

PREVIEW



**SENIOR
DEVIN JAMES**



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Having posted winning records in each of the past two seasons with a relatively young team, the Tribe enters the 2007-08 campaign with an experienced, talent-laden squad that could be one of the best in the program's history. The optimism surrounding the program is well founded, as four starters return from last year's team that recorded 19 victories, the second-best total in school history, and nearly earned a post-season NIT bid.

Highlighting the impressive contingent of returnees are two of the CAA's top players – seniors **Kyra Kaylor** and **Devin James**. Kaylor is a two-time first-team all-conference honoree and the 2005-06 CAA Player of the Year. James has averaged double figures in scoring during her entire career and enters her final season needing just six points to become the College's 12th 1,000-point scorer.

Bolstering the roster this year will also be the return of junior **Dani Kell** and talented sophomore **Tiffany Benson**. After earning CAA All-Rookie Team honors as a freshman, Kell was in the midst of a terrific sophomore campaign before suffering a torn ACL in her right knee versus George Mason on Jan. 7. Although just a freshman last year, Benson figured prominently in the team's success and established herself as one of the league's top defensive players.

In addition to the individual accolades and impressive win total, the Tribe had tremendous success statistically. W&M led the conference in field goal percentage defense (35.5 percent), while it totaled a league-leading 6.3 three-pointers per game. The field goal percentage defense ranked 13th



Senior Kyra Kaylor
Two-Time All-CAA First Team Honoree

nationally, while the long-range shooting ranked 23rd in the country. W&M also led the conference in three-point shooting percentage (36.0), a figure that ranked 26th nationally.

"There is a sense of excitement about this season," Head Coach Debbie Taylor said. "The success we had last season was another big step for our program, and we expect to continue building upon it. We really grew as a team, and a lot of our younger players gained valuable experience. Despite the adversity we faced when Dani got hurt, we demonstrated resiliency and were able to answer the challenge presented to us. We accomplished a number of firsts in the program's history, so I think this year's team will enter the season with a greater sense of confidence."

While the level of talent on this season's squad is clearly among the best in the program's history, the Tribe will also rely heavily on its experience and depth. W&M returns five players who averaged at least 23 minutes per game last season and a number of underclassmen who gained significant playing time in key situations.

"This is the most depth and experience we have had during my tenure at W&M," Taylor said. "We return four starters who have been in that role for much of their careers. The group that will lead this team has gone through adversity, and it has begun to experience the success they have created. While we have finished in the top half of the conference in each of the past two seasons, this year's group has an excellent opportunity to be even better."

In addition to the returning talent, this season's roster will be bolstered by the influx of a talented and athletic freshman class that includes three guards. The group should provide the team with increased athleticism and depth that will allow the Tribe to utilize a more up-tempo style of play.

Backcourt

Although the Tribe will be without the services of point guard Sarah Stroh, who completed her career last season as the program's all-time leader in games played, the backcourt should continue to be a strength. While James and Kell headline the group, junior **Courtney Portell** also returns to the fold after serving as a key contributor last year. Additionally, three talented sophomores return to the mix and will be joined by the trio of freshmen. The versatile unit possesses a dynamic, well-rounded mix of abilities at both ends of the floor.

One of the College's top players throughout her career, James enters her senior season as the team's starting two-guard and a



Senior Devin James

strong candidate for all-conference honors. After averaging double figures in scoring and at least 5.0 rpg during each of her first two seasons, James continued to elevate her game as a junior and posted a career-best 12.7 ppg and 6.7 rpg. Additionally, she was the CAA's 11th-most accurate free throw shooter (76.4 percent), while she ranked seventh in the conference in minutes per game (35.35). A talented defender, she currently ranks ninth on W&M's career steals list with 167.

"Devin is one of the top players in the conference, and she can elevate our team to a new level when she plays at her best," Taylor said. "We are looking for more consistency from Devin this season, and I think she is ready to rise to that challenge. While Devin is a great defender, we hope to see her continue improving her work on the boards. She also has the ability to be a more productive scorer. In addition to all her talents on the court, her leadership will also play a key role in our success."

After missing the final 17 games last year due to a torn ACL, Kell returns to the hardwood this season and should contend for all-conference honors. An All-CAA Freshman Team selection two seasons ago, Kell was having an excellent sophomore campaign prior to suffering the injury. Through the first 14 contests, she ranked second on the team in scoring with 12.6 ppg and averaged 5.7 rpg. Although she will see most of her action on the perimeter, Kell also has the ability to be effective in the post.

