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high school

# GIRLS BASKETBALL PREVIEW

By LEE TOLLIVER |

## The Virginian-Pilot

### BEACH DISTRICT

#### HIGH FIVE

Bayside G Takerra Parsons, a 5-9 sharpshooter led South Hampton Roads public schools in scoring last season as a freshman.

First Colonial G Ladeja James, a 5-9 sophomore, played a key role in the Patriots' return to Beach prominence last season.

Landstown G Gabrielle Swinson, now a junior, pushed the Eagles into the Eastern Region playoffs last year and was the Beach Defensive Player of the Year.

Princess Anne G Justyce Swango helped the Cavaliers to a Group AAA runner-up finish and takes on the leadership role this season.

Salem C Tyshara Fleming, one of the top post players in South Hampton Roads, will guide the SunDevils on another playoff run.

#### PREDICTIONS

(Last season's record in parentheses)

1. Salem (25-2 overall, 10-0 Beach District) With 6-5 C Tyshara Fleming (8.9 ppg, 13.4 rpg, 5.8 blocks) in the middle, the SunDevils feature one of the region's tallest lineups. Khadijah Kelly (5-10) joins her to lead a group of seven returners from last year's Beach regular-season championship team that will feature no starter under 5-8.

2. Princess Anne (27-4, 9-1) The Group AAA runner-up Cavaliers' run of four straight state finals could be in jeopardy with the loss of All-Tidewater Player of the Year Galaisha Goodhope (Old Dominion) to graduation. PA's hopes will be left in the hands of several juniors. Freshman Danyael Goodhope is Galaisha's younger sister and will help continue the Cavaliers' high-paced, pressure defense. Janayla White, a 6-1 center, Morgan Cooper and Alexis Platt are returning seniors.

3. Landstown (17-9, 9-3) Gabrielle Swinson (15.7 ppg, 4.5 rpg) was part of last year's "super sophomore trio" and finished as the top defensive player in the league. She also can score, averaging nearly 16 ppg. At 5-10, Amaya Ransom (9.2 ppg) is one of the tallest guards in the area. Briona Mathews is the lone senior. Jada Lee (7.9 ppg) transfers in from Ocean Lakes and will be joined by Daneda Simon (Indian River) and incoming freshman Cynita Webb.

4. First Colonial (14-11, 7-3) The Patriots will miss the leadership of Sarah Bollman, who was the lone senior last year. Sophomore Ladeja James (14.8 ppg), however, is one of the top players in the area. She'll get considerable help from Bridget Marois (8 ppg) and Raya Berkley (7.1 ppg) in coach Larry Bowman's pressure defense. Field hockey standouts Taylor Cimbalist and Haley Schleicher bring winning ways after claiming a second straight Group AAA title.

5. Ocean Lakes (12-11, 5-5) Shrita Parker (16 ppg, 6 apg) is a two-time All-Beach selection as a freshman and sophomore. Kaitlyn Lehan, a 5-11 junior, missed much of last year because of an injury. She was averaging 11 points and 8 rebounds prior to getting hurt. Youth is a concern: the Dolphins have only three seniors.

6. Bayside (6-15, 1-9) The Marlins consider last season a disappointment. But with six returning sophomores joined by one freshman, the team is experienced enough now to climb in the standings. G Takerra Parsons led the area in scoring (19.1 ppg, 5.3 rpg, 61 steals) despite being a freshman. G Keonna Rheubottom, a sophomore, returns after missing all but three games because of a foot injury. Minisha Gordon (5.8 ppg) and Jannell Johnson (5 ppg) are returning seniors. Freshman Jazmynne Blue is expected to contribute immediately in the post.

7. Kempsville (8-12, 5-5) Seniors Doneshia Davis (Bayside transfer) and LaBria Wilson are expected to provide leadership for what coach Greg Dunn calls “the best group of freshmen we have had in many years.” Those players include Kayla Duplain, Tatiano Walker and Morgan Towe. Seniors returning are Elizabeth Connelly and Brianna Perry.

