

# 2016-17 WYOMING MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

## IN HIS HANDS

First-year coach  
Allen Edwards brings  
a championship pedigree  
to the Cowboys



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# Bigger isn't always better.

It didn't take a 7 foot tall guard to invent the jump shot and forever change the game of basketball, that honor belongs a 5'10 farm boy from Hillsdale, Wyoming.

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Dr. Pat Robertson M.D.

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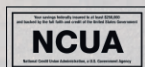


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CASPER  
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**INSIDE**

**4 2016-17 SCHEDULE**

Wyoming's opponents  
for the upcoming season

**5 FOSTER: REASON FOR OPTIMISM**

UW basketball team has blueprint  
to follow in football team's success

**6 'SMART BASKETBALL'**

New coach Edwards wants Cowboys to  
be assertive on both ends of the floor

**11 HEAD START**

Summer trip to Bahamas  
should benefit Cowboys

**13 CHAMPIONSHIP PEDIGREE**

Rookie head coach Edwards knows  
what it takes to win national titles

**20 PIECES ARE IN PLACE**

Now Cowboys have to  
find out where they fit

**23 LEADING BY EXAMPLE**

Jason McManamen lets his  
play on the court speak for him

**27 LOOKING FOR MORE**

Mountain West hopes to bounce  
back after one-bid season

**29 MWC PREVIEW**

A closer look at the teams  
in the Mountain West

**32 CHALLENGES AHEAD**

Cowgirls will be tested  
by tough early schedule



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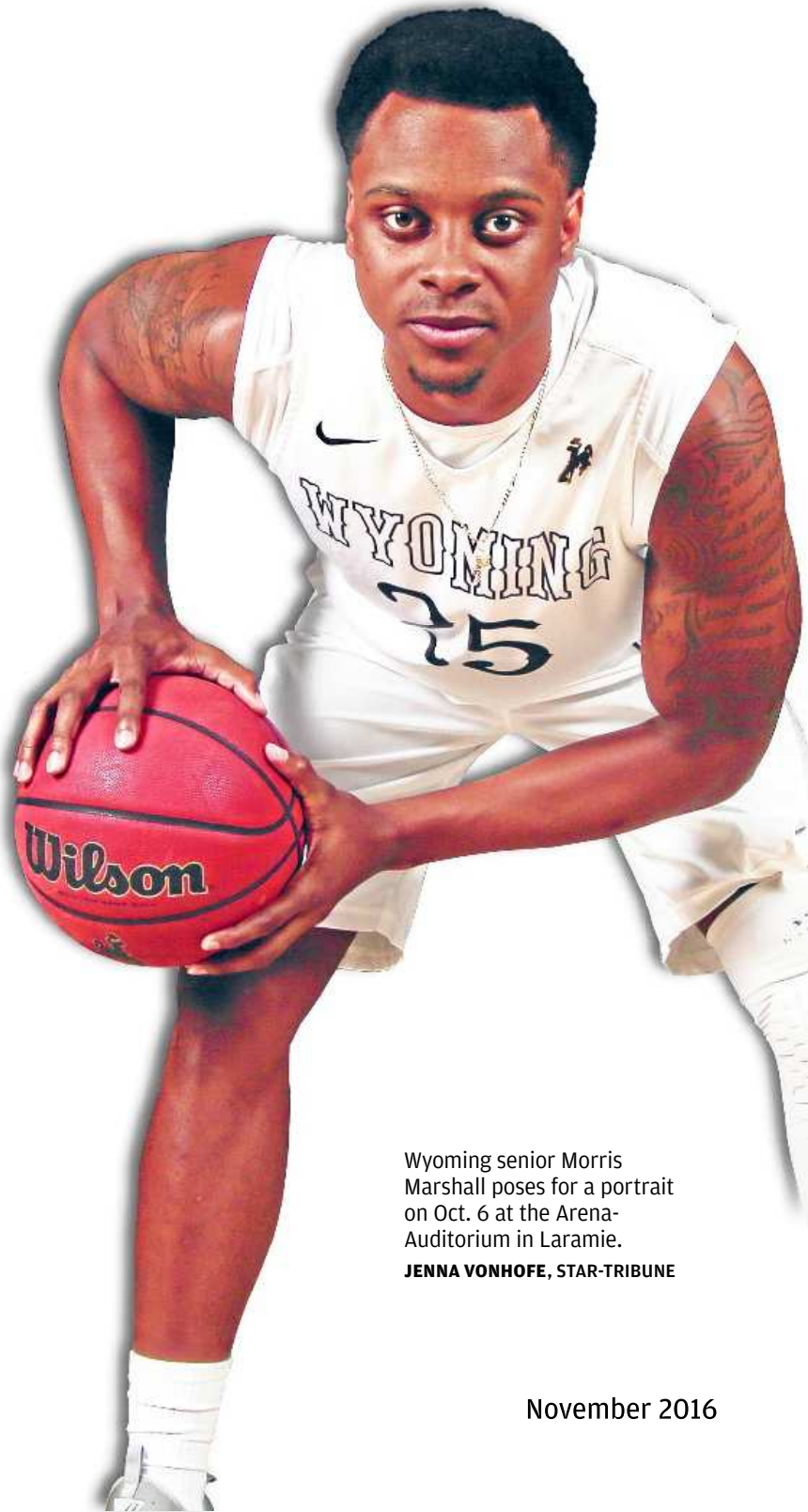
# UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING MEN'S BASKETBALL 2016-17 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME	TV
<b>Nov. 11</b>	<b>WESTERN STATE</b>	<b>8:30 p.m.</b>	
Nov. 14	at Montana	7 p.m.	
<b>Nov. 19</b>	<b>SOUTH DAKOTA STATE</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>	
Nov. 22	at Pacific	8 p.m.	
Nov. 25	at California	9 p.m.	
<b>Nov. 30</b>	<b>DENVER</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>	
<b>Dec. 3</b>	<b>NORTHERN IOWA</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>	
<b>Dec. 5</b>	<b>COLORADO CHRISTIAN</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>	
<b>Dec. 10</b>	<b>MONTANA</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>	
Dec. 17	CORNELL#	4 p.m.	
Dec. 19	TROY#	7 p.m.	
Dec. 22	DePaul#	5:30 p.m.	Fox Sports 1
Dec. 23	USC or Missouri#	TBA	
<b>Dec. 28</b>	<b>AIR FORCE*</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>	
Dec. 31	at UNLV*	2 p.m.	
Jan. 4	at Fresno State*	8 p.m.	
<b>Jan. 11</b>	<b>UTAH STATE*</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>	<b>ROOT</b>
<b>Jan. 14</b>	<b>NEVADA*</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>	<b>ESPN3</b>
Jan. 18	at San Jose State*	8 p.m.	
Jan. 21	at New Mexico*	6 p.m.	CBS Sports Network
<b>Jan. 25</b>	<b>UNLV*</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>	<b>Campus Insiders</b>
<b>Jan. 28</b>	<b>BOISE STATE*</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>	<b>ROOT</b>
Jan. 31	at San Diego State*	9 p.m.	CBS Sports Network
Feb. 4	at Air Force*	2 p.m.	
<b>Feb. 8</b>	<b>FRESNO STATE*</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>	
Feb. 11	at Utah State*	7 p.m.	
<b>Feb. 14</b>	<b>COLORADO STATE*</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>	<b>ROOT</b>
Feb. 18	at Boise State*	4 p.m.	ROOT
<b>Feb. 25</b>	<b>NEW MEXICO*</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>	<b>ESPN3</b>
Feb. 28	at Colorado State*	8 p.m.	ROOT
<b>March 4</b>	<b>SAN JOSE STATE*</b>	<b>2 p.m.</b>	
<b>MOUNTAIN WEST TOURNAMENT AT LAS VEGAS</b>			
<b>March 8</b>	<b>First round</b>		
<b>March 9</b>	<b>Quarterfinals</b>		
<b>March 10</b>	<b>Semifinals</b>		
<b>March 11</b>	<b>Championship</b>		

\* Indicates Mountain West game.

# Indicates Continental Tire Las Vegas Classic.

The final two rounds will be played at Orleans in Las Vegas.



Wyoming senior Morris Marshall poses for a portrait on Oct. 6 at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

JENNA VONHOFE, STAR-TRIBUNE

# Reason for OPTIMISM

## Can Cowboys' men's basketball team follow the blueprint of football team?

The Wyoming football and men's basketball teams began this academic year in somewhat similar spots.

Both were coming off losing seasons, fairly disappointing ones, during which each team was in no small part hamstrung by an abundance of youth. Both teams returned most of those young players, many of them first-year players, for the 2016-17 year.

So maybe the Wyoming football team is the best reason to have some optimism in this Wyoming men's basketball team. Many, me included, had relatively low expectations for Cowboys football last summer. They were picked to finish last in the Mountain West, receiving fewer points in the preseason media poll than any team in either division.

Those predictions looked foolish as the Cowboys won their first three conference games and five of their first seven games overall — more than double their total from a year ago.

The young players that a year ago were a part of a woeful Wyoming team are now putting that experience to use.

Now, is this an entirely airtight comparison? No. Wyoming men's basketball lost Josh Adams, far and away its best player, to graduation. That's a much more substantial loss than any suffered by the football team between 2015 and



**BRANDON FOSTER**

2016, no offense to Eddie Yarbrough. And the football team is succeeding with veteran leadership at receiver, running back, linebacker and tight end. It's not a complete youth movement.

But nonetheless, Wyoming fans already have seen evidence this year that young experience can pay dividends.

Will that happen on the basketball court?

That's a good question. In fact, this team has a lot more questions than it does answers.

That's bound to happen when you lose your head coach, Larry Shyatt, who helped lead you to a Mountain West tournament championship and NCAA Tournament appearance just two years ago. Or when you lose a player like Adams, who was the Most Valuable Player of that tournament and last year finished third in the country with 24.2 points per game.

Will promoted assistant Allen Edwards have success in his first year as a head coach? How well will the team transition into Edwards' new aggressive style of play after taking a ball-control approach under Shyatt? Who will step up to account for the points lost by Adams? And how will the offense adjust to finding the best shot instead of the best player?

Remember, there were questions surrounding the Wyoming football team before the season, too. Many



**ALAN ROGERS, STAR-TRIBUNE**

Wyoming's Jason McManamen tries to break San Diego State's full-court press during their game last season at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

have been answered.

Like that Wyoming football team, the basketball Cowboys didn't receive much love in the preseason poll. They were picked to finish below every team in the Mountain West besides San Jose State, which has averaged six wins a year under coach Dave Wojcik.

Whether that prediction will look silly come March remains to be seen. This very well could be a season for patience for the Cowboys, who have just two seniors. That's understandable. Edwards is a first-year coach with two new assistants on staff, Tony Pujol and Jermaine Kimbrough. Eleven players on the roster have one or fewer years of experience at Wyoming, meaning just five remain from that conference championship team of 2014.

But regardless of where this team goes, there will still be something worth watching: Jason McManamen.

If there's one thing I've learned in my five months on the job, it's that Wyoming fans absolutely love a player from Wyoming. Not only is McManamen that, but he's also the main attraction on this team. The sharp-shooting senior is the only player guaranteed of a starting spot, Edwards said.

He's the leading returning scorer (14.4 points per game). He was the best 3-point shooter in the Mountain West last season. And he's from Torrington.

