

Senior point guard Tony Taylor was last season's most valuable player and led the Colonials in scoring, assists, and steals.



Senior guard Tiana Myers was the most valuable player in 2009-10 and is coming back from an injury last season.

COLONIALS O

GW men's and women's basketball teams launch into a new season.

By Lori Weinrau B

A new coach and coaching staff, new athletic director, a stronger schedule, and newly renovated arena are among the changes coming together around a squad determined to improve in the Atlantic 10 Conference.

"It's going to be an adjustment period with new players, new coaches, and new plays but I'm excited," says new head coach Mike Lonergan, who returns to his roots after six seasons as head coach of the University of Vermont, one of the most successful mid-major programs in the nation. Mr. Lonergan is a Bowie, Md.,

native who has been cheering on GW men's basketball since his playing days at Catholic University in the mid-1980s. (Read more about Mr. Lonergan in the early fall edition of *GW Magazine* at gwmagazine.com.)

Hired in May, Mr. Lonergan takes over a program that returns four starters and six of the team's top seven scorers from last season. The Colonials were 17-14 overall in 2010-11, and 10-6 in the Atlantic 10 Conference, good for a fourth-place tie.

For this season, Mr. Lonergan's focus will be on improving GW's conference play and qualifying for the A-10 tournament after a four-year winless drought that included getting upset by a 12th-seed last season in the tournament. Mr. Lonergan says his goal this season is to finish in the top third of the conference.

To get ready for March, the Colonials will play a more challenging schedule than in recent years. The 30-game schedule includes 15 teams that advanced to postseason play in 2011 and 12 teams rated inside the top 100 of the final 2011 NCAA Ratings Percentage Index.

Senior Aaron Ware averaged 5.4 points and 3.8 rebounds per game last season as a Colonials shooting guard.



Senior center Sara Mostafa is pegged to be a key player for the Colonials women's basketball team this season.

ON THE COURT

Highlights of the 16-game away slate include marquee nonconference matchups against the University of California, Kansas State, Virginia Commonwealth University, and nationally ranked Syracuse.

"Our team is ready to be challenged, and I think that will pay off later in the season," Mr. Lonergan says.

GW began home play Nov. 11 against University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Six home games will come against teams that reached the postseason in 2011, including NCAA Tournament participants University of Alabama at Birmingham, Richmond, and Xavier, and A-10 rivals Duquesne and Rhode Island. Other conference games will be played at Temple, Dayton, and St. Bonaventure.

Sizing up the A-10 Conference, Mr. Lonergan says Xavier and Temple will be the biggest worries. The perennial conference powerhouses are returning most of their players.

Even though the more challenging nonconference games will be played on the road, Mr. Lonergan hopes that translates to more support at Charles E. Smith Center, which has undergone a three-

year, multimillion-dollar renovation to make it a state-of-the-art facility. The center has enjoyed a reputation as being one of the toughest places to play in the A-10 Conference.

"We have to win games and play an exciting brand of basketball," he says. "It's based on the product you put on a court. We have a nice core group of guys returning, and if they play hard and play exciting, they will gain the respect of the fans so they will come out and support us."

The centerpiece of the Colonials' 2011-12 team is 6-foot-1 senior point guard Tony Taylor. Last season's most valuable player led the Colonials in scoring, assists, and steals. Mr. Taylor ranked 12th in the A-10 in scoring at 15 points per game and finished third in the league with 4.6 assists per game to earn Second Team All-Atlantic 10 honors. Mr. Taylor was named to the Atlantic 10 Pre-Season All-Conference First Team this year and is now the 43rd member of GW's 1,000-point club, following a November win over Detroit in the Progressive CBE Classic's Bowling Green Subregional event.

Another key player should be 6-foot-5 junior shooting guard Lasan Kromah, who missed last season with a foot injury. As a freshman, Mr. Kromah averaged 11.8 points per game and converted a team-high 48 three-pointers, to make the 2010 A-10 All Rookie Team.

Mr. Taylor and Mr. Kromah should give the Colonials a strong backcourt, Mr. Lonergan says, with shooting guards Aaron Ware and Bryan Bynes as key reserves.

Ware, a 6-foot-5 senior, averaged 5.4 points and 3.8 rebounds per game last season, while Bynes, a 6-foot-3 junior, averaged 6.1 points. Anchoring the frontcourt are forwards Dwayne Smith, a 6-foot-6 junior, and Nemanja Mikic, a 6-foot-8 sophomore.

Last season, Mr. Smith was second on the team in scoring, with 9.3 points per game, and rebounding, with 5.1 rebounds per game. Mr. Mikic is GW's best three-point shooter, at 43.6 percent from three-point range. In reserve at forward is David Pellom, a 6-foot-8 junior who led the Colonials in rebounding with 5.2 rebounds per game and averaged 6.7 points per game.

One question mark is center, which is wide open, according to Mr. Lonergan. Last season's starter, Jabari Edwards, played 16 games before injuring his knee. Mr. Lonergan says the 6-foot-10, fifth-year senior has a lot of athleticism, but he wonders if his knees will hold up. This could lead to some opportunities for freshmen John Kopriva and Jonathan Davis.

