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TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 2020 MEN'S BASKETBALL & WOMEN'S BASKETBALL C-USA SCHEDULE

2020 MEN'S BASKETBALL & WOMEN'S BASKETBALL ROOSTER **4**

5 MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW **6**

8 SECOND-YEAR STAR

NOTHING BUT JETT **9**

10 NEW LEADER IN TOWN

HER HEART IS ON THE COURT **11**

12 FROM THE SIDELINES

2020-21 MBB C-USA SCHEDULE

1/1 vs. WKU	1/22 at FAU	2/10 vs. ODU
1/2 vs. WKU	1/23 at FAU	2/13 at ODU
1/8 at Marshall	1/29 vs. FIU	2/19 vs. UTSA
1/9 at Marshall	1/30 vs. FIU	2/20 vs. UTSA
1/15 vs. UAB	2/5 at MTSU	2/26 at UTEP
1/16 vs. UAB	2/6 at MTSU	2/27 at UTEP

2020-21 WBB C-USA SCHEDULE

1/1 at WKU	1/22 vs FAU	2/10 at ODU
1/2 at WKU	1/23 vs FAU	2/13 vs. ODU
1/8 vs. Marshall	1/29 at FIU	2/19 at UTSA
1/9 vs. Marshall	1/30 at FIU	2/20 at UTSA
1/15 at UAB	2/5 vs. MTSU	2/26 vs. UTEP
1/16 at UAB	2/6 vs. MTSU	2/27 vs. UTEP

Note: This includes Conference USA games only.

2020-21 MBB ROSTER

0 Caleb Stone-Carrawell

1 Jahmir Young

2 Caleb Byrd

3 Brice Williams

5 Milos Supica

10 Marvin Cannon

12 Jackson Threadgill

13 Jordan Shepherd

14 Regin Larson

15 Aly Khalifa

25 Jared Garcia

30 Jhery Matos

31 Anzac Rissetto

35 Luka Vasic

2020-21 WBB ROSTER

0 Imani Howard

2 Cali Konek

3 Mariah Linney

4 Tamia Davis

10 Dazia Lawrence

12 Jacee Busick

13 Octavia Jett-Wilson

15 Jada McMillian

20 Sierra McCullough

24 Molina Williams

34 Dara Pearson

40 Jazmin Harris

44 Angel Middleton



UNFINISHED BUSINESS

by Bradley Cole
Sports Editor

Men's basketball team huddles, photo
courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

Charlotte's men's basketball team looks to pick up where they left off from last season

Eight months. That's how long it's been since Charlotte's men's basketball team had their postseason ripped away from them after the COVID-19 pandemic started.

The 49ers didn't get the chance to play in the Conference USA (C-USA) basketball tournament after clinching the fourth seed. They finished 16-13 on the season and 10-8 in conference play.

A lot has changed around the world as the worldwide pandemic has lasted throughout the summer and into the winter, but it's now time for head coach Ron Sanchez and company to finish what they started last season.

"We have a chance to compete and we are grateful for that," said Sanchez of this season. "We are going to control what we can control."

There's been a lot of changes to the roster for the 49ers since the last time they took the court. Six players have either transferred or graduated for Charlotte which means a mix of new and old faces will be present.

A lot of questions surrounded the team last season as they had young, unproven talent.

"Last season we were going in with a lot of unknowns," said Sanchez of last season's team. "Jordan Shepherd as a transfer, Jahmir Young as a freshman. Those guys hadn't played a game, we were wondering what we had."

As both Young and Shepherd both proved to be leaders for the 49ers last season, the 2020-21 season will be their year to bloom. Young was named C-USA Freshman of the Year after averaging 12.5 points and 5.2 rebounds a game. In his first season with the team, Shepherd averaged 14.0 points a game.

Sanchez likes the growth of both Shepherd and Young coming into this season.

"I like that combination of those two guys," said Sanchez of the duo. "I think they really met our expectations last year and there's still growth in both of them."

The roster also features senior forward Milos Supica, who averaged 5.5 points and 3.8 rebounds a game. As last year's big man Amidou Bamba graduated, Supica will be an important piece down in the post. Forward/center Anzac Risetto is another piece that can make a big impact in the post after watching Supica and Bamba his freshman year.