Seeing a Wyoming kid lead the Pokes is something all Cowboys fans can take pride in. It's one thing to say you're invested in making the most of in-state talent. It's another thing to show it.

The Cowboys will open the season with an exhibition game against Chadron State in Torrington, McManamen's hometown. It's a small gesture, but it's a meaningful one. It's a sign that the program is committed to its home state and to its best player from that state.

There will surely be trying times this season as the Cowboys look to climb back up the ranks of the Mountain West. And who knows? Maybe, like the football team, they'll do it much more quickly than expected.

But if nothing else, Wyoming fans can take heart in the fact that a kid from the Cowboy State will be leading the charge.

I know that's no small thing.

Follow University of Wyoming athletics reporter Brandon Foster on Twitter @BFoster91



## UW MEN'S BASKETBALL

# 'SMART BASKETBALL'

## POKES VOW TO BE ASSERTIVE ON BOTH ENDS OF THE FLOOR

**BRANDON FOSTER**  
Brandon.Foster@Trib.com

**T**he buzzword surrounding the first few months of Allen Edwards' tenure as head basketball coach of the Wyoming Cowboys has been "tempo."

Or, more specifically, "uptempo."

But before visions of an Arkansas-esque "40 minutes of hell" style of basketball start circling through your head, allow Edwards to interrupt you.

Just as he interrupted his own player, junior forward Jonathan Barnes.

"I mean, it's just smart basketball," said Barnes, when asked to describe his new coach's playing style. "If you can score quickly, then score quickly. If you can't, then just be smart with it. That's the biggest thing is..."

"Assertive on offense, assertive on defense," corrected Edwards, who had just appeared in the hallway. "Not uptempo."

"Yes, sir," Barnes said with a laugh. "What he said. Assertive on offense. Assertive on defense."

So, if you need a word to describe Edwards' style of play for the Cowboys, you've got one. But what will assertive look like?



Uptempo or not, it should be a departure from the style used the last five years by Edwards' predecessor, Larry Shyatt.

"I think when you think about what we've been doing the last five years under Coach Shy, it was more about ball control," Edwards said. "My thing to them was there's still a little bit within that, but I just want guys to understand that if they're open and balanced and it's early in the clock, shoot the basketball. Where when we were more ball-control, it was more about, it may not be the best shot for us right then, let's work them a little bit more, and then let's get something later in the clock."

And even if it's not a full-on, full-court press, there will still be plenty of running.

"My thing to them was, at the end of the day, we may not practice, but we're gonna be in shape," Edwards said.

Please see **SMART**, Page 8

**LEFT:** Wyoming's Alexander Aka Gorski drives to the basket against UNLV last season at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

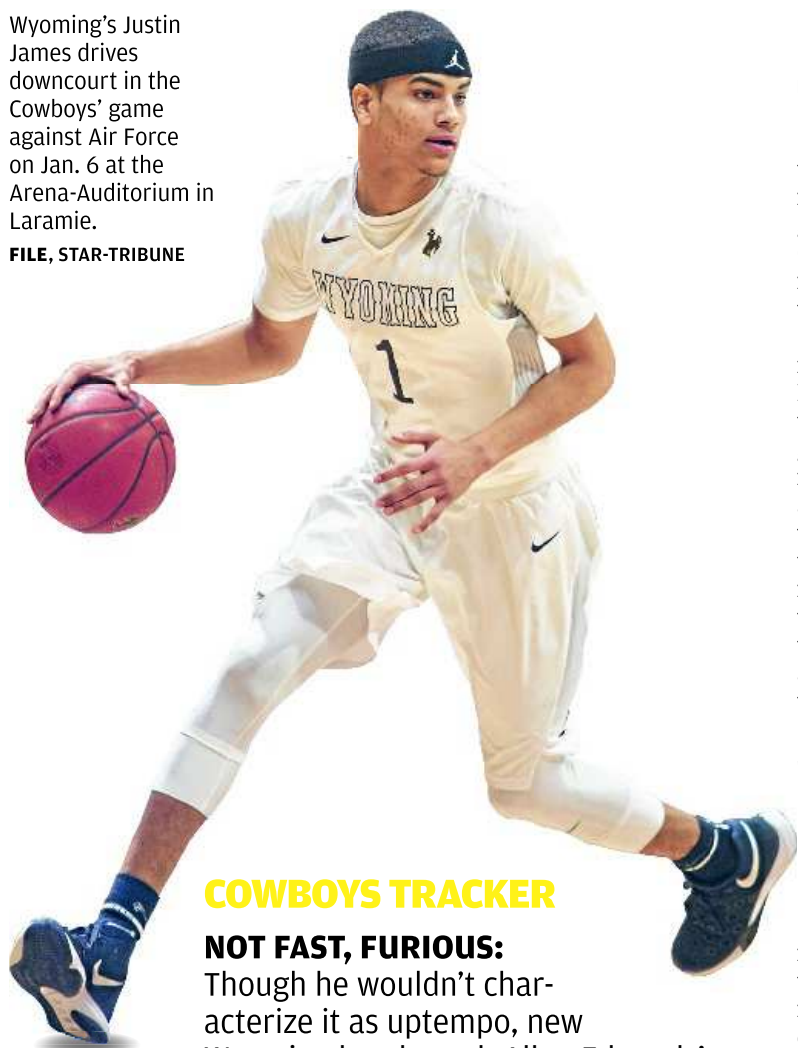
**BLAINE MCCARTNEY,**  
WYOMING TRIBUNE EAGLE



Wyoming's Jonathan Barnes dunks against Montana State last season at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.  
FILE, STAR-TRIBUNE

Wyoming's Justin James drives downcourt in the Cowboys' game against Air Force on Jan. 6 at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

FILE, STAR-TRIBUNE



## COWBOYS TRACKER

### NOT FAST, FURIOUS:

Though he wouldn't characterize it as uptempo, new Wyoming head coach Allen Edwards' style of play is more aggressive than the ball-control approach used under previous coach Larry Shyatt.

### MINT CONDITION:

The way Edwards wants to play has required Wyoming to do plenty of conditioning this preseason.

### HE SAID IT:

"The difference is, I think, just realizing that each player's going to have their role, and it might be one player's night, and we just have to be unselfish and get him, because that's what we're going to need to do to win."  
— junior forward Jonathan Barnes.

## Smart

From 6

The running in practice is to get the Cowboys in peak shape. The running in games will mostly come getting up and down the floor as the Cowboys try to get into transition more often and to find shots early if they're there for the taking.

"We want to get the ball up the floor fast, but we're not in a rush," Edwards said. "We want to be able to take advantage of what's being given and then if not, let's play offense. We had a practice ... that I let a lot of stuff go, just so they could understand getting up and down the floor. But since then, it's been more about being assertive and what we're trying to do. I didn't want guys hesitating when it was an open and on-balance shot that was not, in a sense, selfish."

The initiative to find the quick shot if it's there fits into the larger idea that this Wyoming offense will be more about finding the right shot rather than feeding a star player such as the departed Larry Nance Jr. or Josh Adams.

"I think the one thing that's going to be really different about this team as opposed to last year's team is it might be (Lou Adams') night one night and it might be (Alexander Aka) Gorski's night the next," Barnes said. "And just realizing that if somebody's hot, feed him. Whereas we kind of felt like we had to get Josh hot, because when you've got somebody that's like that, you just have to. He's your best bet at winning."

"The difference is, I think, just realizing that each player's going to have their role, and it might be one player's night, and we just have to be unselfish and get him, because that's what we're going to need to do to win."

Because, for one, the Cowboys don't necessarily have a Josh Adams at the moment.

"I don't know if we have that type of caliber guy in the program right now," Edwards said. "I think we have guys in the program who

have potential to eventually do what those guys did. Everybody always remembers Nance his junior and senior year or Josh his junior and senior year but don't remember freshman year, sophomore year, when they were just a small piece within what we were trying to do, so we just have some guys right now that are going through that transition."

While losing a player of Adams' caliber is no small task, the team does appear excited about the opportunity to share the love more.

"I think the whole philosophy is more team-driven," Barnes said. "So when you had somebody like Josh Adams who was such a prolific scorer, we're trying to find Josh, get him open, because he's the man. So for Coach Edwards, just the new system of play, it's just going to be more distributed."

"And as a big man, I'm going to be able to attack the glass more, be able to run the floor and it's a lot more fun. It's a lot more fun. I really enjoy it."

Last year, Wyoming's offense might not have allowed for post players to get up many shots unless the shot clock was so low there wasn't another option.

"Now, it's more calculated," Barnes said. "It's more about reads, and it's more just about a feel for the game, whereas before it was kind of like, 'I don't really know. I'm probably not going to shoot this possession, so I just need to box out or get back on defense.'"

"So it's a big difference, but both of them were fun. Playing with Josh is unbelievable."

Sophomore forward Jordan Naughton anticipates a varied attack on offense this year.

"We try to have a little more balanced attack where you try to penetrate with the guards or with the dropoffs to the bigs," he said. "Or just look for a feed directly into the bigs. So there's no lack of 3-point shots being taken, but I think the bigs are getting a little better looks this time around."

Please see **SMART**, Page 10

Wyoming's Jordan Naughton, left, and Alan Herndon go up to block a shot by San Diego State's Winston Shepard last season at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.  
ALAN ROGERS, STAR-TRIBUNE





FILE, STAR-TRIBUNE

Wyoming's Jordan Naughton soars in for a dunk in the Cowboys' game against Bristol last season at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

## Smart

From 8

Even when the Cowboys get into half-court sets, the moving doesn't stop.

While the big men are maneuvering around the rim, the guards are passing the ball around the perimeter or running back-door screens.

"There's a lot of motion," Naughton said.

Some of Edwards' inspiration for Wyoming's new assertive approach comes from his days playing at Kentucky.

"We pressed a lot more back then as well, but it's probably in my mind a version of that, but not completely that," he said. "I'm trying to get our

guys ... to understand it's not about how fast we get up and shoot it, it's about how fast we get down the floor and then be able to assess what's best for the Pokes."

Conditioning is a priority in order to play that way.

"You definitely have to be in better shape at 7,220 (feet above sea level)," junior forward Alan Herndon said. "So we're going to definitely use that to our advantage and hopefully have other teams gasping for air when they come up here."

Added Naughton: "I've definitely had to get in better shape, which is the one thing I had to adjust to."

While coaches can't go out of their way to coach in a way that takes advantage of the thin Laramie air, it sure doesn't hurt when the two

overlap.

"I've played at altitude against fast teams, and I've played at altitude against teams that grind you, and neither one of them's very fun," Boise State coach Leon Rice said at Mountain West Media Day. "Shyatt's teams, they grind you into a pulp, and that was a thing you had to get mentally prepared for. As a coach, whatever you're good at teaching, whatever your system is has to be yours, and it's hard to coach something that you're not comfortable with and that you don't like to do. So yeah, I think Allen will do a great job of that."

Now it's time to put those steel lungs to use.

"I think at the end of the day, conditioning is a big piece of it, and

then one of the things I told our guys that I'm a firm believer in (is) you can be good both ends of the floor," Edwards said. "Most guys go into it saying, 'Well, you have to pick one! Actually, both teams I played on, we were good on both ends of the floor, because we cared about both ends of the floor."

"I want our guys to understand that yeah, we're playing a little bit more assertive, but we will have just as much respect on the defensive end as, like most kids want, on the offensive end."

Just remember: Assertive. Not uptempo.

