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Seattle University Basketball Teams Prepare for WAC Championships

Ben Wiley, Author

This week, the Seattle University Men's and Women's basketball teams will leave it all on the court as they compete in the 2021 Hercules Tires WAC (Western Athletic Conference) Basketball Tournament. The men's team is the fifth seed in the six-team bracket, while the women earned the fifth seed out of seven teams.

The WAC Basketball tournament for men and women will take place March 10-13 at the Orleans Arena in Las Vegas, Nev., the 11th straight year that it will be held at this location. The winning teams of both the men's and women's brackets will represent the conference in the NCAA Division 1 Men's and Women's Basketball Tournaments. This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the men's competition will be held in sites around the state of Indiana and the women's tournament will take place in San Antonio, Texas.

For the WAC Basketball Tournament, each team will receive a certain amount of tickets that players can distribute to loved ones, yet the general public won't be allowed to attend the games. Additionally, because of COVID-19 protocols, members of Seattle U's spirit squad (Dance Team, Drumline and Rudy the mascot) will not be allowed to travel to Las Vegas to cheer on the team at the conference tournament as they have done in past years.

This comes following members of spirit groups not being allowed to cheer at Redhawks home games this season. As a result, the arena atmosphere has not been as exciting without fans and members of spirit squads there to encourage the players on the teams.

Jessica Fabroa, a Seattle U alum who was on the dance team and now serves as an assistant dance team coach, spoke about the impact that not being allowed to dance at games has had on the dancers.

"We are definitely disappointed that we don't get to cheer on the teams at home and in Vegas. Vegas is such a great bonding experience for all of us as we don't interact with band and drumline during games, but we come together as spirit squad during the Vegas trip," Fabroa said.

However, she said that everyone on the dance team has been attending virtual practices so that the dancers can practice together, providing them an opportunity to keep dancing and working on technique during the pandemic, all to ensure that they will be ready when they can perform on the court again.



The Seattle U Women's Basketball team finished the regular season with an overall record of 11-13 and a 6-8 mark in WAC games. As the fifth seed, they will take on fourth-seed New Mexico State in the first round Wednesday, March 10 at 1:00 p.m. These two teams split their two regular season contests, yet their upcoming third meeting has heightened postseason stakes. If they are able to defeat New Mexico State, the women's team would then have to play undefeated and regular season conference champions Cal Baptist in the tournament semifinals.

Seattle U Women's Basketball Head Coach Suzy Barcomb is excited and looking forward to seeing what her fully healthy team can accomplish in the WAC tournament. She highlighted the excitement that the conference tournament brings and what her team hopes to achieve.

"Everybody's goal is to win the tournament. Our goal is to play our best basketball as if we do that we have a chance of doing well in the tournament. We need to take it one game at a time and focus only on New Mexico state, our first round opponent. We know that Cal Baptist is sitting and waiting for the winner of that contest," Barcomb said.

In their first round game, New Mexico State defeated the Redhawks by the final score of 56 to 46. Freshman forward Irena Korolenko matched her career high of 15 points to lead Seattle U. The Redhawks started out the game cold, allowing the Aggies to establish a 15-6 lead at the end of the first quarter. As the game went on, Seattle U played better and kept fighting to try to reduce and overcome the early deficit. Despite having many chances to tie or take the lead over the course of the game, Seattle U was unable to reclaim the lead, allowing the Aggies to pull away in the last few minutes of the game.

This marks the end of the season for Seattle U as New Mexico State goes on to play unbeaten and regular season conference champions Cal Baptist in the tournament semifinals. Looking ahead to next season, the Redhawks will return two players short as Seniors Leilani Peat and Makenna Schoenofor will graduate.

The men's basketball team will take on fourth-seeded Cal Baptist in their first round matchup Thursday, March 11 at 4:30 p.m. Similarly to the women's team, if they were to win this game, the Redhawks would match up in the semifinals against Grand Canyon, the top seed in the bracket. In order to advance deep in the tournament, the Redhawks will need more excellent production from Darrion Trammell and Riley Grigsby who finished 1st and 2nd in the WAC in scoring, respectively averaging 20 and 18 points per game.

While fans of the Redhawks won't be allowed to physically attend the games, they will be able to watch the games online. All women's games will be streamed on ESPN+ as will men's games on Thursday and Friday. Then, Saturday's WAC Tournament Championship game will be broadcast live on ESPNU.