Charlotte will finally get to see guard Caleb Stone-Carrawell in action year as he redshirted last year. Hailing from Concord, Stone-Carrawell could be another guard who can make big time plays for the 49ers.

When it comes to transfers, the 49ers have three total from all over the country.

Guard Jhery Matos spent the last couple of years playing with the University

of Dayton, who were one of the top teams in the country last season with a 29-2 record. He's a graduate transfer who averaged ten minutes a game with the Flyers over the last two seasons.

Marvin Cannon, another transfer who spent two years at Washington State, will be a guard who can bring a veteran presence to the 49ers backcourt. He started with the Cougars 23 times over two years and averaged 6.3 points a game.

Charlotte local Regin Larson is a transfer guard from Pfeiffer University who played in 25 games in his one season with the school.

There will be plenty of talent on the floor for the 49ers this year, but one of the biggest challenges will be how the team handles the new conference scheduling format come January. Teams will play back-to-back games on Friday and Saturday, something that would be unheard of prior to the pandemic. The new format is to limit travel for teams.

A lot of unknowns surround the new format such as how players will get a substantial amount of rest each weekend and how the team will respond to injuries. Sanchez says how the team will prepare and managing their day offs will be crucial.

"I can definitely tell you it's gonna be a challenge," said Sanchez. "We just have to tap into our experiences

playing tournaments....(We) have to tap into those experiences and just do that every weekend."

Compared to other years, Sanchez has taken things slow when it comes to getting his guys playing back at full speed. Due to the pandemic, players haven't been able to play in the offseason like they used to.

"Our return to play has been very cautious," said Sanchez. "Our return in play has been a strategic plan. Guys are still emerging and showing what they have."

As of Nov. 11, the 49ers don't have a full slate of non-conference opponents announced, but the 49ers are set to open the season with a tough task at 12th ranked Tennessee on Nov. 25. The game will be a part of the Volunteer Classic tournament, which also includes VCU. A date for the Charlotte-VCU game has not yet been announced.

No matter who the 49ers play this season, Sanchez and company are happy to be playing on the court after a grueling wait.

"We are looking forward to allowing this sport to give us the opportunity to enjoy one another," said Sanchez. "I think that it has given us a new level appreciation because we know that it's not guaranteed."



CHARLOTTE LOOKS TO RELOAD THIS SEASON

49ers aim high in Consuegra's 10th season

by Miles Ruder
Asst. Sports Editor

Women's basketball team huddles,
photo by Chris Crews

Coming off one of the weirdest endings to a basketball season in NCAA history, the Charlotte 49ers Women's Basketball team is ready to pick up where they left off for a fresh start for the 2020-21 season.

Even with the loss of key players from last season, the 49ers have reloaded their roster and are ready to compete at a high level this upcoming season.

"I'm super excited. One of the things that's come out of this pandemic is a renewed sense of, 'this could be taken away from you at any point in time,' and how fortunate we are to do what we love," said head coach Cara Consuegra. "For me and probably for my players too, it brings a different sense of excitement of reminding us that we get to do this and everyone is putting these resources in to make sure we're able to play."

This season opens as a very promising one that consists of talented veteran players, transfers and a great group of freshmen that performed at a high level in their senior seasons of high school. The 49ers are poised to pick up where they left off this past season with the same level of success despite losing some key players in the process.

Leaving the past behind

To say that the way last season ended was disappointing would be an understatement. Charlotte finished the 2019-20 season with a top five record in Conference USA at 21-9, the best record for the team since 2012-13. Charlotte will be missing two key players from last year's team in Jade Phillips and Christian Hithe. The two combined to average over 23 points per game last year.

"I think there's a sense of disappointment and emptiness that will never go away," said Consuegra. "To start something and to put so much into something and not being able to see it through, is just a disappointing feeling that you can't really describe unless you've been through something like that. At the same time, we have to move forward. Things happen out of your control and we have to move forward."