Follow University of Wyoming athletics reporter Brandon Foster on Twitter @BFoster91

# Getting a head start



## Cowboys should benefit from a summer trip to Bahamas

**BRANDON FOSTER**  
Brandon.Foster@Trib.com

**T**he beginning of the Allen Edwards era was accompanied by snorkeling.

The Cowboys and their first-year head coach played three exhibition games in August at the BTC Summer of Thunder 2016 in Nassau, Bahamas.

The team won all three of its games and afterward had a chance to fit in some water activities.

“Got a lot of cool pics,” junior forward Jonathan Barnes said. “It was a great experience, great experience.”

Of course, above all, it was still a business trip. And with Edwards preparing for his first season as a head coach, it was a valuable one.

The NCAA permits programs to go on international trips every four years. Because of the timing, Edwards got to begin his first season early.

Wyoming beat CTG Knights 81-74, IBA Elite 95-48 and PJ Stingers 88-74.

The competition doesn't always stack up with elite NCAA talent — though Edwards did mention the level of play had improved from when he went on the same trip as an assistant at VCU.

If nothing else, the Cowboys

got in 10 extra practices and had a chance to play against teams that weren't in brown and gold.

“I was happy about what I saw coming into fruition,” Edwards said. “They were still trying to figure out how we as a staff wanted them to play, and I thought there were flashes of it.”

The staff put together a film afterward to help hammer that home. Plays that reflected the type of basketball Edwards and his staff are looking for went on one tape, and plays that were the opposite of what Edward wanted went on another — regardless of the outcome.

“Even though the times where we showed them, it could've been a missed shot, that's what we want,” Edwards said. “Versus times where it could've been selfish and we made it, and I'm saying, ‘No. That's not what we want, because I'm thinking long-term. You're thinking right now.’ But I was happy about the trip, but even more happy about the 10 days of practice.”

Having games to prepare for and play in so early helped alleviate the grind of preseason practices, Barnes said.

Please see **BAHAMAS**, Page 12

**LEFT:** Junior forward Hayden Dalton poses for a portrait on Oct. 6 at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

**JENNA VONHOFE, STAR-TRIBUNE**

# Bahamas

From 11

“Especially when you work out as much as we did over the summer,” he said. “You don’t really have that nervous anticipation to get back out there. It’s like practice without the thrill of competing, so it can kind of get tedious sometimes, so to know that it’s around the corner is super exciting.”

And getting to spend additional time with teammates paid off in ways that might not show up on the stat sheet.

“It helped with everything,” Barnes said. “Just with team chemistry, building a new foundation, just getting everybody to kind of get a feel for each other, and that really, really helped.”

**“Guys in the Bahamas, they play because they know the opportunities that could come from that game. So playing some guys that are going to go at you, they’re going to be physical, they’re going to do things that most guys here probably wouldn’t do.”**

**Morris Marshall, senior**

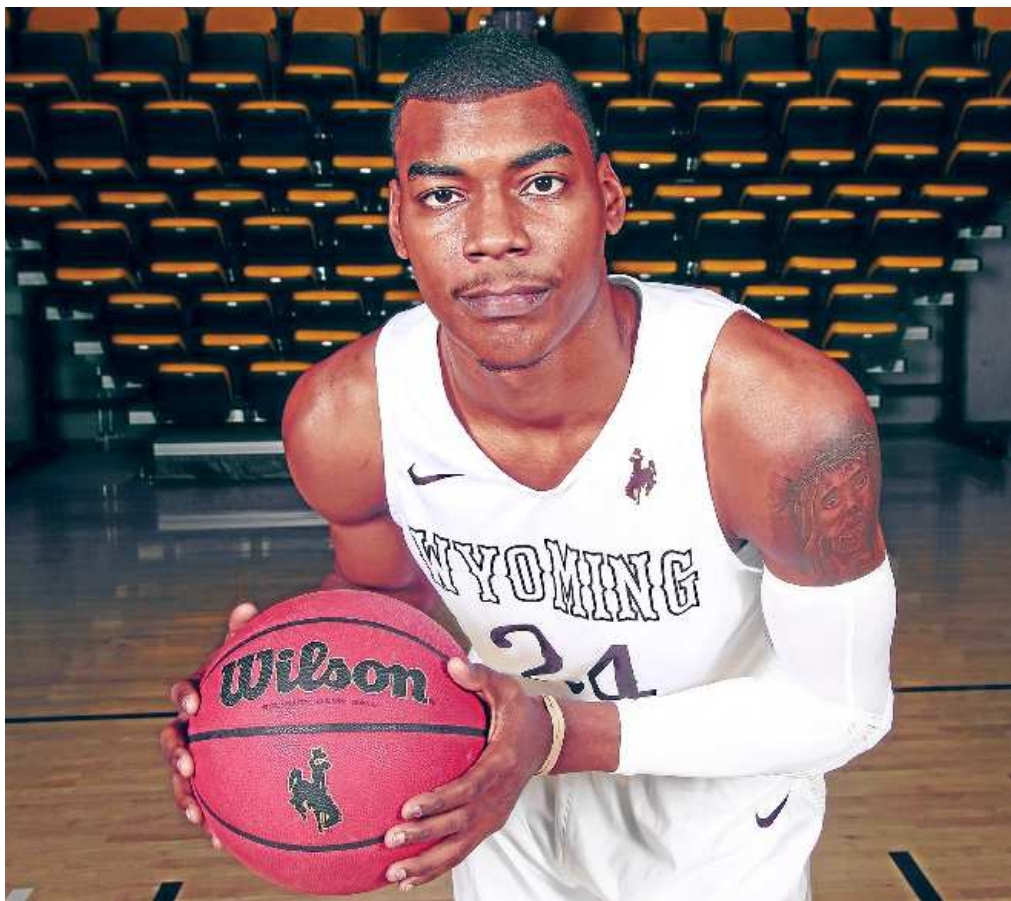
athleticism so far. It showed in Nassau.

“I think what Lou is going through is just (that this is) the hardest he’s ever worked in his life on the court,” Edwards said. “He’s a guy that we’re constantly just yelling at to fight through fatigue.”

“But I think with Lou, there’s just some things that he does that you can’t coach. I don’t care how good of a coach you are, there’s things he can do that coaching has nothing to do with. But at the end of the day, I still care about you’ve got to know what you’re doing, and you’ve got to be able to fight through fatigue. At the end of the day, what you can do without my coaching can

Recent transfer Lou Adams led Wyoming with 55 points in three games (18.3 average), and senior Jason McManamen was also in double figures every game (18 PPG). Junior Alan Herndon chipped in 10.3 points per game, and junior Alexander Aka Gorski averaged 8.

Adams, a transfer from Odessa (Texas) College, has impressed with his



JENNA VONHOFE, STAR-TRIBUNE

Wyoming junior guard Louis Adams poses for a portrait on Oct. 6 at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

only take you so far. So my thing is, learn the plays, understand what we’re trying to do, and then conditioning.”

Per Edwards’ decision, sophomore Justin James and junior Hayden Dalton didn’t make the trip because of a suspension in early March.

“We were definitely cheering them on,” Dalton said. “I got to watch the games online. It obviously wasn’t fun not being able to go, but I’m glad the team did well there.”

Said James: “Of course I want to be with my team all the time. But it is what it is.”

Dalton and James have put the incident behind them.

“I’d say it’s just the same as always,” Dalton said. “Just working as hard as we can and kind of moving on and learning from that. But definitely just a sense that, yeah, we learned from it and we’re doing all we can to be better now.”

He and James were two of five basketball players cited for possession of marijuana ahead of the suspensions, along with Morris Marshall, Andrew Moemeka and Austin Conway, who

is now on the football team. Marshall and Moemeka were on the Bahamas trip.

Marshall, a senior, said he felt a bit more of a need to make up for the suspension.

“Not only to the team but to our fans,” he said. “Because we owe them. It was a stupid mistake, and we’re not trying to make it again. So we’re just doing what we can to do what we can.”

With the trip to the Bahamas, Marshall got a head start on that.

“Guys in the Bahamas, they play because they know the opportunities that could come from that game,” he said. “So playing some guys that are going to go at you, they’re going to be physical, they’re going to do things that most guys here probably wouldn’t do.”

And being by the beach wasn’t all too bad, either.

“Being in the Bahamas was just great,” he said. “It was lovely.”

Follow University of Wyoming athletics reporter Brandon Foster on Twitter @BFoster91

UW MEN'S BASKETBALL | HEAD COACH

# A CHAMPIONSHIP PEDIGREE

First-year head coach  
Edwards knows what  
it takes to win titles

**BRANDON FOSTER**

Brandon.Foster@Trib.com

**L**ARAMIE – If they ever need a reminder, there's one right on his desk.

A giant gold paperweight of a ring with a big "K" on the nose emerging from an oval of Kentucky blue. "Come Back Cats" on one side. "National Champs" on the other.

A big, gaudy reminder.

Allen Edwards is an NCAA champion.

As a matter of fact, Edwards was actually a two-time NCAA champion as a forward with Kentucky – in 1996 and 1998, though the team only got rings for the second.

"Both of them were different," said Edwards, Wyoming's first-year head coach. "The one in '96, everybody expected it. We were supposed to be the best team in the country. Our first group was supposed to be the best team, our second group was supposed to be the second-best team. Everybody kind of expected it."

Please see **EDWARDS**, Page 14

University of Wyoming head men's coach Allen Edwards.

**DAN CEPEDA, STAR-TRIBUNE**





# Edwards

From 13

Under Rick Pitino, the 1995-96 team went 34-2 overall, riding a No. 1 seed to a 76-67 championship victory over Syracuse.

“To me I think that’s a little bit of pressure,” Edwards said. “You go in and everybody’s picking you to do it, and then you actually go and do it.”

Edwards, a sophomore that year, averaged 3.3 points and 1.1 rebounds per game. He played in every NCAA Tournament game that year, scoring a total of 17 points in the six wins.

Two years later, the circumstances were different. Coach Tubby Smith was in his first year at Kentucky. Edwards, now a senior, was playing a bigger role.

The outcome, though, was just the same.

“And we were a veteran group, too,” Edwards said. “But we eventually, with a new coach, we eventually figured it out and then tournament time ... we just ran up against the right teams, to be honest with you.”

The Wildcats, a 2 seed, won two games by two points or less before beating Utah 78-69 in the championship.

Edwards averaged 9.2 points and 3.2 rebounds in 37 games that season. He averaged 10.3 points per game in the tournament and played nearly 24 minutes per game.

“Nobody thought we would do it, but what I felt like people forgot was most of those guys on the ‘98 team were on the ‘96 team but just not in the role that you had your top guys,” Edwards said. “But they experienced that. So that feeling of standing there at the end and being the last — that means something.”

\*\*\*

What exactly does it mean?

It means credibility to Jonathan Barnes.

“Something to know that he’s been through the struggle, he’s been exactly where you are as a player,” the junior forward said. “And now he’s sitting on the other side. So if

he says, ‘This is going to help you succeed,’ you’d better believe that it’s going to help you succeed, because he’s done it. That’s probably the biggest thing, just it brings that sense of, ‘Oh my gosh, he’s where every player ever has wanted to be, so I should probably just listen.’”

It means belief to Jordan Naughton.

“I think he knows what to do and what it takes to get there,” the sophomore forward said. “I believe in him. I believe in the process that he has planned out for us, and I believe in his strategies and things like that. We’re all working hard and we’re all trying to follow the leader, basically,

because I believe that he’s leading from the right direction.”

