

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Basketball Basketball Programs Share Expectations For Upcoming Season on Media Day

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The University of the Virgin Islands hosted a Media Day on Monday where players and coaches from both the men's and women's basketball teams shared their thoughts on the upcoming season which will begin with two road games on October 29 and 30 before the university hosts the HBCU Classic which will take place at the Sports and Fitness Center on St. Thomas from November 3-5.

The team's season will begin when they travel to South Carolina and face Morris College on October 29 and 30.

HBCU Classic Information

The Bucs will return to the Virgin Islands and host their first HBCU classic from November 3-5. UVI will match up against Arkansas Baptist College, Warner University, Huston-Tillotson University and Wilberforce University during the HBCU Classic.

The UVI men's team will play Wilberforce on Nov. 3, Warner on Nov. 4 and Huston-Tillotson on Nov. 5 with all three games tipping off at 8:30 p.m.

The UVI women's team will play Arkansas Baptist on Nov. 3 at 6:00 p.m., Wilberforce on Nov. 4 at 6:30 p.m. and Huston-Tillotson on Nov. 5 at 6:30 p.m.

During the HBCU Classic there will be two additional games a day that do not feature UVI.

On Nov. 3 there will be a women's game between Wilberforce and Huston-Tillotson at 2 p.m. and a men's game between Huston-Tillotson and Warner at 4:30 p.m. On Nov. 4 Arkansas Baptist and Huston-Tillotson women's teams will play at 2 p.m and Huston-Tillotson and Wilberforce men's teams will play at 4:30 p.m. On Nov. 5, Warner and Wilberforce will play a men's game at 2 p.m. and Arkansas Baptist and Wilberforce will play a women's game at 4:30 p.m.

Attendance for the event will be limited to vaccinated persons.

Fans will have two ticket options. A tournament pass, which includes general admission for all three days, can be purchased for \$30 or daily passes which can be purchased for \$15 per day for general admission for a specific day of the event.

Daily passes are \$5 for faculty/staff and local high school students.

All ticket options can be purchased [here](#).

UVI Students with school ID and Children under 5 can attend the event for free.

For the University of the Virgin Islands HBCU Basketball Classic, fans can submit proof of vaccination to HBCUAthleticsvacs@uvi.edu.

Earlier this month, UVI Athletic Director Jerel Drew spoke to the Consortium about the other teams UVI will play during the HBCU Classic and said “you have a long history of teams coming down who have won conference championships, some who played in the tournament as far as nationally, so your going to get different styles, different calibers of players.”

At the same time he shared his expectations for UVI basketball this year. The AD said “we are going to play great ball here, we are going to be aggressive, we are going to be out on that court and we are going to run and own our tournament and also own our gym. Look for UVI to come in and we are going to ball very hard on the women's side and men's side as well.”

Men's Basketball

Alfonzo Duncan, UVI men's basketball coach, spoke about what he has learned from his team over the first few weeks of practice on Monday, “they've been working hard for the past few weeks, we're putting in a lot of offensive and defensive sets... It's new to these guys, I think they have the potential to be a really, really good team if they work hard and buy into the system.”

Mr. Duncan said “Everyone of the young men on this basketball team, they're new to the system that we are looking to run, again they never played together as a team and quite frankly, you're going to be running up against teams that are more experienced...We have a lot of ground to cover in a short amount of time, but I don't count them out.”

When speaking about the system that Mr. Duncan plans to implement, he said that offensively the team will run a motion offense and defensively they will be “a blue collar type man to man team.”

Mr. Duncan likes the motion offense because “it makes difficult for teams to scout” and “on any given night any guy has the potential to score 20 to 25 points and team’s may see us play and they feel like I need to stop this guy, he is their guy, but you know what another guy can step up the next night and have 25 to 30 points.”

Shirmoy O'Garro, a player on the men's team and Charlotte Amalie graduate, spoke to members of the media about the adjustment to a new system. “Coach Duncan is actually doing a good job helping us get into the system and understanding how college ball works.”

When speaking about what he saw from his teammates in the first few weeks of practice Mr. O'Garro said “everyone here is a stand out in their own way especially due to the fact that people came from different parts of the states... Everyone here was recruited and everyone had a point to make.”

When asked what fans should expect when they watch UVI basketball this year, LiWayne Richardson, a player on the team who transferred from Howard University and is originally from Anguilla, simply stated “that W.”

Coach Duncan, responding to the same question, said “we will play hard, we will be disciplined, we'll have structure, we have accountability... We are a collective bunch coming together with one common goal and that's to win.”

Denny Gonzalez, a player on the team and graduate of All Saints Cathedral School, said “it's very nice to play for UVI, especially since it's like the home team, you can see your family and friends who grew up with and they are very proud of you” when asked by the Consortium what it meant being from the territory and playing for the university.

Responding to the same question, Mr. O'Garro said “in the Virgin Islands after high school basketball is kind of finished if you're not going to college. Not many people get to play college ball in the islands so it's a big opportunity.”

After hearing his players answers, Mr. Duncan spoke about the importance of recruiting players locally to play at UVI “we need to have representation throughout the Caribbean, our representation right here in St. Thomas, and we made a conscious effort to find the players in this area and have them be a part of a product that we are looking to put on the floor that we are looking to represent the community as well as the Caribbean in a

positive way.”

Women's Basketball

When asked about her team, Lynika Niki Collins, women's Head Basketball Coach, said “we're going to be a team that's going to be quick in transition” and stressed that point repeatedly throughout the press conference.

She described the style that she wants her team to play as a “Warriors tempo offense with Spurs execution. I like to be a team that's not X's and O's. I dislike running plays, we have them but I don't like doing it because I don't like a team figuring out what we do on the offensive end. My players are equipped to make any type of adjustments or move in the middle of the game then we will go with it. So I'm saying freestyle all day.”

Amber Appiah-Kubi, a player and transfer from Tennessee State, said “that's actually how I like to play, I grew up playing streetball and that's how I really want to play so it goes right into what I want to do anyways, so I like it.

Ms. Collins explained why she likes her team playing that style as opposed to a system. “I feel like a lot of players get lost in systems, sometimes you don't get to see that true talent because you are trying to see what a coach wants...my style of coaching is going to expose players. If you are in the gym multiple hours of the day you are going to see it in my system but if you don't and you're not able to fit and you're not able to get up and down the floor, you're not going to make it.”

On the defensive side of the game the coach said that the team would play zone defense and “we are going to be very aggressive.”

When asked about how the team is gelling after the first few weeks of practice, she said “that's difficult considering a lot of these young ladies have never played college basketball before so it's one thing to be able to juggle the aspects of being a student, just getting acclimated into the offense and defense of college basketball, the tempo is different” before handing over the question to her players.

Kaeani Berry, a player on the team and Alabama State transfer, said “we like each other.”

When Ms. Collins spoke to the Consortium on the first day of practice, she emphasized that she wanted her more experienced players to embrace a leadership role with the younger players on the team and it's a role that they have welcomed.

Ms. Berry said "I like to help really. I like to say what she (Coach Collins) means in a different way, a way that they understand."

Ms. Collins is appreciative of those efforts "it's big for me to be able to tell them something and they relay the message in a way that they understand."

When asked what the fans should expect when they watch this team play Melea Lovelace, a player on the team and transfer from Kaskaskia Community College said "Get vaccinated and watch us play" and Ms. Berry added "we are going to put on a show, we definitely going to go hard."