Last year's team was led by senior Jade Phillips, who was the leading scorer and a leader of the team the past two seasons. She averaged just under 15 points per game and over nine rebounds per game, which granted her the honors of All-Conference USA first team last season. It will be important to replace Phillips this season but it must be a group effort to replace such a talented player as she was for Charlotte.

"We feel Jade's void everyday, not just from her production but from her leadership and her personality," said Coach Consuegra. "The biggest thing I tell my players is that we're not gonna fill that with one person. Jade was special."

Instead of focusing on the bitter feeling of the way last season ended, Consuegra and the team have a strong mindset of looking ahead to this upcoming season and the opportunity to run it back and play again this season.

Returning Players

Returning for the 49ers this season are three seniors who have been starters for the team the past two seasons in

Mariah Linney, Octavia Jett-Wilson and Dara Pearson. This sound group of veterans have had the privilege of playing under Coach Consuegra their entire collegiate career, which allows them to bring experience, knowledge and leadership to this team on and off the court.

"I think I've become more of a vocal leader this year so that's really been able to help the team," said Jett-Wilson.

Pearson brings size, rebounding and defensive interior leadership to the team while Linney and Jett-Wilson star on the offensive end by getting to the basket or scoring from the perimeter.

"It's wonderful, especially Dara who's in her sixth year now playing for me," said Coach Consuegra. "Even Octavia and Mariah, they've played so much too so it's not just seniors."

Also returning from the starting lineup from last year is Jada McMillian, who became the distributor for the team last year and plans on playing in a larger role this season. McMillian had the difficult task of replacing Laia Raventos last year but she held her own at the point guard position. Coach Consuegra has high expectations for her to improve in her junior season.

"I think Jada has a chance to become the best point guard in Conference USA. I felt like, as a sophomore, she really evolved into the point guard we thought she could be," said Consuegra. "I think as a sophomore, she kind of had to find her way and become confident in who she was and who we needed her to be. I thought in the month of February, she was the best point guard in the league and I certainly expect that to carry over."

Center Jazmin Harris looks to flourish in a larger role this year. Harris, who stands at 6'3 has played consistently her first two seasons, averaging 7.4 points per game and adding five rebounds as well. The third-year junior, who put the work in this offseason by improving her game and getting into better shape, looks to bolster the interior for the 49ers this season.

"I think the biggest thing is I've been in a place where my values align. My values align with Charlotte and I love being here. I'm just really blessed to be in a great university and a great city where I'm happy and my family is happy."

COACH CARA CONSUEGRA

"I think Jazmin Harris is going to be one of the huge surprises of Conference USA not to us but maybe to coaches and players in this league," said Consuegra. She's someone I'm really excited about to see on the court and see all the work she's put in to improve from her sophomore to junior year to see that come into fruition."

Sophomore guard Cali Konek is another player that has a chance to play more minutes after playing sparingly the season before. As a freshman, Konek was mostly used as a three-point specialist but has improved on both ends of the court this offseason and has the chance to play in a larger role.

"She's improved tremendously on the defensive end. She's becoming more confident as an overall offensive player," said Consuegra.

Newcomers

Despite losing key players like Phillips and Hithe, the 49ers have brought in a talented freshman class that is set to make an impact on the court right away. Jacee Busick and Molina Williams represent the freshman class and can contribute in a variety of ways because of their size, mobility and athleticism. Both players earned North

Carolina All-State honors in high school and have the chance to play a key support role in their rookie seasons.

Charlotte also attracted Tamia Davis this offseason who will be eligible to play right away after transferring from Kansas this offseason. Davis, a three-star recruit and former teammate of Jada McMillian from high school, brings her quickness and ability to score at the point guard position.

Dazia Lawrence is a unique player who brings a lot to the team in terms of her ability to score the basketball at a high level. In her senior season at Mallard Creek, she averaged 23.6 points per game and also achieved numerous accolades for her performance that include Mecklenburg's and the 4A Conference Player of the Year. She was also a member of the North Carolina AP All-State Team.

Lawrence is a redshirt freshman who sat out last season due to a knee injury that occurred during her senior year of high school but has an opportunity to shine in her first collegiate season.