It means means trust to Andrew Moemeka.

“I think of it as like he knows what he’s talking about because he has the experience,” the redshirt freshman forward said. “So really you’ve just got to trust him because he’s been here before.”

It means inspiration to Cody Kelley.

“It’s huge just to understand he’s been there,” the redshirt freshman guard from Gillette said. “Like, I can listen to this man and learn from him, and he’s a real inspiration to me just to understand. That’s every-

# EDWARDS TRACKER

## COACHING HISTORY

**2011-16:** Assistant coach, Wyoming

**2010-11:** Assistant coach, Western Kentucky

**2009-10:** Assistant coach, Towson

**2006-09:** Assistant coach, VCU

**2003-06:** Assistant coach, Morehead State

**2002-03:** Assistant coach, Kentucky

## NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP TEAMS

**1998:** forward, Kentucky

**1996:** forward, Kentucky

**“To me I think that’s a little bit of pressure. You go in and everybody’s picking you to do it, and then you actually go and do it.”**

**Allen Edwards**

one’s goal. Since he’s already done it, he’s someone that can make a big impact on us.”

It means winning to Justin James.

“He don’t like to brag a lot, but just knowing that he’s won two, he knows what to do to win games,” the sophomore guard said. “Just knowing that and knowing he can teach me how to win championships, it’s a pleasure, definitely!”

And to Edwards himself? Not a whole lot, actually.

“All that does to me is give you instant credibility,” he said. “But you still have to prove yourself at the end of the day.”

\*\*\*

There’s a third championship that might be just as valuable to Edwards as his wins at Kentucky.

That one came in brown and gold.

Before taking over for Larry Shyatt as Wyoming’s head coach, Edwards was an assistant for the Cowboys for five years. The fourth year, Wyoming won the Mountain West Conference tournament to reach the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2002.

Having familiarity with the program that won that championship gives Edwards an advantage that, rings or not, no newcomer could bring.

“As a player, I think that would be really tough, just because there’s no sense of trust,” Barnes said. “Coaching, it requires a lot of trust, because you have to believe that your coach has your best interest in mind. So if you bring in somebody completely new, there’s no foundation of trust. There’s no relationship to be able to start off with.”

“So to keep coach Edwards and then be able to promote him to head coach, that just brought such a sense of already a foundation of trust, and be able to know already that I understand how to work with him, because he’s worked with me before. Whereas somebody new, you’re not going to have that advantage at all.”

Please see **EDWARDS**, Page 16

**Allen Edwards speaks after he was introduced as the new University of Wyoming men's head basketball coach March 21 at War Memorial Stadium in Laramie.**

**ALAN ROGERS, STAR-TRIBUNE**



**“I think of it as like he knows what he’s talking about because he has the experience. So really you’ve just got to trust him because he’s been here before.”**

**Andrew Moemeka,**  
Wyoming redshirt freshman on Edwards

## Edwards

From 14

There’s especially a bond between Edwards and the big men, with whom he worked frequently as an assistant.

“We’ve gotten to know each other a lot,” Naughton said. “We talk a lot off the floor and on the floor, too. So whenever I have a question, I go to him and he can always help me out. He knows what big men are supposed to do, where they’re supposed to be and basically what we need to do to get minutes on the floor.

“... He’s a really humble guy. He’s very smart. He’s spiritual, and we talk about the Bible and things like that. He’s a good person. He’s all about his job, and he’s all about working hard. He’s very focused, I would say. The number one thing is he’s very focused.”

That focus has already been evident in Edwards’ first few months on the job.

“He stepped into that head coaching role great,” senior guard Jason McManamen said. “He’s a perfect fit for this team and brings a lot of energy. It’s a great thing to have.”

Added junior forward Alan Herndon: “He’s, in a sense, the same as he was as an assistant,

Please see **EDWARDS**, Page 17



**JENNA VONHOFE, STAR-TRIBUNE**

Wyoming redshirt freshman Andrew Moemeka poses for a photo on Oct. 6 at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

# Edwards

From 16

but with a bigger role. He still cares about us all the same, he still treats us the same, but now he does have that 'head coach' in front of it."

That continuity is key for a team that is losing its coach and its leading scorer in Josh Adams, whose 24.2 points per game last year ranked third in the country.

"He and I have built a really good relationship, and he's been there for me in the good days and the bad," Barnes said. "It's really cool just to have that personal connection with him and know that I can go and talk to him about anything and he's just a genuinely great guy, so it's really cool to have him as a head coach."

Plus, Edwards absorbed some of what made Shyatt so successful in Laramie.

"I'd say he definitely took a lot from Coach Shyatt, because Coach Shyatt's a great coach," Hayden Dalton said. "Coach Edwards is very intense, I would say, but it's a good intense. He always has everyone focused and concentrating on what we're doing, I would say. We're in and out, but it's really focused."

Not that Edwards is a clone of his predecessor by any means. In addition to his plans to run a more aggressive system, Edwards and Shyatt give off "different vibes," as Barnes put it.

"Coach Shyatt was very old-school," he said. "Very, very old-school, and I love that about him. He's just older, not very charismatic, and that's probably the biggest difference is Coach Edwards is super charismatic. Very, very, very passionate. He just brings so much energy. So much energy and just passion to coaching, and I love it. It's awesome to see?"

\*\*\*

Edwards also has championship experience as an assistant at VCU and Kentucky.

VCU won the Colonial Athletic Association regular season cham-



ALAN ROGERS, STAR-TRIBUNE

Wyoming's Alan Herndon looks for an opening against San Diego State last season at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

ampionship every year from 2007-09 and won the tournament as well in '07 and '09. In 2002-2003, his first season in coaching, Kentucky won the Southeastern Conference regular season and tournament championships.

These Cowboys have some similarities with those 1998 Wildcats in that a handful of players were able to experience the 2015 conference championship, even if they didn't have huge roles on the team itself.

Plus, a number of current Cowboys have championship pedigrees dating back to their time before Wyoming.

"That still goes into play as well," Edwards said. "Because even on the '96 and the '98 team, a bunch of us came from state championship programs, so when you're a part of winning, even when you move on, there's still something there about it."

"It's a drive that you just have because of what you're going after, and after you've experienced it, you just want more of it."

A championship's a championship. Of course, an NCAA Championship is a particularly special one.

As for the ring, Edwards lets it talk for itself.

He doesn't bring up his championships much, his players say.

"But I know we've all seen it every time we go in his office," Moemeka

said.

Edwards' biggest concern is not his past successes but rather his present job of preparing Wyoming for a bright future.

But if the players ever need proof, if they ever start to doubt whether their coach knows what it takes to

**"He's, in a sense, the same as he was as an assistant, but with a bigger role. He still cares about us all the same, he still treats us the same, but now he does have that 'head coach' in front of it."**

**Alan Herndon,**  
junior forward on Edwards

reach the top, there's a big gold reminder right on his desk.

It's hard to miss.

"He makes sure that it's there," Kelley said. "Shoot, I would, too. I would, too."

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# UW MEN'S BASKETBALL ROLE PLAYERS



DAN CEPEDA, STAR-TRIBUNE

Wyoming's Jeremy Lieberman drives against Fresno State's Jahmel Taylor last season at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

## PIECES ARE IN PLACE

Now Edwards has to decide where they fit

BRANDON FOSTER

Brandon.Foster@Trib.com

**T**he last two seasons could not have ended much differently for the Wyoming men's basketball team. In 2015, the Cowboys won the Mountain West Conference tournament, earning their first NCAA Tournament berth since 2002.

In 2016, Wyoming played just seven players in its lone Mountain West tournament game because of suspensions and a mid-season departure. The Cowboys lost to Utah State 88-70.

"I think that's kind of what our team needed, though," junior forward Jonathan Barnes said. "When you have the laurels of victory like we did before, and you have that good taste in your mouth, it's easy to become

Please see **ROLE**, Page 21

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## ADAMS LEAVES VOID

### TOP 10 SCORERS IN THE 2015-16 SEASON

Player	School	PPG
1. James Daniel	Howard	27.1
2. Buddy Hield	Oklahoma	25.0
<b>3. Josh Adams</b>	<b>Wyoming</b>	<b>24.2</b>
4. Kay Felder	Oakland	24.2
5. Jack Gibbs	Davidson	23.7
6. Stefan Moody	Ole Miss	23.6
7. Anthony Barber	N.C. State	23.5
8. Cane Broome	Sacred Heart	23.1
9. Obi Emegano	Oral Roberts	23.1
10. A.J. English	Iona	22.4

## Role

From 20

complacent. And with such a bad ending to our season (last year), it just kind of put a fire under a lot of us to get back there, because now we've tasted victory and now we've tasted defeat.

"Now it's just a question of what tastes better. What are you willing to sacrifice to get back to the good?"

Another question is what exactly the makeup of the team making those sacrifices will be.

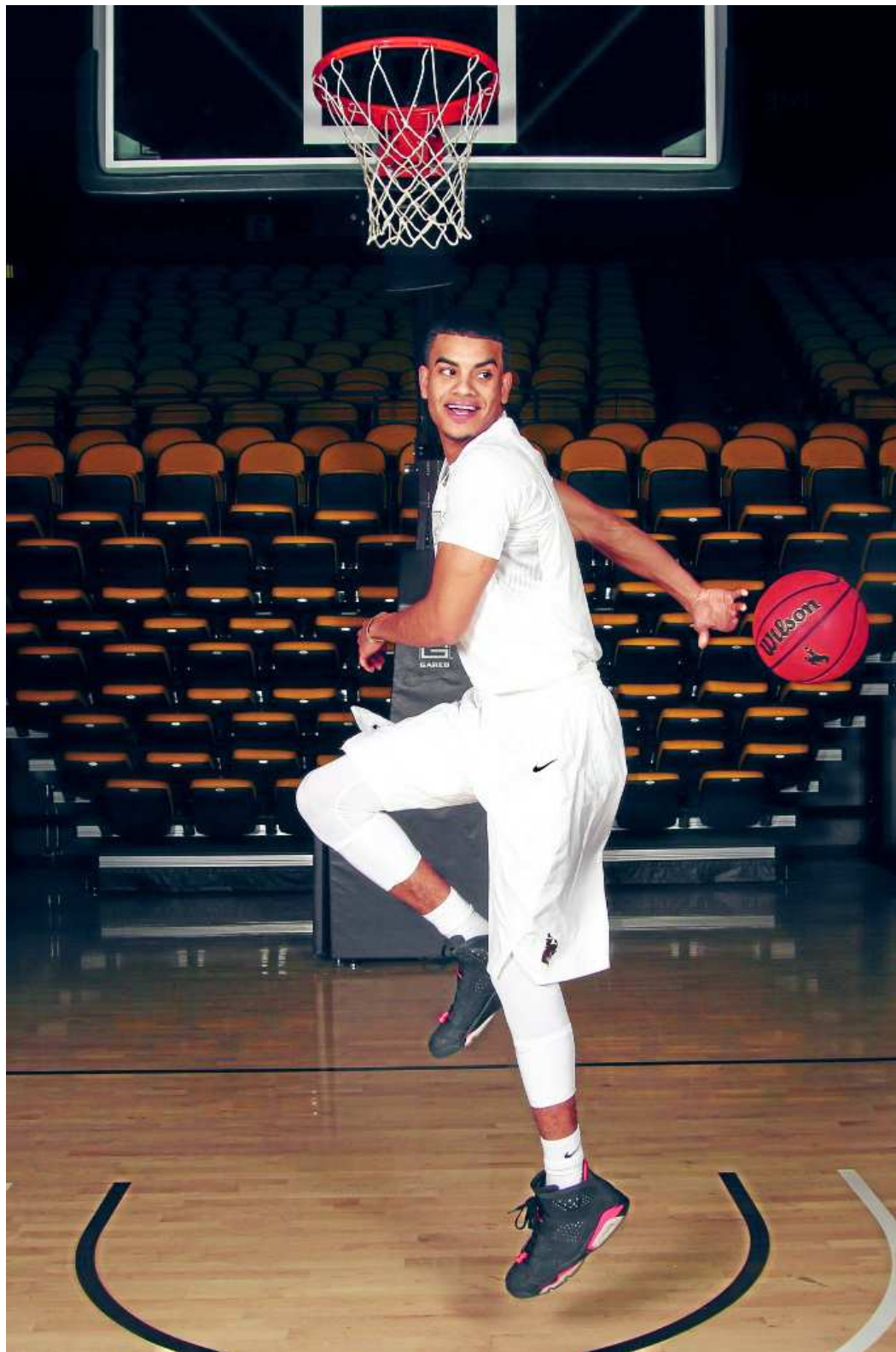
In losing Josh Adams to graduation, the Cowboys lost more than the country's third-leading scorer. They also lost the nucleus of their offense. With 24.2 points and 36.3 minutes per game to replace, there is no shortage of opportunity for Wyoming players to have a breakout season.

