purdue transfer Kendall Stephens.

Musselman has proven to be an effective recruiter, not just at the high school level, but also at bringing in transfer players. Along with bringing in five-star forward Jordan Brown, five new players who transferred to Nevada from other DI programs will be eligible to see playing time this season.

Nevada will likely begin the season ranked as one of the top-10, if not top-5, teams in the nation, and it has a chance to be a legitimate Final Four contender. The Mountain West Conference, and the rest of the nation for that matter, needs to watch out for the Wolfpack.

**2017-18 RESULTS AGAINST USU**
01/13 vs USU - W 83-57
02/17 @ USU - W 93-87

**STATISTICS**
- Points Per Game: 82.6
- Points Allowed Per Game: 73.1
- Rebounds Per Game: 35.5
- Assists Per Game: 16.2
- Field Goal Percentage: 46.9
- 3 Point Percentage: 39.2

**SCHEDULE**
01/02 @ NEVADA
03/02 @ USU

**RETURNING STARTERS**
- G - Lindsey Drew
- F - Jordan Caroline
- F - Caleb Martin
- F - Cody Martin

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The 2017-18 season was a roller coaster for the Nevada women’s basketball team. Despite going 7-4 in the non-conference portion of their schedule, the Wolfpack went just 7-11 in Mountain West play to earn the ninth seed in the conference tournament. That didn’t stop them from competing though, as they went on to play their best basketball of the season when it mattered and made it all the way to the conference finals before losing to top-seeded Boise State. Nevada participated in the Women’s Basketball Invitational, where they played to the semifinal before losing.

Can Nevada carry on some of the momentum they gained at the end of last season? That’s the big question. However, it may be difficult without last year’s leading scorer and rebounder Teige Zeller who accounted for 14.2 ppg and 8.6 rpg, and T Moe, who led the team with 118 assists and was second in scoring with 11.9 ppg.

Starters Jade Redmon and Terae Briggs are back, but the Wolfpack will need to rely on several young and inexperienced players this season. However, the team is trending in the right direction. After winning just five games in 2015-16, that total improved to 11 the following year, and 19 last season.

As head coach Amanda Levens enters her third season at the helm, Nevada may just be one of the teams to watch out for in the Mountain West this season.

**2017-18 RESULTS AGAINST USU**
01/13 @ USU - L 57-79
02/17 vs USU - W 85-78 (OT)

**STATISTICS**
- Points Per Game: 69.8
- Points Allowed Per Game: 68.5
- Rebounds Per Game: 37.9
- Assists Per Game: 14.2
- Field Goal Percentage: 42.2
- 3 Point Percentage: 36.4

**RETURNING STARTERS**
- G - Jade Redmon
- F - Terae Briggs

**SCHEDULE**
01/02 @ USU
03/02 @ NEVADA
MEN

2017-18 RECORD W: 19 L: 15

Last season the Lobos knocked Utah State out of the Mountain West Conference Tournament after the Aggies made a surprise visit to the semifinal round. And this year the Lobos could reach even higher after falling eight points short of making the NCAA Tournament in 2017-18.

New Mexico did lose three of its top three scorers — Sam Logwood, Joe Furstinger and Antino Jackson — but their backcourt duo of Anthony Mathis and Makuach Maluach will be a nightmare for opposing defenses on the perimeter. In conference play, both Mathis and Maluach shot above 50 percent from 3-point range. Adding to that nightmare is the fact that both have great size and length (Mathis is 6-foot-3 and Maluach is 6-foot-5).

On the interior is where the Lobos could be weaker. The departure of Logwood and Furstinger leaves the team with zero players that averaged more than four rebounds per game in 2017-18. Furstinger was also the only player to average more than 0.4 blocks per game. There are several candidates to fill their roles inside but none have much experience. The 6-foot-10 Vladimir Pinchuk is the top candidate among the bigs. The sophomore center averaged just under 14 minutes per game, pulling in 2.5 rebounds and scoring 3.1 points. UCONN transfer Vance Jackson becomes eligible again this year. Still just a sophomore, the 6-foot-9 Jackson averaged 8.1 points as a freshman and grabbed 3.8 rebounds per contest.