"She has an opportunity to come in and be a huge impact player," said Coach Consuegra. "She's been really great in practice. She's finally healthy."

Looking ahead

At the helm of this women's basketball team is Head Coach Cara Consuegra, who will enter her 10th season with the 49ers. With being a part of this team for so long comes experience, leadership and heart which she and her team embodies every time they step on the court. Through nine seasons, Coach Consuegra has achieved 165 wins, which is just 11 wins shy of breaking the all-time wins record at Charlotte for the women's basketball team.

"I've just been lucky to be in a place where I've had great mentors from Judy Rose to Mike Hill and people that have allowed me to grow and learn and get better," said Coach Consuegra. "I think the biggest thing is I've been in a place where my values align. My values align with Charlotte and I love being here. I'm just really blessed to be in a great university and a great city where I'm happy and my family is happy."

Under Coach Consuegra, the team likes to thrive offensively based on how well they perform on the defensive end. The team finished third in the C-USA for points allowed last season with 61 points allowed overall and 59.1 in conference games. With returning and incoming players who can score often and efficiently, playing good defense and forcing turnovers will be crucial in the success for the 49ers team this season.

With the season set to begin in under two weeks, there still remains a certain level of uncertainty about how many games will be played and the safety for the players because of COVID-19 and traveling. Nevertheless, Consuegra and the team is focused on what they can control and relishing the opportunity to play basketball this season.

"We've spent a lot of time just talking to our kids about controlling what they can. Looking forward and not looking back and understanding that we have an opportunity to play again this year," said Consuegra. "There was a chance a month or two ago we weren't sure that was going to happen. Just embracing that opportunity and looking forward and trying to be even better."