"Dani is an incredibly talented all-around player, and she has the ability to do a lot of things very well on the floor," Taylor said. "Her game is very versatile in the sense that



she can score from anywhere on the floor, is a great passer and understands the system. Like Devin, we will need her to assume a leadership role this season to help the team achieve its goals."

While she saw limited playing time as a freshman and during the early portion of the 2006-07 campaign, Portell emerged as a key player following Kell's injury. The Woodbridge, Va., native was the team's fifth-leading scorer with 6.3 ppg and distinguished herself as one of the league's top outside shooters. Regardless of whether Portell earns a starting spot or comes off the bench this season, she will once again be an important contributor.

"Courtney is a very steady player with a great work ethic and intelligence," Taylor said. "She was one of our best shooters and defensive players last year. I think her confidence will continue to increase this year, and we will rely on her even more."

After playing nearly 10 minutes per game during her initial season as a member of the Tribe, sophomore **Robyn Barton** should see increased minutes this season. Very athletic and one of W&M's fastest players, Barton is also one of the team's most accurate long-range shooters. She finished last year with a 45.9 percent mark from long range, as she sank 17 of her 37 attempts. Her most important three-pointer came in the exhilarating comeback victory against George Mason when she connected on a game-winning long ball with just 2.6 seconds remaining.

"Robyn earned significant playing time as a freshman, and that is what she needed," Taylor said. "She is going to continue improving with the more game time she gets.

We are going to run more this season, and her athleticism is going to allow her to have an opportunity to play. If her ball handling and decision making continue to improve, she will see even more time on the court."

Lindsey Moller is another athletic sophomore who will vie for increased playing time in the backcourt. Although she averaged just 4.5 minutes per game in 22 contests last season, she displayed solid defense and a high level of energy in her appearances.

"Lindsey is a tough, smart player who really worked hard this summer," Taylor said. "She brings athleticism and is a great competitor who loves to play. She may be our most improved player this year and will definitely see more action this season."

Like Moller, sophomore **Kelly Heath** also saw limited playing time during her initial season with the Tribe but should contribute more this season. A talented offensive player, Heath is an accurate shooter who can also score going to the basket. Her versatility will also allow her to play some in the post.

"Kelly has gotten stronger this summer and is a more confident player," Taylor said. "I have been proud of her commitment and the manner in which she has worked to improve her game. I think she is motivated to contribute this season, and her ability to play a number of different positions will allow her to do that."

While Portell could fill the open slot left by the graduation of Stroh, freshmen **Katy Oblinger** and **Katherine DeHenzel** will also have the opportunity to step into the starting point guard roll. Oblinger was a four-year letterwinner at Altoona Area High



Junior Dani Kell

School, a perennial powerhouse in Pennsylvania's largest division (AAAA), and finished her career as the school record holder for three-pointers made. One of the top prep prospects in Pennsylvania, she helped her team compile a 76-15 record during her final three seasons.

"Katy has uncanny maturity and is a very bright player," Taylor said. "She is also mentally and physically tough. Although she is a small guard, she is incredibly quick and tenacious. She also possesses confidence and has great leadership skills."

DeHenzel also joins the Tribe after a stellar prep career. A first-team all-conference selection as a senior, she was twice named *Washington Post* All-Met Honorable Mention. A four-year letterwinner at St. John's College High School, she helped the program post a 95-34 record and finished her career with more than 1,000 points. Additionally, she was a member of the Fairfax Stars AAU team that finished among the top five at nationals three consecutive seasons.

"Katherine has great floor vision and is a great passer," Taylor said. "She is a very smart player who sees the game in slow motion. She has a great work ethic and has experienced success at the prep level with her high school and AAU programs."

The third member of the freshman class is **Aleia Gland**, who joins the Tribe after a successful career at David and Mary Thomson High School where she was a four-year starter. A strong, athletic guard, Gland averaged 21.0 ppg during her senior season and was selected as a *Toronto Star* All-Star. She suffered an ACL tear last spring and is currently still recovering from the injury.

"Aleia is a strong rebounder and is quick



The Tribe returns four starters from last season's highly successful team.



PREVIEW

off her feet," Taylor said. "She has the ability to play inside as well as on the perimeter. She is a good athlete with a big skill set, but she will need to continue building upon it."

Frontcourt

While not as deep as the backcourt, the Tribe's post players are equally talented and will figure prominently in the team's success. Although all-conference performers Kaylor and Benson are the group's most heralded players, the unit also features other skilled players who should make significant contributions as reserves.