8. Kellam (11-11, 6-4) Coach T.J. Jones is expecting a slow start until newcomers learn the system. Until then, seniors Alex Kimball, Kayla McNair and Caitlyn Dodd – along with sophomores Sara Witaker and Tchelsea Jones – will try to hold down the fort.

9. Tallwood (7-12, 3-7) Seniors Saria Parker, Chakema White, Yasmin Tate, Katie Saunders and Kelsey Mills will lead the way for the Lions. Parker is the leading returning scorer after averaging 10.5 ppg and will get help from junior Nyle Young (6.7 ppg).

10. Cox (8-14, 2-8) Inexperience could plague the Falcons after the loss of three starting guards to graduation and transfers. G/F Jamila Harrington, a 6-1 senior, should lead the way with fellow seniors Donavan Merrill and Olivia Camper. Freshman G Emma Johnson (5-10) could play a key role.

11. Green Run (2-16, 1-9) Transfer Jhanel Brown, a 6-2 center from Washington and Lee High in Montross, could be an impact player in the league. Martina Williams (6 ppg, 7 rpg) is 6-1 and will help Brown on the boards. Ebony Story (10 ppg) is 5-10, giving the Stallions a tall lineup.

## **EASTERN DISTRICT**

### **HIGH FIVE**

Wilson G Monnazjea Finney-Smith, headed to Virginia Commonwealth, is the reigning Eastern District Offensive Player of the Year.

Maury G Chanette Hicks, a 5-5 point guard, sparked the Commodores’ amazing run through the Eastern Region tournament.

Lake Taylor G Feyonda Fitzgerald is headed to Temple and trying to get the Titans back into state prominence.

Lake Taylor F Jordan Mitchell-Harmel is the Titans’ other All-Eastern District first-team member.

Maury G Gigi Smith was one of four Commodores freshmen starters last season. Like Hicks, she was second team All-Eastern Region.

### **PREDICTIONS**

(Last season’s record in parentheses)

1. Lake Taylor (21-4 overall, 14-0 Eastern District) The Titans once again were the class of the Eastern District, going undefeated and advancing to the Eastern Region semifinals. Temple commit Feyonda Fitzgerald (16.8 ppg) was an All-Group AAA honorable mention selection. Jordan Mitchell-Harmel (7.9 ppg) is a defensive force, and is joined by fellow veterans Courtney White and Endia McKinney. Mary Jones, a transfer from Booker T. Washington, and freshman Carlesha Farris are the top newcomers.

2. Maury (20-5, 11-3) Despite starting four freshmen, the Commodores reached the Eastern Region semifinals after upset victories over Western Branch and Beach District regular-season champion Salem. The journey gave those players – Chanette Hicks (11 ppg), Gigi Smith (12 ppg), Kayla Airaghi (9 ppg) and Tiffany Daniels – vast experience. Look for freshmen Taylor Day and Kishona Sutton to join the tradition this season.

3. Wilson (19-10, 10-4) The Presidents are a contender with Monnazjea Finney-Smith (18 ppg) in the lineup. But she’s hardly alone. Wilson returns four players – Kinyeer Kirton, Taura Jones, Makayla Jones and Tommarah Harris – who each averaged about 6 points a game. The Presidents will enjoy the additions of freshman Mariah Coker, who averaged 25 ppg for the JV team, along with 6-3 freshman C Janeen Camp and her twin sister Janay (5-11).

4. Churchland (10-9, 7-7) Forwards Monique Gatling (6-0), Ronesia Spicer (5-10), Johnelle Johnson (5-10) and Danielle Honore’ (5-10) give the Truckers a formidable lineup.

5. Booker T. Washington (14-7, 7-7) The Bookers will feature a speedy lineup, but not a lot of experience. Sophomore F Joanna Williams and juniors Whitney Blackwell (F/C) and Alisha Depann (G) are returning starters.