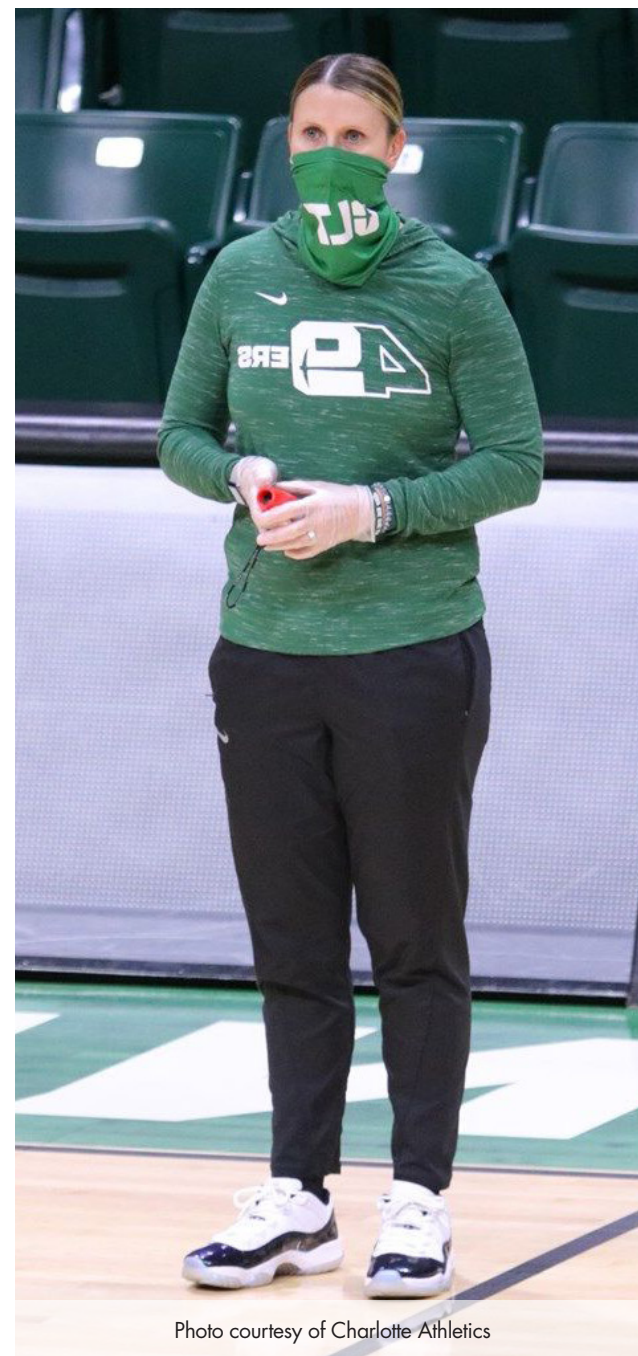


Photo courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

SECOND-YEAR STAR

After a breakout freshman year, Jahmir Young looks to be leader this season

by Bryson Foster
Staff Writer

Photo courtesy of
Charlotte athletics

Going into the 2019-20 season, Jahmir Young was an unproven talent for the Charlotte 49ers who had a successful high school career.

It didn't take long for the guard to show that he belonged.

Young had a breakout season his freshman year for the 49ers basketball team. He was able to establish himself as a valuable scoring option and a leader for the team. Young is looking forward to picking up where he left off in 2020.

"Last season just being able to play was the fuel to my fire," said Young.

Young, who is a native of Hyattsville, Maryland, played his high school basketball at Dematha Catholic High School. At Dematha, Young was able to deliver a state championship for the school in 2018. As a senior, he earned All-Conference honors and was a top 10 senior in the state of Maryland.

Young had many offers from prestigious schools such as Boston College, Old Dominion, La Salle, and Hofstra. He could have gone anywhere but he was drawn to the what was being built in Charlotte.

"I just wanted to keep building the program," said Young on the decision to come to Charlotte.

Young chose Charlotte and it was the right decision as he had a breakout year and helped Charlotte come back into the basketball spotlight. Averaging 12.5 points, 5.8 rebounds and 2.8 assists, he was able to make his mark.

The production that Young showed on the court helped him snag some Conference USA honors such as being named C-USA Freshman of the Year. Young would be named to Third Team All-Conference USA as well as being a C-USA All Freshman Team selection.

"Jahmir grew up quickly," said head coach Ron Sanchez. "He took many steps to get better."

This offseason has been a rather hectic one with the COVID pandemic that has forced the basketball season to start a month later than usual. Young is ready to get back on the court and continue what he started last year.

"I want to build from last year," said Young. "I look forward to playing every game this year."

With a new season, Young looks to step into a new role as a leader for the team. Charlotte was able to exceed expectations last year with great play as they finished 16-13. With a new season approaching, giving others valuable information is what will help the 49ers grow.

"I feel like I need to give others the key information that I learned from my first year," said Young.

With this new role, Young has been trying to find ways to make sure that the team is always communicating. The plan is in action for the Niners as the start of the season is only weeks away.

"We have to stay focused on the idea that we are getting to play," said Young. "I want to lead by example by communicating well."

Young has been staying focused by getting in the gym often and being ready when the season officially starts. That has been a bright spot for the sophomore guard and it is what has kept him motivated.

With the extra time that comes from a later season start, Young is trying to keep his skills fresh and in top shape. He is looking forward to working with the team to create chemistry that will be hard to break.

"We are trying to sharpen all our tools on the defensive and offensive end," said Young. "When the day comes we will be ready to go."

Head basketball coach Ron Sanchez has given the reins to Young and expects big things. Young is ready for the challenge and is excited to see where the team will head in the next year.

"Jahmir will turn into a veteran leader that will make sure that we do what we have to do to win games," said Sanchez.

Young has set many goals for himself and is ready to hold the team accountable. Young wants to be able to give 100% out on the court and make the team better by his play. Mindset is the key and he is always trying to stay positive.

"Our mindset is to take it game by game and play as hard as we can," said Young.

With a new recruiting class, Young has many new teammates around him. He wants to immediately

insert them into the offense and make some magic on the court with them.