RETURNING STARTERS
G - Anthony Mathis
G/F - Makuach Maluach
G/F - Dane Kuiper

STATISTICS
82.2 Points Per Game
77.7 Points Allowed Per Game
31.6 Rebounds Per Game
15.9 Assists Per Game
45.5 Field Goal Percentage
37.5 3-Point Percentage

SCHEDULE
01/26 @ New Mexico
02/20 @ Utah State

WOMEN

2017-18 RECORD W: 25 L: 11

The lady Lobos will be without a significant amount of their production from a year ago this season. New Mexico will retain the services of senior center Jaisa Nunn, who led the team in points and rebounds per game with 17.0 and 10.2. Nunn was selected to the 2017-18 MW All-Conference Team.

Unfortunately for the Lobos, Nunn will be the only returning starter as three of the starting five graduated and the fourth, sophomore N'Dea Flye, opted to transfer from New Mexico.

With just one of those five players, the Lobos will have a tall task in replicating their success from a season ago. While going 25-11, the team set program records for scoring average, total points, field goals and 3-pointers made: The 25 wins was also third-most in school history and led them to the third round of the WNIT.

New Mexico will likely see increased production from the likes of Madi Washington and Antonia Anderson. The two were key reserves last season, playing 34 and 32 games, respectively. Washington, a point guard, was the team’s top bench scorer with 6.4 points. The 6-foot-2 Anderson led the team in blocks despite playing just 13 minutes per game.

RETURNING STARTERS
C - Jaisa Nunn

STATISTICS
80.4 Points Per Game
70.7 Points Allowed Per Game
39.8 Rebounds Per Game
16.4 Assists Per Game
42.4 Field Goal Percentage
34.2 3-Point Percentage

SCHEDULE
01/26 @ Utah State
02/20 @ New Mexico

Incoming transfer Nkei McCue will also boost the frontcourt. The former Washington State forward, who is eligible to play immediately, appeared in 28 games for the Cougars last season, scoring 5.4 points per game and reeling in 5.6 rebounds. She also swatted 63 shots and in the 2016-17 season she set the WSU single-season record with 68 rejections.

In all, UNM returns eight players from last year’s team and has added five freshman and two transfers, one of whom must sit out the 2018-19 season.
After their first year under new head coach Brian Dutcher, the Aztecs are looking to make it back to the big dance in consecutive years for the first time since they made it six straight years from 2010-2015.

The Aztecs lost Malik Pope, their leading scorer. (12.8 PPG) While the Aztecs had a very balanced scoring attack with five players averaging more than ten points per game, losing Pope along with Troy Kell (10.5 PPG) will definitely be a daunting task to overcome. While they do lose two of their top 5 scorers that is essentially all, they all lost a combined 9.9 PPG from Max Montana and Kameron Rooks, something that should not be too hard to get from incoming freshmen.

Devin Watson looks to be a main cog in the Aztecs effort this year. He was last year’s number two scorer on the team. (12.2 PPG) They also have Jalen McDaniels (10.5 PPG) and Matt Mitchell (10.5 PPG) returning to the starting lineup. The key newcomers are Joel and Nathan Mensah, who will look to fill in the missing pieces at the forward spots. We can also look for guards Jeremy Hemsley and Jordan Schakel to see an uptick in minutes from last year. There will be plenty of opportunities for the incoming freshmen to step in but San Diego’s success will largely depend on who is returning, and willing to step into a starting roll.

WOMEN

After a rather disappointing season last year, one would have a hard time seeing that this year would be much different for the Lady Aztecs. With most of the teams rebounding and scoring to likely disappear this year, SDSU can only hope to maintain competitiveness in some of their games.

This one’s going to hurt. This year the Aztecs will return without their top two scorers, McKynzie Fort and Geena Gomez. Between the two of them they averaged 27.4 total PPG. The entire team last year averaged 65.4 per game. Crunch some numbers and you will see that the team is losing just under 42% of their entire team’s scoring. They also lose the first and second team rebounders, with Fort being number one and Khalia Lark being number two.