6. Norcom (9-13, 5-9) Coach Anthony Chappelle takes over as coach, replacing Danny Hill, and admits his lineup might have trouble scoring points. Senior PG Katrea Edwards (10.5 ppg, 5 apg) will try to change that. Guards Kishera Theus and Naomi Whitaker come from basketball families and could help.

7. Granby (2-20, 0-14) Sophomore G Imani Lewis and senior F Nikki Burgess are the only players who saw significant playing time last season. Lewis had a couple of double-digit performances. Marquasia Barbee is a 6-2 freshman center who was a dominating middle school player last season.

8. Norview (6-16, 2-12) Donald Shovely Jr., is the district's other new head coach, taking over a squad that will depend heavily on two players – Destiny Warren and Rolonda Taylor – who move up from junior varsity. They join returning junior starters Adranette Cuffee (9 ppg) and Takayla Bolden (4.3 ppg).

## **SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT**

### **HIGH FIVE**

Grassfield G Nola Anderson has signed with Oakland University in Rochester, Mich., and will be looking to get the Grizzlies into their third straight Eastern Region tournament.

King's Fork Khadedra Croker will take over the leadership role for the defending Southeastern District champs after the graduation of Delisia Sharpe.

Western Branch C Da'Lishia Griffin, a James Madison commit, leads another powerful lineup for the Bruins.

Western Branch G Shanese Harris, verbally committed to play next year at UNC-Greensboro, is looking for a championship senior season.

Western Branch G Alexis McKay, now a junior, took lots of pressure off Griffin and Harris with double-digit scoring and nearly double-digit rebounding averages last season.

### **PREDICTIONS**

(Last season's record in parentheses)

1. Western Branch (15-10 overall, 14-4 Southeastern District) The Bruins no doubt consider last season a huge disappointment, especially after losing an Eastern Region first-round match-up to freshmen heavy Maury by 32 points. Senior C Da'Lishia Griffin (16.2 ppg, 14 rpg, 3 bpg), senior G Shanese Harris (15.4 ppg, 6.6 rpg, 3.4 spg) and junior G Alexis McKay (14.1 ppg, 9.4 rpg) arguably make up the best returning trio in the region. Senior G Adriane Fraser returns after missing last season with a knee injury, giving the Bruins for formidable foursome. As a sophomore, the defensive specialist recorded 42 charges.

2. Grassfield (19-6, 18-2) Nola Anderson (14 ppg, 6 rpg, 3.8 apg, 5.7 spg and 43 3-pointers) is reason enough to think the Grizzlies will enjoy another stellar campaign. Courtnei Williams (13 ppg) has committed to Chowan and Tajee Pledger (10 ppg) is going to Division II Davis and Elkins. Dericka Sims (10 ppg) tops a senior-heavy starting lineup that features four players who averaged double figures.

3. King's Fork (22-3, 17-1) The loss of Delisia Sharpe to graduation likely will be felt. But junior 6-3 C Khadedra Croker (15.8 ppg) figures to take up the slack nicely. She scored double figures in all but one game last season. Seasoned returners Chantel Roberts (8.9 ppg), Shaiheyyla Jordan (7.4 ppg) and Brittany Alston (4.9 ppg) could help keep the Bulldogs at the top.

4. Nansemond River (13-10, 11-7) Finishing fourth behind the Big Three in this district isn't bad, and the Warriors are hoping to at least stay put. Senior point guard Ashante Humphries (12.2 ppg) is 242 points shy of 1,000 career points. Sonnae Gibson (6.6 ppg, 5 rpg) and Laura Ortiz (7.1 ppg) will be joined by freshmen Anela Yelverton and Sabree Clegg.

5. Deep Creek (12-10, 10-8) Returning starters Breana Boone (7.1 ppg) and Dazmone' Joseph (8.3 ppg) will be joined by fellow senior Alexandria Cooper (3.6 ppg). The Hornets will greatly miss graduated scoring leaders Iman Williams and Krista Moss.