Who will seize the opportunity?

Senior guard Jason McManamen has already emerged, leading the Mountain West in 3-point percentage last season. He is the team's lone designated starter, coach Allen Edwards said.

That leaves four starting spots for the taking.

"(We know) that there's nothing handed to you, that we have to work for everything that we get," sophomore Jordan Naughton



JENNA VONHOFE, STAR-TRIBUNE

Please see **ROLE**, Page 22

Wyoming sophomore Justin James poses for a portrait on Oct. 6 at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.



# Role

From 21

said. “(Edwards) kind of reinforces that idea all the time. It’s all about what you produce. If you can’t produce, then you’re going to have to find other ways to benefit this team by just going into practice every day, trying to produce as much as you can, hustle as much as you can and give him trust that you can be on the floor.”

In addition to McManamen, who averaged 14.4 points per game last year, Wyoming returns junior Alexander Aka Gorski (6.0 points per game), sophomore Justin James (5.4), junior Jeremy Lieberman (3.9) and senior Morris Marshall (2.1) to the backcourt. Junior Lou Adams comes on as a junior college transfer, and freshmen walk-ons Cody Kelley and Sam Averbuck join the team after redshirt seasons.

Alan Herndon (7.8 points per game) is the leading scorer among the returning big men. Also back are junior Hayden Dalton (3.8), Naughton (3.0) and Barnes (2.1). Freshman Andrew Moemeka will be coming off a redshirt season, and Austin Mueller will be joining the team as a true freshman.

“I think the best part about this team right now is our numbers,” Edwards said. “I think we have a lot of options to put out on the floor to where I’m not stuck on maybe six or seven guys. I think we can get to nine and play that group consistently.”

Time will tell which players make the rotation, but two sentiments have been shared by nearly everyone on the squad.

1: There’s no simple solution to making up for the production lost by Josh Adams.

“Not that you can replace one person, but as a collective group of guys, I feel like we have all the pieces that will do that,” Marshall said. “Josh is going to be truly missed. He did great things here. But we have a great group of guys that collectively is going to be great. ... Everyone on our team can score.”



ALAN ROGERS, STAR TRIBUNE

Wyoming’s Hayden Dalton dunks against Nevada last season at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

2: Nobody’s putting any limits on this team’s expectations one way or another.

“We’ve been talking about this a lot,” James said. “The team doesn’t really have a goal set in mind. We don’t know how high our ceiling is. Whether it’s NCAA, whether it’s Mountain West, whether it’s home games, stuff like that. We’re just trying to be the best that we can be.”

As far as the scoring goes, the addition of Lou Adams sure won’t hurt.

He averaged 18.3 points per game in the Cowboys’ three exhibition games this summer in the Bahamas.

But whether that will be his role this season, like so much else, remains to be seen.

“I don’t want to pigeonhole him and say that’s what he needs to do,” Edwards said. “I think what I’m seeing in practice is versatility. That even if he doesn’t score, I think we still have enough firepower to make up.”

**“I think the best part about this team right now is our numbers. I think we have a lot of options to put out on the floor to where I’m not stuck on maybe six or seven guys. I think we can get to nine and play that group consistently.”**

**Allen Edwards,**  
Wyoming head coach

In the frontcourt, Barnes and Naughton will try to build on their experience at center with Moemeka pitching in, and Herndon and Dalton providing size at power forward.

“I think me and Al will be two good, big 4s to play together and stretch the floor,” Dalton said. “We’ve all been working hard as a team — and we’re kind of a newer team, I would say, as a whole — to play together. So we’ll just have to figure it out as it goes.”

Edwards’ concerns about personal goals are much more centered on the other side of the court.

“My thing to anybody on this team is I care more about a guy being selfish about trying to be on the all-defensive team,” he said. “And I think we have a few guys that, if they buckle down and really got into it, could possibly do that. So I’m not in a sense counting on a guy to say, ‘I need you to go out there and score 20, 30 points for us to be successful!’”

“I just want you to go out there and play the way the game is meant to be played. We just need to take the best shot for the Pokes.”

Whoever’s shot that may be.

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# LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Senior McManamen tries to talk the talk

**BRANDON FOSTER**  
Brandon.Foster@Trib.com

**T**here is no starting five on the 2016-17 Wyoming men's basketball team.

Only a starting one.  
"The lineup, to me, doesn't matter," head coach Allen Edwards said. "I care more about mixing and matching, because I think certain guys need to be on the floor with certain guys. To get best what we're trying to get across, and that can change depending on our opponents.

"So I've told our guys there's no constant. The only constant is Jason McManamen."

One of two seniors on the Cowboys' roster, McManamen has been on the team since 2012-13, longer than any other player. The 6-foot-5, 195-pound guard will be called on to do even more now that Wyoming is without Mountain West Player of the Year Josh Adams, whose 24.2 points per game last season were third in the country.

Please see **MCMANAMEN**, Page 24

Wyoming senior Jason McManamen poses for a portrait on Oct. 6 in the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie. A native of Torrington, McManamen is one of only two seniors on the Cowboys' roster.

JENNA VONHOFE, STAR-TRIBUNE

## McManamen

From 23

**“He’s a great leader. He knows how to pump people up. It’s great having him on the floor, because that’s an easy assist. I love having him on the court.”**

**Justin James,**  
sophomore guard on  
Jason McManamen

“I’m just trying to step up in that leadership role a little bit more,” said McManamen, a Torrington native. “I’ll always be more of a leader by example, but I’ve been trying to be a little more vocal. That’s what Coach Edwards wants me to do. Trying to be positive with guys. Always talking, helping them in whatever way I can at practice. Little things like that.”

Like he said, McManamen leads more by example. So we’ll let him stop talking and instead give you a few examples.

McManamen is coming off a season in which he hit 92 of 209 attempts from 3-point range. Good for 44 percent, that led the Mountain West and was 15th best in the country.

McManamen averaged 14.4 points per game last year, second on the team behind Adams and 11th in the Mountain West.

McManamen scored a career-high 28 points last year against Fresno State, hitting eight 3-pointers on 15 attempts.

McManamen hit an average of three 3-pointers a game, second best in the conference and 27th nationally.

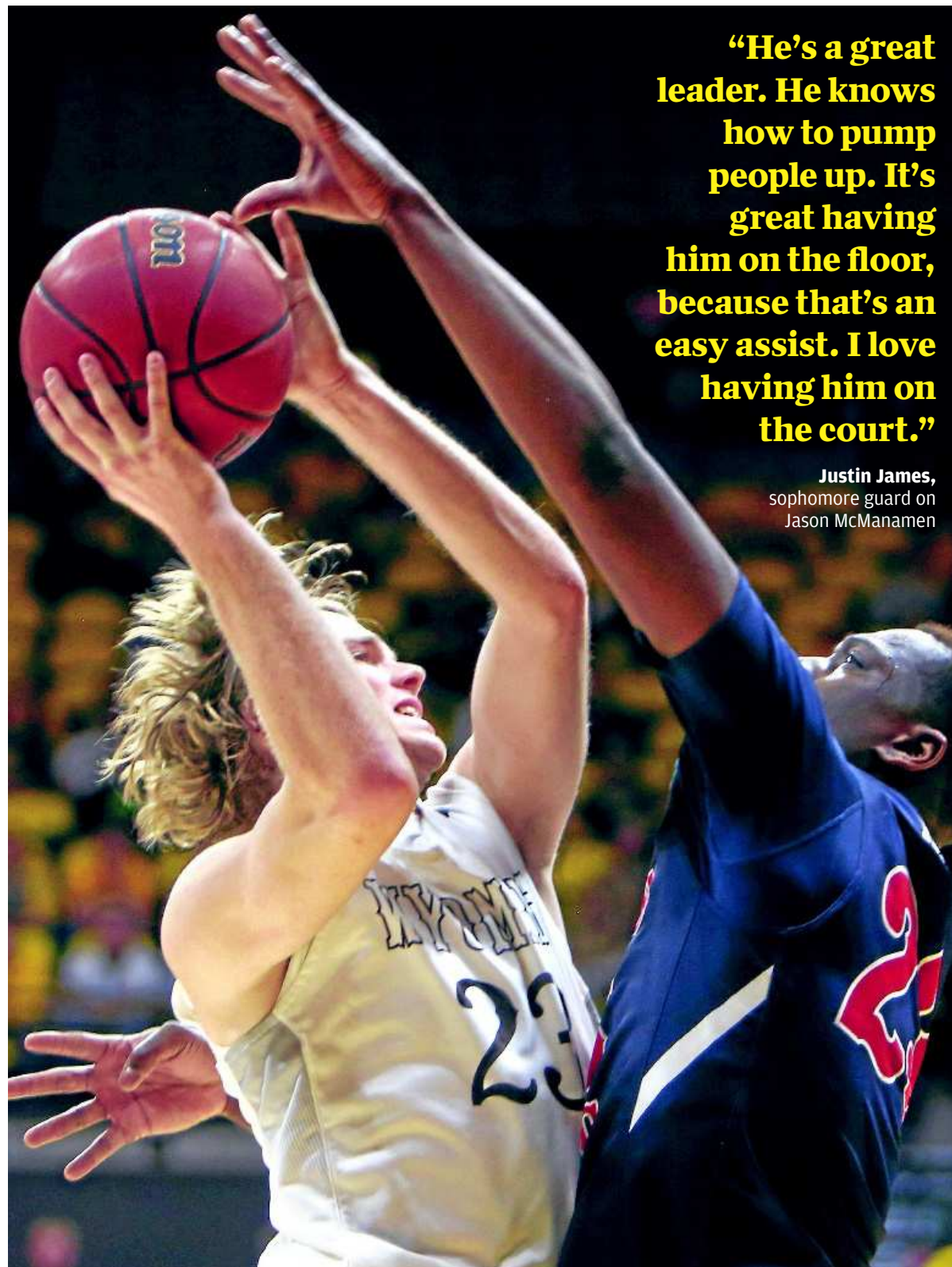
McManamen was named All-Mountain West Honorable Mention by both coaches and media.