Najé Murray will have to step up in a big way this way if the lady Aztecs look to make something better out of this year. Losing four of the teams five leading scorers does not bode well for this team so they will be looking to the underclassmen to perform. They will look to the likes of returning forwards Arantxa Gómez Ferrer and Baylee Vandervoes, to step up in the absence of McKynzie Fort, who was essentially everything to the team last year. They will also look to freshman guards Sophia Ramos, Mallory Adams and Jayden Perez to make contributions.
2017-18 RECORD: W: 4 L: 26

MEN

2018 was a year to forget for San Jose State. The Spartans put up a dismal 4-26 overall record, and a 1-17 mark in the Mountain West Conference, under first-year head coach Jean Prioleau. They finished at the bottom of the MW and lost in the first round of the MW Tournament to Wyoming. San Jose State was led in 2017 by junior sharpshooter Ryan Welage, who garnered an All-Mountain West honorable mention recognition. Welage averaged 18.1 points per game, good for fourth-most in the MW. He carried the woeful Spartans, leading them in scoring in 19 of their games in 2018. Unfortunately for San Jose State, Welage has left for much-greener pastures, as he has joined Xavier as a graduate transfer. This leaves Prioleau with an unproven roster that's lacking an identity. As a team, the Spartans struggled to defend in '18, giving up an average of 75.3 points per game. They also had ball-security issues, averaging a whopping 16.3 turnovers per contest. Isaiah Nichols and Ashtin Chastain return some key experience for the Spartans this season, but they are still a team lacking in depth and star-power.

San Jose's lone MW win in 2018 came at home against the Aggies. The Spartans won a 64-62 nailbiter against USU on February 28th after losing 86-72 in Logan two months earlier. San Jose State's one strength in 2017 was their three-point shooting, as they shot at a 36.7% clip from beyond the arc. Much of that ability has departed with Welage, however, and the Spartans will have to adapt. San Jose State will play Utah State twice in a two-week period; the Spartans host the Aggies on January 14th before traveling to Logan on January 30th.

WOMEN

The 2017-18 season was a rough one for the San Jose State Spartans. San Jose State finished dead last in the Mountain West Conference by going 7-23 overall and 4-14 in MW play. Their post-season ended poorly, too, as the Spartans dropped 12 of their last 13 games. While they struggled mightily, the young Spartans do stand to show some improvements from last season. With only three upperclassmen on the team in 2017, San Jose State will be without their top player from the 2017 campaign in Myzhanique Ladd. She was the Spartans leading scorer with 13.5 ppg. Taylor Turner is back for the Spartans in 2018 after putting up 13.1 ppg and a team-high 4.0 assists per contest. Turner's assist average was the sixth-best output in the MW. Joining her in the Spartans' backcourt will be Fieme' A Hafoka and Analyss Benally, both of whom played in all 30 games last year. Cydni Lewis will anchor San Jose's frontcourt in '18 after averaging 4.3 rebounds last season.

It was a mixed bag for San Jose against Utah State in 2017. The Spartans topped Utah State at home 79-66 in their MW opener, but they did not fare well in the Dee Glenn Smith Spectrum. The Spartans had their worst loss of the season, 86-78, on the road at Utah State. Ultimately, San Jose had a penchant for playing close games last year, even though they came out on the wrong end most of the time. Their wealth of experience could lead to an improvement, even if a slight one, in 2018. The Spartans will face USU in Logan on January 14th before hosting the Aggies on January 30th.

San Jose State
Are the Rebels going to be running once again? After faltering in 2017, finishing last in the MW and winning only 11 games and going 4-14 in conference play, they picked up speed in a breakout 2018 campaign where the Runnin’ Rebels won 20 games and went 8-10 in the Mountain West conference – a marked improvement from the previous season. This year UNLV may struggle to get out of the gate and will be forced to rely on in-house development and incoming recruits to bolster a squad which lost its first, third, and fourth leading scorers from last year: Brandon McCoy, Jovan Mooring, and Jordan Johnson. This is a team which relies on its offensive ability to win close shootout games and may struggle without these impact players as they allowed opponents to score 78.4 PPG last season which was a mediocre 9th in the conference.

The impetus behind the Rebel’s offense will now be senior forward Shakur Juiston who finished second on the team in scoring last season, averaging 14.6 PPG. Freshman guard and former 4-star recruit Bryce Hamilton should also be a major contributor right away on a team featuring six freshman. Youth pervades this UNLV squad, and head coach Marvin Menzies and the rest of his staff will have to trust their young guys and allow them to fight through their on-court mistakes throughout the season. Another freshman to keep an eye on is Trey Woodbury, a Las Vegas native and 3-star recruit.