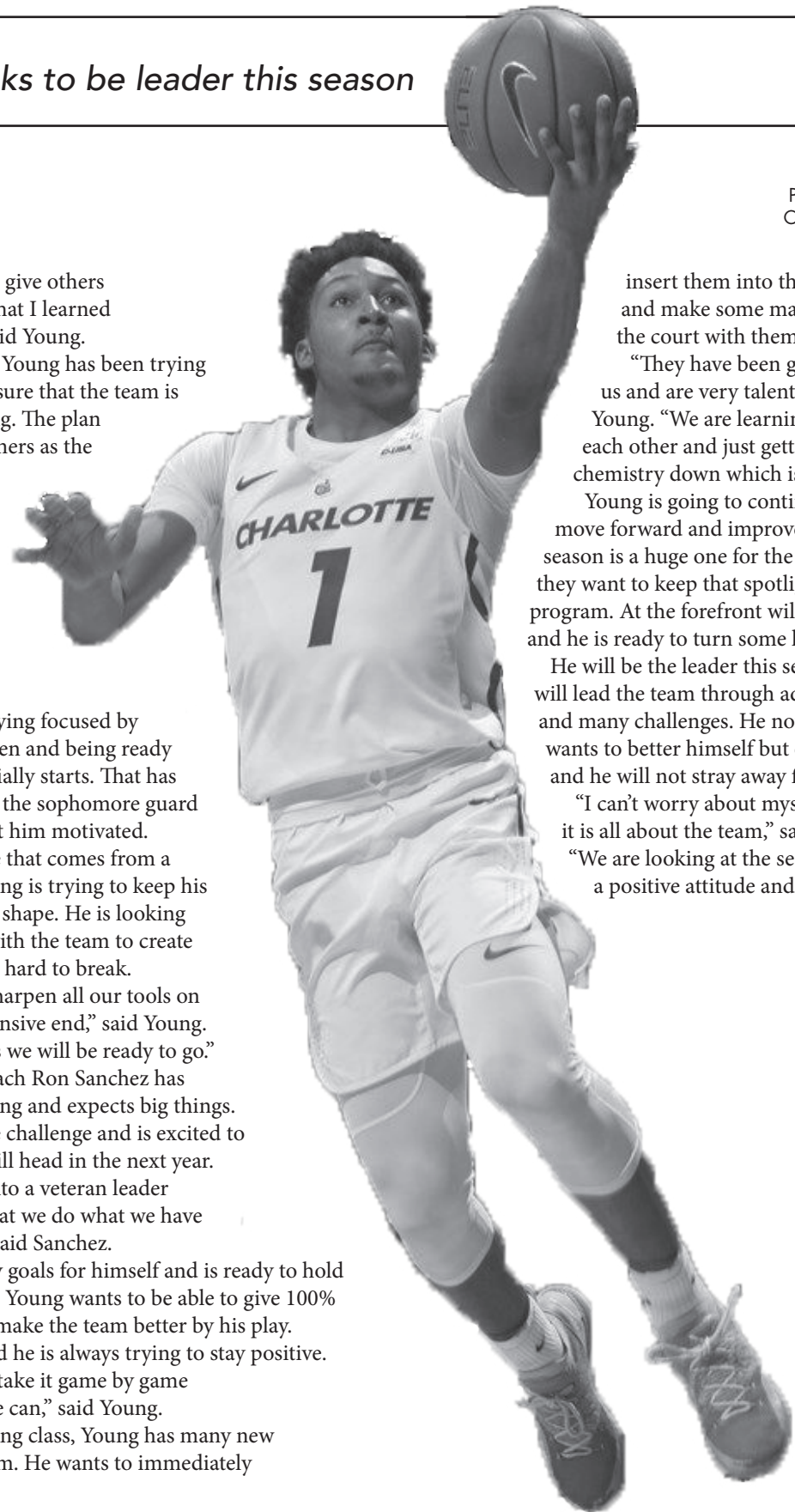
"They have been great for us and are very talented," said Young. "We are learning from each other and just getting that chemistry down which is key."

Young is going to continue to move forward and improve. This season is a huge one for the Niners as they want to keep that spotlight on the program. At the forefront will be Young and he is ready to turn some heads.

He will be the leader this season and will lead the team through adversity and many challenges. He not only wants to better himself but others and he will not stray away from it.

"I can't worry about myself because it is all about the team," said Young.

"We are looking at the season with a positive attitude and mindset."