"I think Kyra and Tiffany are two of the top post players in the conference, and I would not trade them for anyone," Taylor said. "After earning all-rookie team honors last year, Tiffany has worked hard on her game during the summer and she will continue to improve even more. If Kyra can stay healthy, she will remain one of the league's best players. We also expect our reserves to step up this season, because they will need to provide valuable minutes for us."

Perhaps the greatest player in the program's history, Kaylor has been instrumental in W&M's success during the last few years. After being honored as the CAA Player of the Year as a sophomore, Kaylor garnered first-team all-conference distinction last season with averages of 14.8 ppg and 9.1 rpg. She enters her senior year needing just 101 points to break the College's career scoring record and is less than 200 boards away from establishing a new rebound mark. Undoubtedly, her production and leadership will be vital as the Tribe sets out to achieve its goals.



Sophomore Tiffany Benson
2006-07 CAA All-Rookie Team Honoree

"Kyra is on track to be the most-heralded player in the history of the program," Taylor said. "She had to play through injuries last season, and hopefully that will not be the case this year. The expectations for her are immense, but she is driven to propel this team into the postseason and I expect her to have another great year."

One of the league's top defensive players as a freshman, Benson returns to the court this season as an established veteran with the opportunity to earn all-conference honors. During her rookie campaign, Benson shattered the single-season blocks record and already ranks fourth on the program's career list. Additionally, she earned 25 starts and averaged 5.7 ppg and 5.9 rpg.

"The sky is the limit for Tiffany, and she has the potential to be a conference player of the year candidate by the time she is a senior," Taylor said. "I have been very proud of how hard she has worked to improve. While her defense stands out, her offensive game has gotten much better. We are going to expect a lot from her this season, and I'm excited to see how she performs."

After redshirting her first season at W&M, **Lauren Aadland** saw action in 16 games as a reserve during the 2006-07 campaign and should earn increased playing time this year. While the majority of her action will come in the post, her athleticism allows her the flexibility to play on the wing as well.

"I think we will see the 'new' Lauren this year," Taylor said. "She worked really hard on her game this summer and also improved her strength and conditioning. She is a very talented player who will be one of the first players off the bench."

Also expected to vie for minutes in the interior is junior **Julianne Thomas-Drolet**. While nearly her entire collegiate career has been hampered by injuries, she should add valuable depth in the post this season. A fundamentally sound player, her game has continued to develop.

"This is the year we will really need Julianne to step up and provide a presence in the paint," Taylor said. "She has worked hard this summer and wants to contribute. She will have the opportunity to play, and I'm excited to see her on the court."

Schedule

The Tribe will compete in 30 regular-season contests during the 2007-08 campaign, 12 of which will be played at Kaplan Arena at William and Mary Hall. In addition to the challenging 18-game CAA slate, the Green and Gold will square off against 12 non-conference foes from all around the country. Highlighting the slate will be a trip to Hawaii and road contests at Kentucky and



Junior Courtney Portell

Marquette.

In what will be the earliest season opener in the program's history, W&M will begin its season at the Elon Tournament on Nov. 9-10 with contests against Campbell and Penn. After welcoming Richmond to Williamsburg on Nov. 20 for the Tribe's home opener, the College will hit the road for matchups at Radford (Nov. 23) and at Marquette (Nov. 26).

W&M returns home to host the Black Bears of Maine on Nov. 29 before a series of road games at Kentucky (Dec. 4), Longwood (Dec. 7) and Howard (Dec. 9). After welcoming Duquesne to Kaplan Arena on Dec. 20 in its final non-conference home game, the Tribe will close out its non-conference slate at the Hawaii Tournament. W&M opens the event against Iona on Dec. 28 and will then take on either Hawaii or UC Irvine the following day.

The Tribe's CAA ledger includes home games against Towson (Jan. 6), Delaware (Jan. 13), Old Dominion (Jan. 20), UNC Wilmington (Jan. 31), James Madison (Feb. 3), Northeastern (Feb. 17), Drexel (Feb. 21), Hofstra (Feb. 28) and VCU (March 6). Conference road contests include trips to VCU (Jan. 10), Georgia State (Jan. 17), George Mason (Jan. 24), Drexel (Jan. 27), Towson (Feb. 7), Old Dominion (Feb. 10), James Madison (Feb. 14), UNC Wilmington (Feb. 24) and Northeastern (March 2).

The CAA Tournament will be held in Newark, Del., once again and is scheduled for March 13-16.