His actions might speak even louder this year, now that there will be more scoring to go around without Adams.

And, yes, he might just have to speak up, too.

“He is a quiet guy,” Edwards said. “He’s a quiet guy in a sense of off the floor.”

DAN CEPEDA, STAR-TRIBUNE



Wyoming's Jason McManamen drives to the basket against Fresno State last season at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

Please see **MCMANAMEN**, Page 25

# McManamen

From 24

What I mean ... when I want him to speak, I just want him to hold other guys accountable. He's a very talkative guy on the floor in the sense of calling out responsibilities. But at the same time, I've always been a firm believer in the best teams are able to coach themselves."

Edwards, in his first year as Wyoming's head coach, can relate.

"I always revert back to myself, because I'm pretty quiet away from the floor until you get to know me and I loosen up a bit," he said. "But my thing is when we get on the floor, it's just a different personality."

\*\*\*

It's a fairly new role for McManamen, who, even in high school, had a number of other seniors surrounding him.

"It's a little different," he said. "But I think I'm getting better at it every day."

His teammates have noticed the effort.

"I think he's actually stepped up a lot more this year into that leadership role," redshirt freshman Cody Kelley said. "He knows that he's our senior. He's our guy. He knows he needs to have that leadership role. I've seen him step up a little bit."

Added redshirt freshman Andrew Moemeka: "Yeah, I feel like once you get to know him, he talks as much as he needs to."

And his actions are speaking as loud as ever.

"He really doesn't say much, but we know what to do and what we expect of him," junior guard Lou Adams said. "He expects the same out of us, so we don't really need him to so much tell us what to do. His presence is enough for us to know what we need to do."

When you shoot like McManamen does, people tend to pay attention.

## TOP 3-POINT SHOOTERS

### THE 20 BEST 3-POINT SHOOTERS IN 2015-16 BY PERCENTAGE.

Player	School	3-pts made	3-pts attempted	3-pt percentage
1. Giddy Potts	Middle Tennessee State	79	156	50.6
2. Bryn Forbes	Michigan State	112	233	48.1
3. Fletcher Magee	Wofford	91	190	47.9
4. Matt Donlan	Youngstown State	82	177	46.3
5. Trent Mackey	North Florida	110	239	46.0
6. Buddy Hield	Oklahoma	147	322	45.7
7. Max Landis	IPFW	125	274	45.6
8. Max Hooper	Oakland	117	257	45.5
9. Duncan Robinson	Michigan	95	211	45.0
10. DeYshonne Much	Iona	80	179	44.7
11. Denzel Valentine	Michigan State	104	234	44.4
12. Emie Duncan	Vermont	84	190	44.2
13. Alec Kobre	Pacific	60	136	44.1
14. Anthlon Bell	Arkansas	89	202	44.1
<b>15. Jason McManamen</b>	<b>Wyoming</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>44.0</b>
16. Jaylen Adams	St. Bonaventure	84	192	43.8
17. Bryce Scott	Lafayette	73	167	43.7
18. Kyle Wiltjer	Gonzaga	90	206	43.7
19. Dusty Hannahs	Arkansas	81	187	43.3
20. Jeremy Senglin	Weber State	106	245	43.3

"He's a great leader," sophomore guard Justin James said. "He knows how to pump people up. It's great having him on the floor, because that's an easy assist. I love having him on the court."

\*\*\*

Though he is the most veteran of this year's Cowboys, McManamen will still get some help.

Morris Marshall, the team's other senior, is only entering his second season at Wyoming, but he's a senior nonetheless.

"I feel like a lot of the guys, they look up to me in a way," Marshall said. "And I kind of have a voice, so just being able to echo what Coach wants (is important)."

McManamen will have a slew of juniors by his side as well.

"I think all of us upperclassmen have just got to step up and take more of a leader role and show the new guys what needs to be done and stuff like that," said Alexander Aka Gorski, one of six juniors eligible to play this season.

Forward Alan Herndon isn't a senior, but as a redshirt junior he is the second-longest tenured Cowboy.

Herndon represented Wyoming at Mountain West Media Day this year with McManamen and last year with Adams.

He and McManamen are in the same boat in some respects.

"I think we're both definitely trying that, us being the oldest guys of the group now, being here the longest," Herndon said. "I think we're both trying to be more vocal and I think it's kind of hard

for both of us just because we were so used to a different style.

"We both came out of our redshirt years, you had Larry (Nance) and (Derek Cooke Jr.) and all of them, so you didn't really have to worry about that and you had Josh last year. But now we've got to definitely get out of our comfort zone and definitely try to lead these guys to the best of our abilities."

That can take some getting used to.

"The most difficult part is just getting out of yourself and actually doing it," Herndon said. "Because I think sometimes in your head you're thinking, 'Well, I'm messing up, too. How am I going to get on another guy?' But you've got

Please see **MCMANAMEN**, Page 26



ALAN ROGERS, STAR-TRIBUNE

Wyoming's Jason McManamen drives past San Diego State's Jeremy Hemsley on Feb. 24 at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

## McManamen

From 25

to get out of that, and you've got to think, 'OK, what's best for this team and what needs to be said at that moment?' And hopefully the guy will take it the right way."

Edwards preaches that "uncomfortable becomes comfortable after a while."

"I think for us to continue down that road, they have to kind of get out of that comfort zone and be able to speak up," Edwards said.

"Because I think they're respected within the group, because of how they carry themselves, and the team needs for them to say things."

\*\*\*

Why so much emphasis on being vocal?

"What I've been hitting the team on is them being able to hold themselves accountable with what we're trying to do going forward and not always waiting on a coach to say something," Edwards said.

That means when a player points

out something to another player, Edwards is there to back him up.

"Because I want to hear more of it, rather than less," he said.

He has told his staff to act the same.

"Then the guy who was being confronted with that information (will) be able to respond in the right way," Edwards said. "Versus it being macho and acting like, 'Don't talk to me that way,' type stuff."

That way, the new comfort zone can come to McManamen without too difficult of a transition.

"I think it's a process," Edwards said. "And with this one, you would hope that the process happens a little quicker than later."

And though he may never match a leader like Adams with his words, there's no doubt McManamen's teammates are sold on his actions.

"Josh was very emotional, Jason not so much," Aka Gorski said. "But he's a leader by example for sure."

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# MOUNTAIN WEST | NCAA TOURNAMENT OUTLOOK

# Looking for more bids

Mountain West wants to get back to being a multi-bid conference

**BRANDON FOSTER**  
Brandon.Foster@Trib.com

The NCAA Tournament Wyoming participated in two seasons ago was not the same as the one it missed in 2016, and that's not just because of the absence of brown and gold.

For the first time since 2001, the Mountain West had just one team in the NCAA Tournament. The Fresno State Bulldogs, winners of the Mountain West Conference tournament, went to the Big Dance, losing as a 14 seed to 3 seed Utah and heading home.

That was it.

No San Diego State, which won 28 games and went 16-2 in conference play. Nobody else.

"It was frustrating last year," commissioner Craig Thompson said last month at Mountain West Media Day. "Everybody involved in Mountain West basketball (was frustrated). Only two times in 17 years had we had a single team, and I would say this, I think I'm close, on average in 17 years we've probably averaged about three NCAA participants annually."

Since that one-bid year in 2001, the conference has sent an average of 2.73 teams to the tournament. It peaked in 2013, when five of nine teams in the conference reached the tournament.

Please see **MWC**, Page 28

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**RIGHT:** Air Force head coach Dave Pilipovich calls to his players during the Falcons' game against Wyoming last season at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

**FILE, STAR-TRIBUNE**



# MWC

From 27

## TOURNAMENT BIDS

### MOUNTAIN WEST TEAMS IN THE NCAA TOURNAMENT BY YEAR

Year	Bids	Teams
2016	1	Fresno State
2015	3	San Diego State, Boise State, <b>Wyoming</b>
2014	2	San Diego State, New Mexico
2013	5	New Mexico, UNLV, San Diego State, Colorado State, Boise State
2012	4	UNLV, San Diego State, New Mexico, Colorado State
2011	3	San Diego State, BYU, UNLV
2010	4	New Mexico, BYU, UNLV, San Diego State
2009	2	Utah, BYU
2008	2	BYU, UNLV
2007	2	UNLV, BYU
2006	2	San Diego State, Air Force
2005	2	Utah, New Mexico
2004	3	Utah, Air Force, BYU
2003	3	Utah, BYU, Colorado State
2002	3	<b>Wyoming</b> , Utah, San Diego State
2001	1	BYU
2000	2	Utah, UNLV
1999	2	Utah, New Mexico

Why the decline since?

Different coaches have different theories.

“I think the elephant in the room, nobody wants to talk about it, is we’ve been a five-bid league, a four-bid league, a three-bid league before the Power Fives come into effect,” said New Mexico coach Craig Neal, referring to the Power Five conferences’ autonomy that was approved in 2014. “And ever since then we haven’t been a multi-bid league. So I think that’s unique.”

Colorado State bore perhaps the biggest brunt of the Mountain West’s recent slide. In 2013, the Rams had the best RPI of any team to ever miss the NCAA Tournament at 29.

“I’m not sure who’s running the selection committee these days,” Larry Eustachy said. “I think it’s pretty much driven by CBS, ESPN. The ratings.”

But the solution most coaches can agree on is non-conference scheduling. The better the non-conference slates across the conference – and the more wins – the better the resumes come Selection Sunday.

“We talk about it every year at meetings,” Utah State coach Tim Duryea said. “I think strategic scheduling, obviously, is huge, and the more resources you have available to buy Division-I home games, that’s going to help our league. That’s really what the league has talked about is each institution making a commitment financially to allow us to play more home games against Division-I teams. It keeps you from going on the road where you have a better chance to lose. It keeps you from playing teams that hurt your individual RPI, which in turn hurts your conference RPI.”

“We have to be really strategic in the way we schedule. Not only as a school but as a league, and every win or loss in the pre-conference affects your tournament chances. Like it or not, that’s just the way it is.”

The Mountain West has had a

conference RPI in the double digits each of the last three seasons after being ranked third in 2012-13 and fifth the year before.

“We’re taking the right steps in the right direction as a league of ramping up our guarantee money, because it allows all teams in our league to be able to go out and schedule the game that they should be capable of getting,” Fresno State coach Rodney Terry said. “And with that, we have to win some of those marquee games to obviously raise the stature of your league and things. But that’s the next step for us.”

Scheduling well can be easier said than done, though.

“We’re trying to get better at that, but sometimes these games are scheduled a year or two years out,” Air Force coach Dave Pilipovich said. “Teams are projected to be top of their league. Somebody graduates early and transfers. Somebody gets hurt. A coach leaves. So now that team that was 24-4 and you thought everybody was back you’re going to play, you’ve got a 12-18 team, so it changes a little bit, too. But I think we’re a little bit more conscientious of who we’re playing, where we’re

playing them at and trying to get more home games for everybody.”

The latter has been one of Thompson’s bigger points of emphasis.

“I mean, you’re not going to have success when you’re playing 12, 15 road games in college basketball in general,” he said.

Wyoming, for its part, has 11 road games on its 2016-17 schedule – not that scheduling is ever an easy task in the Mountain West.