Excitement also is building around Isaiah Armwood, who transferred to GW from Villanova and will be eligible to play in the 2012-13 season. The 6-foot-9 forward and Baltimore native played two seasons for the Big East powerhouse, averaging 2.4 points and 2.9 rebounds on 48.1 percent shooting.

"It was huge for us, getting Isaiah," says Mr. Lonergan, adding that his experience, leadership, and work ethic will

"The most important thing is attitude, be open to new coaches, and work hard," Mr. Lonergan says. "Good team chemistry is important." He also is trying to motivate the seniors especially to leave a legacy.

"Basketball is my life, my family's life. I love to win. I'm proud of going to Vermont and inheriting a program in rebuilding mode and going to the postseason four out of six years and our success on the court and off the court (with a 100 percent graduation rate)," Mr. Lonergan says. "I came here because it's a program with a rich history and a great academic reputation. I think we can be successful here."

After the pain of seeing his team devastated by injuries two seasons in a row, George Washington women's basketball head Coach Mike Bozeman says he is going into the 2011-12 season feeling "hopefully optimistic."

"I'm pretty excited about how everyone is progressing and how healthy everybody is right now," says Mr. Bozeman, now in his fourth season as head coach. "We still have some people about 70 percent, or maybe 85 percent totally healed, but that's a far shout from where we were last year."

The Colonials finished 8-21 last season, barely improved from 6-22 the previous season, leaving Mr. Bozeman scrambling to keep his team from falling into despair while trying to maintain the kind of play that is expected at a school that is used to being a contender in the postseason. After a string of such appearances, including back-to-back NCAA Sweet 16 appearances in 2007 and 2008, GW missed the postseason for the second consecutive season.

"At one point last season I was down to one guard, even six players at times. It's pretty tough to play on this level, with the competition that we play," Mr. Bozeman says.


The girls who were able to play shouldered a big burden, Mr. Bozeman recalls. "They were wearing down physically."

"Having more bodies is going to allow for my players to play in their rightful position and that's a cause for optimism," Mr. Bozeman says. "Let's get back to where we belong' is really my theme this year. We've been there before, and we're going back."

Mr. Bozeman will need his players in fighting form

for this season's schedule. More than half of GW's 28 regular-season contests will be against teams that reached the postseason in 2011: eight A-10 rivals, and nonconference programs Morgan State, Auburn, Old Dominion, Loyola (Md.), Rutgers, and Georgetown. Additionally, the Colonials will play 12 teams that finished inside the top 100 of the final 2011 NCAA Ratings Percentage Index.

There is also a lot of what the coach calls "local flavor," with matchups against American and George Mason on the



"The most important thing is attitude, be open to new coaches, and work hard. Good team chemistry is important."

—coach Mike Lonergan

benefit the team even though he won't be able to play this season. His ties to the area, which include playing high school ball for Montrose Christian School in Rockville, Md., will help with local recruiting, which is a key focus for Mr. Lonergan.

This season is about earning respect and proving wrong those who peg the Colonials to finish anywhere from eighth to 12th place in the conference, Mr. Lonergan says. None of his teams have ever fared that poorly and he's not about to start, he insists.



“Let’s Get back To
Where We belong
is really my Theme
This year. We’ve been
There before, and
We’re Going back.”

—coach mike bozeman

The depth that Mr. Bozeman expects to have at point guard will be of huge help to junior point guard Danni Jackson, who led the team last season with 10.4 points per game and led in assists and minutes played.

The Colonials also are welcoming back Megan Nipe, a junior forward/guard who missed much of last season. She played in only four games but averaged 9.0 points. Ms. Nipe averaged 32 minutes a game before she got hurt. “Megan has a very high basketball IQ,” Mr. Bozeman says. “She gives us that outside shot that we were

missing last year when we only had one shooter.”

The same goes for Shi-Heria Shipp, a junior forward who played in only one game. “She’s fighting her way back also. She gives us that strong penetrator, that strong guard and great defender that we were lacking last year,” Mr. Bozeman says.

The coach also is looking for good numbers from Ms. Booker, who averaged 9.3 points and 6.8 rebounds in her first season back after spending much of the 2009-10 season sidelined with chronic knee pain.

With the key players returning to health, “it can appear that we have a whole different team and we only have three new recruits,” Mr. Bozeman says.

In addition to Ms. Miller, the other new Colonials are guard Bria Bourgeois, also from Marietta, Ga., and Adrienne Phillips, a forward from League City, Texas.

“That’s our strength, our depth. We have some players that can play multiple positions, we have shooters, we have penetrators, we have rebounders.”

And when GW starts winning again, it will be that much sweeter, the coach says.

“That’s the way life goes. You have to go through some struggle so that you can appreciate when you finally reach your potential,” Mr. Bozeman says. “I look forward to this season being a reward for everything that these young ladies and my staff have gone through.”

For schedule and ticket information, visit gwsports.com. **GW**

Cat Ch your team on tv

Can’t make it to the Charles e. Smith Center for every game this season? a dozen George Washington men’s basketball regular-season games and a trio of GW women’s basketball regular-season contests will be televised this season in national, regional, and local markets. the 12 televised games are the most for the Colonials men’s program in seven seasons.

View the television schedule at go.gwu.edu/bbtv.