6. Indian River (14-11, 10-8) The Braves return four starters and a fifth player who saw plenty of action. Chelsea Harrison (10 ppg), Sacha Cheeseboro (6 apg), Chasity Elliott (6 rpg) and Breona Cowan (9 ppg) welcome Alexis Veasley (6 rpg) as a starter. Freshmen C Karena Purnell and Akira Simmons, and junior center Danyelle Skinner should contribute too.

7. Great Bridge (7-14, 6-12) Young throughout the roster, the Wildcats will depend heavily on sophomores Tyler Holloway and Jessica Washington to support senior Victoria Tulensru. Freshman Shara Madison should help.

8. Hickory (7-15, 4-14) It could be a tough season for the Hawks, who welcome back Caitlyn Douglas (7.5 ppg, 5.1 rpg). Elizabeth Miles (13.5 ppg) had some outstanding games at the beginning of the season, but saw limited action toward the end.

9. Lakeland (1-17, 1-17) The Cavaliers will be led by Kyiesha Barrett (16 ppg, 5 spg), a 5-3 junior point guard. Senior F Chardonnay Patterson (7 ppg, 9 rpg) and senior G Quaesha Knight (12 ppg, 4 spg) are the only other veterans in the lineup.

10. Oscar Smith (2-19, 1-17) Three seniors – Ki-Juana Lawrence (7 ppg, 8 rpg), Teonna Thompson (3 ppg, 3 rpg) and Arielle Jones (4 ppg, 7 rpg) – will carry the Tigers' hopes.

## **PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

### **HIGH FIVE**

Cape Henry G Alexis Smith, after helping the Dolphins win a second straight VISAA Division II state title, takes on the leadership role as Cape Henry moves to Division I .

Norfolk Christian G Danielle Webster, the overall leading scorer in South Hampton Roads last year, has committed to play at UNC Charlotte.

Norfolk Christian G Latrice Hunter, South Hampton Roads' second-leading scorer last season, has chosen William and Mary.

Nansemond-Suffolk G Jessica Pieroni, a junior, was instrumental in the team's major improvement last season and has the Saints looking to challenge in the Tidewater Conference.

Norfolk Academy G Riley Tata, the Tidewater Conference field hockey Player of the Year recently, was second team All-TCIS in basketball last year.

### **NOTABLE**

(Last season's record in parentheses)

Atlantic Shores (15-14 overall) The Seahawks will be led mostly by underclassmen after the graduation of three seniors. Juniors Rachael Flores and Danielle Pratt got plenty of experience as sophomores, while Victoria Wiggin returns and Madison Soto transferred from Maury.

Bishop Sullivan (8-16) Fallon Fant returns at point guard to lead fellow returners Katie Burt, Brenna Dober, Ellie Goldsmith and Ellen Petrovich in an effort to improve on last year's 3-6 effort in the TCIS. Lisa Kram also should contribute.

Cape Henry (24-4) The back-to-back state champs in Division II move to Division I, and are the favorite for another sweep of the Tidewater Conference. Led by Binghamton commit Alexis Smith (11 ppg, 4 rpg) and fellow all-state first-teamer Bianca Roach (12 ppg), Cape Henry will welcome help from sophomore G Angelina Williams and freshman G Alicea Johnson.

Nansemond-Suffolk (17-8) Junior Jessica Pieroni (15.9 ppg, 6 rpg) and freshman Harper Birdsong (12.5 ppg as an eighth-grader) are Division I recruits, said coach Kim Aston. Macy Mears shot 40 percent from behind the 3-point arc last year. Kaylor Nash (5.5 ppg, 7.5 rpg) will play a key role. Freshman Caroline Hogg saw some action last year, and Caylin Harris has transferred from Churchland.

Norfolk Academy (20-8) The Bulldogs lost a pair of All-TCIS selections to graduation, but return 10 players. Leading a group of six seniors is Riley Tata (12.8 ppg, 3.9 rpg, 3.2 spg). Other seniors are Jessica Tow, Meredith Bunch, Brooke Peccie, Catherine Duffy and Kelley Smith.