“This is not a starter-kit league,” Boise State coach Leon Rice said. “You don’t have coaches that don’t know what they’re doing scheduling wise, but you face the reality of, ‘OK, who’s going to go to Laramie and play?’ Fans and people that don’t know about it are like, ‘Well, why aren’t we playing Michigan State at home or why aren’t we playing Duke at home?’ I’m sorry, they’re not coming.”

“Because coaches know how hard it is to play there, and those years of (former coach Larry) Shyatt, you think anybody was going to go play at Laramie? And now it’s been passed on and (head coach Allen Edwards) is going to have the same thing. Scheduling is such a chal-

lenge, and it’s so hard.”

The Mountain West-Missouri Valley Challenge has helped with that somewhat. Wyoming will host Northern Iowa as part of that agreement this season.

But even when making attempts to schedule, it can be difficult for Mountain West teams to know exactly what comprises a tournament resume. Many coaches in the conference believe San Diego State merited an invitation in 2015-16.

“We knew that we were on the cusp,” Aztecs coach Steve Fisher said. “We felt like we had a resume worthy of getting in, but we knew we were not a slam dunk, but we didn’t get in. Rather than surprise, I would say it was bitter disappointment, but we were not blaming the committee.”

Others will.

“We’re a multi-bid league,” Terry said. “We’re never a one-bid league. Even a year ago. People can say what they want to say out there in regards to getting one team in. We had more than one NCAA Tournament team in our league last year. We control what we can control as coaches and our programs, but we were worthy of at least another team or two in postseason play a year ago.”

“San Diego State was obviously worthy,” Pilipovich said, “and we had some other teams who have played well.”

The Aztecs’ exclusion in 2016 and the Rams’ in 2015 have some coaches wondering exactly where the target is.

“It’s hard to put a thumb on exactly what you’re analyzing and what the criteria is and why is it that criteria,” Rice said.

One thing’s certain in the coaches’ minds, though. The Mountain West should not be content with just one tournament team.

“We’ve got great talent and great coaches and great venues obviously to play in in our league,” Terry said. “This league’s never a one-bid league.”

Follow University of Wyoming athletics reporter Brandon Foster on Twitter @BFoster91



# MOUNTAIN WEST CONFERENCE 2016-17 PREVIEW

## AIR FORCE



- **HEAD COACH:** Dave Pilipovich (sixth season)
- **2015-16 RECORD:** 14-18 (5-13 Mountain West, 10th)
- **KEY RETURNER:**

Hayden Graham. Graham became the first Air Force player in 15 years to record a double-double in consecutive games last season. His 13.8 points per game led the Falcons, as did his 6.2 rebounds. He averaged 35.9 minutes per game, third in the conference, and shot better than all but three Mountain West players from the field at 48.4 percent.

■ **KEY NEWCOMER:** Ryan Swan-Ford. The freshman played at Overland high school alongside Austin Conway, who red-shirted with Wyoming in 2015-16 before switching over to football. Swan-Ford was the fifth-ranked Colorado player of that recruiting class, per ESPN, which gave him two stars. At 6-foot-6, 227 pounds, Swan-Ford has added 12 pounds since high school.

■ **X-FACTOR:** Trevor Lyons. The junior guard was second on the team in 2015-16 with 12.7 points per game but he missed the final 10 games of the season with an injury. His assists and steals averages were tops on the team at 2.8 and 1.4 per game, respectively. And despite missing the end of the season, he still had time to score two game-winning baskets, against Mississippi Valley State and New Mexico State.

■ **PROJECTION:** Air Force took a step backward in Pilipovich's fifth season, winning just five conference games for the first time since his first season with the Falcons. Air Force finished second to last in the conference, and lost eight straight conference games at one point. However, the Falcons return all five of their starters: Graham, Lyons, C.J. Siples, Zach Kocur and Frank Toohey. They were picked to finish ninth of 11 teams in the preseason media poll.

## BOISE STATE



- **HEAD COACH:** Leon Rice (seventh season)
- **2015-16 RECORD:** 20-12 (11-7 Mountain West, 3rd)
- **KEY RETURNER:** Nick

Duncan. The 6-foot-8, 235-pound senior is Boise State's only returning starter. He has played more minutes than all but two active Mountain West players, averaging more than 31 minutes each of his first three seasons. His average of 31.2 last season is more than 11 more than any other returning player. The Australian, who put up 11.6 points and 4.2 rebounds per game last season, is eighth all-time in Boise State history with 179 made 3-pointers.

■ **KEY NEWCOMER:** James Reid. The 6-foot-3, 193-pound Arkansas-Little Rock transfer will have one season with the Broncos after sitting out in 2015-16 for transfer rules. Reid started 18 games as a junior at UALR, averaging 7.9 points, 2.4 points and 1.4 assists. He previously played two seasons at the College of Southern Idaho, where he averaged 8.9 points. Boise State has another transfer making his debut in Cameron Oluyitan, who spent last season at Gillette College.

■ **X-FACTOR:** Chandler Hutchison. Hutchison played the most last season of any returning player without an Australian accent. He averaged just under 20 minutes a game for the Broncos and 6.8 points with 4.1 rebounds. He'll no longer have Anthony Drmic and James Webb III in front of him, which is good for his stat sheet, but not great for the Broncos in general.

■ **PROJECTION:** After tying for first in the Mountain West and reaching the NCAA Tournament in 2015-16, the Broncos won five fewer games last year, three fewer in conference, and finished third. With so many departures — Drmic was the program's second all-time leading scorer and Webb departed early for the NBA — this might not be the year in which Boise State returns to the very top of the conference.

## COLORADO STATE



- **HEAD COACH:** Larry Eustachy (fifth season)
- **2015-16 RECORD:** 18-16 (8-10 Mountain West, T-6th)
- **KEY RETURNER:** Gian

Clavell. The 6-4, 185-pound guard will get another go at his senior season after playing just 10 games before being injured before the turn of the semester. Clavell was averaging a team-high 20.8 points, along with 6.9 rebounds and 3.2 assists per game, both second on the team, before his shoulder injury. Eustachy is really high on Clavell's ability, and if he can stay healthy, his productivity could be the deciding factor in the Rams' success.

■ **KEY NEWCOMER:** Che Bob. On this team loaded with transfers, there is no shortage of options. Bob scored 15.5 points at South Plains (Texas) College and pulled in 7.9 rebounds per game. He is battling a hand injury, but the team hopes the 6-foot-6, 220-pound junior will be able to play through it.

■ **X-FACTOR:** Emmanuel Omogbo. Omogbo established himself as a reliable big man in 2015-16 with 10.9 points and 8.0 rebounds per game in his first season with the Rams. Omogbo, a 6-8, 210-pound senior center, is also a South Plains transfer. He ended his season with double-doubles in five of his last nine games. If he and Clavell are firing on all cylinders, this team has quite the senior duo on which to rely.

■ **PROJECTION:** Colorado State will have to make up for the loss of more than half its scoring and rebounding from a sixth-place team in 2015-16. Gone are Antwan Scott (16.4 points, 4.3 rebounds per game), Joe De Ciman (10.3 PPG, 5.2 RPG) and Tiel Daniels (9.4 PPG, 7.6 RPG) to graduation, and John Gillon (13.2 PPG, 3.8 assists per game) has transferred to Syracuse. The Rams are picked seventh, but there are enough unknowns that the Rams could potentially outperform.

Please see **MORE TEAMS**, Pages 30 and 31



## FRESNO STATE



■ **HEAD COACH:** Rodney Terry (sixth season)

■ **2015-16 RECORD:** 25-9 (13-5 Mountain West, 2nd)

■ **KEY**

**RETURNER:** Ka-

rachi Edo. The 6-foot-6, 235-pound senior forward was a member of the Mountain West All-Tournament Team last year as the Bulldogs made their run to the NCAA Tournament. Edo leads all returning players with both 10.1 points and 6.3 rebounds per game. His 1.6 blocks per game ranked fourth in the conference, and he shot 54.6 percent from the floor, fifth in the Mountain West.

■ **KEY NEWCOMER:** William McDowell-White. McDowell-White still needs to become eligible, but the 5-star commit should have a big effect on the team whenever he does arrive. The 6-foot-5 Australian point guard was a heavily coveted recruit, and his presence would be welcomed for a team that lost three senior guards, including Mountain West Player of the Year Marvella Harris.

■ **X-FACTOR:** Jaron Hopkins. A Colorado transfer, Hopkins started 26 games for the Buffs, averaging 5.8 points and 3.3 rebounds as a sophomore. The 6-foot-6, 205-pound junior has got his redshirt year out of the way. He represented his team at Mountain West Media Day and graces the Bulldogs' media guide cover. Now he'll need to back it up on the court.

■ **PROJECTION:** The Bulldogs reached the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2001 thanks to a Mountain West Conference Tournament victory. The Bulldogs, who lost in the first round of the tourney as a 14 seed, have lost some key pieces from that 25-9 team, but finishing second in the conference again during the regular season shouldn't be an impossible task.

## NEVADA



■ **HEAD COACH:** Eric Musselman (second season)

■ **2015-16 RECORD:** 24-14 (10-8 Mountain West, T-4th)

■ **KEY**

**RETURNER:** Cameron Oliver. The 6-foot-8,

225-pound sophomore forward was named to the Mountain West preseason all-conference team by the media after putting up 13.4 points, 9.1 rebounds and 2.6 blocks per game as a freshman. He set the conference freshman record with 99 blocks and was third nationally. Oliver, who entered the NBA draft before pulling his name out, was named to the conference tournament team, the coaches defensive team, and was named freshman of the year.

■ **KEY NEWCOMER:** Marcus Marshall. A Missouri State transfer, Marshall will have one year to play in Reno. The 6-foot-3, 190-pound guard was the Missouri Valley Conference Freshman of the Year in 2013, and averaged 19.5 points and 3.5 rebounds per game as a junior for the Bears. He was named preseason all-conference both his sophomore and junior years.

■ **X-FACTOR:** D.J. Fenner. Fenner averaged 13.7 points last season, most among returning players. The 6-foot-6, 205-pound senior guard started in 36 of 38 games last season and was a top-20 player nationally in minutes played. He chipped in 4.6 rebounds and 1.9 assists per game last season, and his 80 percent free-throw shooting ranks ninth in school history.

■ **PROJECTION:** The Wolf Pack are more or less the darlings of the conference right now. After increasing its win total by 15 games in Musselman's first year, Nevada finished tied for fourth in the Mountain West and went on to win the CBI Championship. Now, the Wolf Pack are projected to finish second in the conference, despite losing Marqueze Coleman and Tyron Chriswell, who each averaged more than 13 points per game.

## NEW MEXICO



■ **HEAD COACH:** Craig Neal (fourth season)

■ **2015-16 RECORD:** 17-15 (10-8 Mountain West, T-4th)

■ **KEY**

**RETURNER:** Eli-

jah Brown. Brown, a 6-foot-4, 200-pound guard, was named the conference's preseason player of the year by media. As a sophomore, he averaged 21.7 points per game, second best in the conference, with 3.1 assists and 1.1 steals. He was a unanimous all-conference honoree, and the Mountain West newcomer of the year.

■ **KEY NEWCOMER:** Jalen Harris. Harris attended the Word of God Christian Academy (North Carolina) that produced Washington Wizards star John Wall. The 6-foot-2, 156-pound freshman was a top-15 recruit in the Tar Heel State. Harris has the speed to make a difference for the Lobos as a freshman.