2017-18 RESULTS AGAINST USU

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<th>Opponent</th>
<th>Score</th>
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RETURNING STARTERS

- F - Shakur Juiston
- G - Kris Clyburn

SCHEDULE

- 02 / 02 vs UNLV

STATISTICS

- 83.4 Points Per Game
- 78.1 Points Allowed Per Game
- 40.5 Rebounds Per Game
- 16.2 Assists Per Game
- 48.9 Field Goal Percentage
- 33.4 3 Point Percentage

The Lady Rebels not only called but also raised the successful campaign of their male counterparts, finishing 2nd in the MW by going 14-4 in conference play and winning 19 games overall. Despite their stellar regular season play, the Lady Rebels fell short of their ultimate goal of reaching the NCAA tournament when their season abruptly ended in a nightmarish double overtime loss to Nevada during the MW tournament. The Rebels will be entering the 2019 season with a chip on their shoulder and with a loaded team which is returning three starters including their leading scorer, senior center Katie Powell, and their sixth man, Jordyn Bell. Expect last year’s balanced offensive attack where four Rebels players averaged double-digit point totals each game to carry over to this 2019 season.

While the success of last year’s men and women’s teams was comparable, the rosters that make up the two this year are vastly different. While UNLV’s 2019 men’s squad is full of youth and new faces, this women’s team is full of experienced junior and seniors with only two freshman currently on the roster – and one is redshirting. This year should hold no surprises as UNLV will, once again, be one of the upper-tier teams in the conference battling for supremacy in the MW.

2017-18 RESULTS AGAINST USU

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RETURNING STARTERS

- F - Jordyn Bell
- C - Katie Powell
- F - Paris Strawther
- G - Nikki Wheatley

SCHEDULE

- 02 / 02 @ UNLV

STATISTICS

- 67.9 Points Per Game
- 66.6 Points Allowed Per Game
- 40.3 Rebounds Per Game
- 12.5 Assists Per Game
- 40.3 Field Goal Percentage
- 28.2 3 Point Percentage
The University of Wyoming is gearing up for the 2018-19 season with a roster full of fresh faces, and some seasoned cowboys ready-to-go. Head coach Allen Edwards will be returning to the court for his third season with the team, along with seniors Jordan Naughton, Nyaires Redding, Justin James, sophomores Hunter Maldonado, Austin Mueller, and redshirt freshman Hunter Thompson. Freshman guard Bradley Belt is of special interest this season as he makes his collegiate debut with Wyoming. Belt is a three-star ranked athlete by ESPN and Sports247, averaging 29.4 points per game and 3.3 assists per contest. Belt received recruiting interest from both Auburn and Alabama. With an overall record of 20-13, Wyoming is ranked second in the conference for turnovers forced, and third in multiple categories. Wyoming is ranked third in defensive rebounds per game, blocked shots per game, free throw attempts, free throws made, steals per game, and total blocks. Along with being ranked third in the Mountain West in free throws made, the teams highest national ranking is in that same category sitting at the 15th spot. Last year when Utah State went to battle with Wyoming, the game ended 85-77 in the rivals favor. The Aggies were able to come back from a 22 point deficit in the first half of the game, but they were not able to come out victorious.

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Ready to take on this season, the University of Wyoming will have a team stacked with returning players and newcomers ready to reach the top. The Cowgirls have 10 players making a reappearance from the 2017-18 season with Bailee Cotton, Marta Gomez, Selade Kepner, Coreen Labish, Elisa Pilli, Tijana Raca, Madlana Rakovic, Taylor Rusk, Clara Tapia, and Rachelle Tucker. This team has players from all over the world, with two freshman, Maria Torresblanca and Alba Sanchez Ramos hailing from Spain. Two more freshman players came to Wyoming from outside of the country, with Tereza Vitulova hailing from the Czech Republic and Karla Erjavec from Croatia. On average last season, the Cowgirls scored 61.5 points per game, had a .766 free throw percentage, and recorded 33.4 rebounds. Along with that, they are ranked first in the conference for fewest fouls, offensive rebounds per game, fewest fouls, and personal fouls per game. The University of Wyoming is also ranked 11 in the nation for offensive rebounds per game, 18 for free-throw percent, and they are in the 16th slot in the nation for fewest fouls. Utah State is ranked first in the conference for blocked shots per game, and just for blocked shots in general, while Wyoming sits at the bottom of the list for blocked shots per game and second-to-last in the blocked shots category.

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