Norfolk Christian (18-9) Coach Curtis Turner takes over a team featuring one of the best guard duos in the state in Danielle Webster and Latrice Hunter. Webster averaged 21 points and Hunter 20 last season. Taylor Brown (10 ppg), Rachel Bondi (11 rpg) and Nicole Lester (10 ppg, 10 rpg) should help.

Norfolk Collegiate (13-13) First-year coach Lonice Kenley takes on a squad that will depend greatly on Raven Evans, a 5-3 senior guard.

Portsmouth Christian First-year coach Brian Rustay will depend heavily on 5-10 seniors Brittany Smith (F) and Surya Lygons (C). Olivia Brown has transferred in from Menchville.

Greenbrier Christian is not fielding a varsity team this season.

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# GIRLS BASKETBALL PREVIEW

## 5 things you need to know

### **Maybe this time**

Western Branch and Norfolk Christian entered last year loaded with talent and high hopes. But both came up short in postseason. With most of their lineups intact, can the two make up for last year's shortcomings? Both teams welcome back a pair of Division I commits: the Bruins' Shanese Harris (UNC Greensboro) and Da'Lishia Griffin (James Madison), and the Ambassadors' Latrice Hunter (William and Mary) and Danielle Webster (UNC Charlotte).

### **Sophomore sensations**

Maury shocked state tournament hopefuls Western Branch and Salem to advance to last year's Eastern Region semifinals, where the Commodores lost to eventual champion Woodside by nine points. And Maury did it with four ninth-graders. That quartet, led by Chanette Hicks, right, and Gigi Smith, now is a year older.

### **A mainstay in Richmond**

Princess Anne has advanced to the last four Group AAA championship games at VCU's Siegel Center, winning state titles in 2009 and 2011. But can the Cavaliers get back this season after the departure of star guard Galaisha Goodhope to graduation?

### **Say goodbye**

Some great postseason rivalries like Princess Anne vs. Lake Taylor – they played for the Group AAA title in 2010 – will be no more after this season, thanks to the Virginia High School League's move to six classifications next year. The Cavaliers will compete in Group 5A, while the Titans will be 4A. King's Fork (4A) vs. Western Branch (6A) won't happen either after district competition.

### **Movin' on up**

Cape Henry has won back-to-back VISAA Division II state championships, but the Dolphins move to Division I this season after losing a few top players. Cape Henry finished 24-4 last season.

– Lee Tolliver

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## preseason Top 10 in South Hampton Roads

1

### WESTERN BRANCH

Loaded with a pair of Division I commits and a junior destined to follow, the Bruins need to get it done this year.

2

### SALEM

The SunDevils hit a wall after handing Princess Anne a rare regular-season loss, dropping a shocker to Maury in the region quarterfinals.

3

### PRINCESS ANNE

The Cavaliers' lineup isn't impressive as in years past. Don't let that fool you. Princess Anne has never been about rebuilding.

4

### NORFOLK CHRISTIAN

With arguably the most-touted guard duo in the area, the Ambassadors appear set to challenge for the TCIS and state titles.

5

### LAKE TAYLOR

The fast-paced Titans will still run most opponents off the court as they defend a string of Eastern District titles.

6

### LANDSTOWN

The Eagles broke the ice last season – finishing third in the Beach and making the region quarterfinals – and are looking climb.

7

### GRASSFIELD

The Grizzlies are coming off a breakthrough season, but want to make up for last year's disappointing Eastern Region first-round loss.

8

### MAURY

The darlings of the Eastern Region tournament are back as sophomores, following last year's trip to the region semifinals.

9

### WILSON

The Presidents made a good run last year before losing to eventual region champion Woodside in the quarterfinals.

10

### KING'S FORK

The Bulldogs no longer have a one-two punch. But a single dominant player likely will be enough to get them back into the playoffs.