■ **X-FACTOR:** Tim Williams. Like Brown, Williams was a preseason all-conference selection by the media. He averaged 16.8 points per game as a junior with 7.4 rebounds and 1.2 blocks. Williams, a 6-foot-8, 240-pounder, started every game for New Mexico last season and shot 60.4 percent from the floor. He was named all-Mountain West first team by the media and second team by the coaches.

■ **PROJECTION:** New Mexico headed in the right direction in 2015-16 after a disappointing eighth-place finish the year before. The Lobos went 17-15 overall, 10-8 and tied for fourth in the conference. New Mexico is expected to continue its ascent in Neal's fourth year. The media picked New Mexico to finish third in the conference, and behind San Diego State, there's no clear favorite, so second place could be within the Lobos' grasp — certainly a possibility with two of the five preseason all-conference players in the lineup.

## SAN DIEGO STATE



■ **HEAD COACH:** Steve Fisher (18th year)

■ **2015-16 RECORD:** 28-10 (16-2 Mountain West, 1st)

■ **KEY RE-**

**TURNER:** Trey Kell.

A preseason All-Mountain West selection, Kell led the Aztecs last season with 12.6 points per game as a sophomore. The 6-4, 210-pound guard was a first-team all-conference selection by coaches and a third-team selection by the media. He started all 38 games and led the team with 71 made 3-pointers, chipping in 3.7 rebounds and 1.4 assists per game, while shooting 40.5 percent from the floor.

■ **KEY NEWCOMER:** Montaque Gill-Caesar. The 6-foot-6, 215-pound guard was named the preseason newcomer of the year by the media. At Missouri, Gill-Caesar was a leading scorer for the Tigers in 2014-15 before being limited by a back injury. He finished the year with a scoring average of 9.1 points while starting 13 games. The Ontario native was a consensus top-50 recruit coming out of high school.

■ **X-FACTOR:** Jalen McDaniels. McDaniels was voted Mountain West preseason co-freshman of the year by media. The 6-foot-9, 190-pound freshman was a four-star recruit out of Federal Way (Washington) High School. Rivals ranked him the 98th best recruit nationally in his class. As a senior, his team went 29-0 and won the Class 4A state title for the second consecutive year.

■ **PROJECTION:** San Diego State is a perennial power in the Mountain West, and this year is no different. After failing to reach the NCAA Tournament despite winning the regular-season conference title, the Aztecs were picked to win the conference yet again. San Diego State hasn't won fewer than 20 games since 2004-05 and has averaged 28 wins the last six seasons. They have the talent to merit a first-place prediction yet again.

## SAN JOSE STATE



■ **HEAD COACH:** Dave Wojcik (fourth season)

■ **2015-16 RECORD:** 9-22 (4-14 Mountain West, 11th)

■ **KEY RETURNER:**

Ryan Welage. The 6-foot-9, 205-pound sophomore forward led all returning Spartans in points last season with 10.4 per game and added 5.2 rebounds per game, third on the team. He notched double-digit scoring games 17 times last year, second on the team. He started 26 games for San Jose State and began his collegiate career with back-to-back double-doubles.

■ **KEY NEWCOMER:** Keith Fisher III. The 6-8, 215-pound freshman forward comes to San Jose State from Westchester High School in Los Angeles, where he was first-team all-state selection by Max Preps. Fisher averaged 19.8 points and 11.1 rebounds as a senior, as his team won a L.A. City Section Open Championship. He was the 20th-ranked California recruit by ESPN and named the 58th-best power forward in the country.

■ **X-FACTOR:** Brandon Clarke. Clarke didn't start for the Spartans but he shot 63.4 percent from the floor, better than any other player in the Mountain West. Clarke was named the conference's sixth man of the year, the first freshman to ever win the award. His 8.8 points per game were second among returning players, and his 5.6 rebound average led all returning players.

■ **PROJECTION:** San Jose State has finished last in the conference every season under Wojcik, and the Spartans are picked to do so again this year. San Jose State lost Frank Rogers, who led the team with 11.9 points per game, but there is some upside for the program. True freshmen accounted for 43.5 percent of the team's scoring, second only to Kentucky nation-wide.

## UNLV



■ **HEAD COACH:** Marvin Menzies (first season)

■ **2015-16 RECORD:** 18-15 (8-10 Mountain West, 7th)

■ **KEY RETURNER:**

Dwayne Morgan. The 6-8, 215-pound junior forward is the only returning starter for the Rebels. He averaged 5.5 points and 4.7 rebounds per game while playing 19.3 minutes. Gone are Patrick McCaw, Ike Nwamu, Jerome Seagears and Stephen Zimmerman Jr. from the starting lineup. They combined for 46.9 points per game and 20 rebounds.

■ **KEY NEWCOMER:** Christian Jones. Jones is eligible immediately as a graduate transfer from St. John's. The 6-foot-7, 225-pound forward will have one year to play in Vegas. Last year, he put up 8.4 points and 5.2 rebounds per game while playing 25.2 minutes per contest with the Red Storm.

■ **X-FACTOR:** Jalen Poyser. Poyser, a 6-foot-4, 180-pound guard is just one of three letter-winners returning for the Rebels. He averaged 5.4 points and 2.1 rebounds in 16.2 minutes per game of action. With so many holes to fill, Poyser should see an increased role this year, as evidenced by his representing UNLV at Mountain West Media Day.

■ **PROJECTION:** The Rebels had quite the crazy offseason. Not only did they lose nine letter-winners — two of which were drafted into the NBA — but UNLV also went through two coaching changes. Chris Beard was hired to replace fired coach Dave Rice, but Beard stayed all of 19 days before leaving for Texas Tech. UNLV then hired Menzies from New Mexico State to help clean up the remains. When it was all said and done, UNLV was picked to finish ninth in the conference.

## UTAH STATE



■ **HEAD COACH:** Tim Duryea (second season)

■ **2015-16 RECORD:** 16-15 (7-11 Mountain West, 4th)

■ **KEY**

**RETURNER:** Ja-

len Moore. After being named a third-team All-Mountain West selection last season, Moore considered making a run to the NBA but decided to return for his senior year. The 6-foot-9, 225-pound wing was named preseason all-conference after scoring 15.2 points per game and pulling in 6.0 rebounds, leading the team in both categories for the second straight year. Moore started all 31 games for the Aggies.

■ **KEY NEWCOMER:** Koby McEwen. McEwen was named preseason co-freshman of the year in the Mountain West. The 6-foot-4, 195-pound guard was a top-100 recruit coming out of Wasatch Academy in Utah. He was ranked the 19th-best point guard in the nation by ESPN after averaging 18.7 points, 4.6 rebounds and 5.4 assists as a senior. His team reached the Dick's National Tournament his senior year. As a junior, he averaged 19.2 points per game.

■ **X-FACTOR:** Shane Rector. Rector, a 6-foot-2, 185-pound senior guard, played in every game for the Aggies last year, starting 12. His 3.3 assists were best on the team and ninth in the Mountain West. He scored 9.3 points per game, third on the team, and reached double digits 14 times. He put up a season-high 24 points against Wyoming in the opening round of the Mountain West Conference Tournament and should see even more responsibility this season.

■ **PROJECTION:** Losing Chris Smith, who averaged 15.0 points and 5.3 rebounds per game last year, will hurt. The Aggies reverted back to a 7-11 conference record after winning 11 Mountain West games the year before. The Aggies haven't been able to get back to the top of the conference, a spot they reached in 2010-11, but with Moore returning, Utah State could have the ability to outplay its sixth-place prediction.

*Brandon Foster*

# Challenges ahead

Young Cowgirls will be tested early and often

Wyoming's Bailee Cotton, a redshirt sophomore from Denver, stands for a portrait on Oct. 6 at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

JENNA VONHOFE, STAR-TRIBUNE



**BRADY OLTMANS**  
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Last season's grind took a toll on the University of Wyoming women's basketball team. The physicality and travel woes showed as the promising Cowgirls began the season 7-4, but finished 6-12 in Mountain West play.

Wyoming is ready to give it another shot.

"I think everybody came back energized, ready to get going, and looking forward to this season," UW head coach Joe Legerski said. "We have a number of questions to be answered for this group and I think that's created some excitement for this team."

Wyoming's lone senior, Sheridan's Hailey Ligocki, felt her batteries recharge upon rejoining

her teammates for the school year and preseason practices.

"The end of last year and our off-season was good," Ligocki said. "We had summer time off, which was a good break for everybody, but this preseason has been really good as well."

There's no doubt Legerski is right. There are numerous questions among this Wyoming team.

With only one senior, the Cowgirls will depend on heavy minutes from juniors and sophomores, and the young team will need to mature in a hurry. Wyoming will be challenged early and often.

"With this group, they probably have the most challenging preseason schedule of any team that I've had," Legerski said. "You're talking about going to Colorado, going to Drake, going to Michigan State — challenges — at Montana, and so one of

the things we said was that we just wanted to get better each and every day."

The road game against Michigan State (Nov. 13) is only the second of the season for the young Cowgirls. Wyoming travels to Drake (Nov. 27) just two weeks later, forging a tough road in the first month of the season. Then come back-to-back road games against Montana (Dec. 18) and Colorado (Dec. 21) to end the non-conference portion of the season.

Mountain West play begins just before the New Year and the coaches hope the new emphasis on defense and less transition is fully developed by then. The conference is home to teams older and faster than Wyoming, so dictating the tempo of

Please see **COWGIRLS**, Page 33

# Cowgirls

From 32

play is already a focal point for the Cowgirls.

“It’s what we need to do,” Legerski said. “We used to do that a great deal, we had success with it and so we have gone back to that formula. It’s also what works best for this group.”

“Each and every year you have to figure out what works best for the team you have and the players you have. For this group it’s probably going to be limit the possessions in a game, as well as to get better defensively.”

The Cowgirls, while young, do return some experience.

Marta Gomez, a member of the MW all-freshman team last year, worked on her shot over the off-season and it’s helped her feel more comfortable in her transition to playing on the wing. Fellow sophomore Bailee Cotton has started 18 games in her career over two seasons before both were cut short due to

## COWGIRLS TRACKER

**YOUNG COWGIRLS:** Wyoming has only one senior on its roster for the upcoming season.

**TRIAL BY FIRE:** The Cowgirls go on the road for the their toughest games, including Michigan State in the first week of the season, before conference play.

**HE SAID IT:** “Each and every year you have to figure out what works best for the team you have and the players you have. For this group it’s probably going to be limit the possessions in a game, as well as to get better defensively.” – UW head coach Joe Legerski.

knee injuries.

“I definitely have to make myself step up and be a little more vocal this year and help out people having struggles,” Cotton said. “Not just, ‘You shouldn’t have thrown this pass,’ but really just being supportive of everyone is our main goal.”

There’s also the question of how receptive the younger players will be; and not just from an attitude standpoint. Five foreign-born players are on the roster, most of whom know English as a second language and none older than sophomores.

Then again, that doesn’t mean they can’t make immediate contributions. Consider Gomez’s success last year as a freshman while still getting acclimated to the complications of coming from overseas. There’s also Riikka Kujala and Tijana Raca, both sophomores, who came off the bench for the Cowgirls last season.

Wyoming may go into the season with little experience, but if the Cowgirls can keep their heads above water during non-conference then they could set themselves up for



JENNA VONHOFE, STAR-TRIBUNE

Wyoming sophomore Marta Gomez poses for a portrait on Oct. 6 at the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie.

success in the Mountain West.

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