NOTHING BUT JETT



by Miles Ruder
Asst Sports Editor

Octavia Jett-Wilson looks to flourish in her senior season

Photo courtesy of
Charlotte athletics

The women's basketball senior class is unique in the fact that all three student-athletes have been a part of the program their entire collegiate career.

One of those players, Octavia Jett-Wilson, has played a major role in Charlotte's success the past three seasons and is looking to have a bigger and greater year in her senior season.

"I feel very confident heading into the season," said Jett-Wilson. "We've had a pretty good head on our shoulders with what's been going on. I think it should be a good one."

Mariah Linney and Dara Pearson round out the senior class with Jett-Wilson. With being a part of the program for so long, they know Head Coach Cara Consuegra more than any other player and understand what she wants from players and help alleviate some of the coaching to help out the newcomers.

"They know me. They know my expectations and they can say things before it comes out of my mouth," said Consuegra. "I think they've really helped to be able to get our younger players and newcomers on the same page when I can't spend as much time with them as I would like."

Jett-Wilson entered the program during the 2017-18 season and made an immediate impact for the 49ers by becoming a full-time starter her freshman year. She averaged 10.1 points per game and was named a part of the All-Conference USA Freshman Team that season.

The past two seasons have been all about consistency for Jett-Wilson and finding a groove. For the first time in her career, the 21-year-old came off the bench her junior season but gradually earned her way back into the starting lineup as the season progressed and improved her game over the course of the season every time she stepped on the court.

One of her greatest attributes is how she has continuously improved her shooting ability from behind the three-point line. Her three-point field goal percentage has improved each year since joining the team but especially this previous season. She shot 38.5% from behind the arc, the best on the team last year.

Jett-Wilson doesn't shoot the most threes on the team but she shoots the three ball at a higher percentage and efficiency rate than any other player on the 49ers roster. In conference play last season, she shot nearly 40% from three. Charlotte will look to Jett-Wilson this upcoming season to be a reliable scorer from all over the court.

"I've really been working on my shot this year and I hope that improves. I think I've done better with being more consistent when shooting," said Jett-Wilson. "That's something I've worked on during the whole time we had off. I think I put that work in enough to be able to put the ball in the basket more this upcoming season."

Jett-Wilson has the opportunity this season to join an exclusive club that not many players have been able to accomplish at Charlotte, which is the 1000-point club. She will be looking to join teammate Mariah Linney as they both have the chance to score over 1,000 points in their 49er career in their final seasons.

"With me being the senior, I would say an individual goal would probably get to 1000 points," said Jett-Wilson. "I don't know how far I am, but I know I'm not that far."

There are a lot of young players and transfers that have the opportunity to learn from the seniors like Jett-Wilson and how to thrive in Coach Consuegra's system. Jett-Wilson wants to be a leader on and off the court to help these younger players grow.

"I think a lot of the younger kids look up to me just because I've been here and I always get the job done on the court and off the court," said Jett-Wilson. "I don't think I was prepared at first, but I think now with me being a senior, I have more of the characteristics as a leader than I did maybe last year."

Jett-Wilson wears the No. 13 but the number has more meaning than simply putting the jersey on. That number represents her family where her father, uncle and sister all wore No. 13 when they played. She says she looked up to her sister which is why she chose to wear the same number as her.

"13 is everywhere in my family. It's like a family number," said Jett-Wilson. "I think a lot of people say that 13 is an unlucky number but I would say it's my lucky number."

Last year ended in one of the most unexpected ways in recent history. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Conference USA tournament was canceled right in the middle of the tournament. Nevertheless, the fourth-year senior uses last season as motivation to have the same success this upcoming year and make it back to the C-USA tournament.

"I think that just gives us a chip on our shoulders this year to be able to go and try to win it again," Jett-Wilson said. "We lost Jade (Phillips) and Lauren (Harley), but I think the team we have now we're really level-headed about getting things done and making sure we are all on the same page so when the time comes again, we don't miss a beat."

With this being her final season, Jett-Wilson eyes the conference championship and aims to win it all for herself, her teammates and the seniors last year whose season was cut short.

NEW LEADER IN TOWN

As a senior, Milos Supica looks to take on new leadership role

by Cameron Williams
Staff Writer

The Charlotte 49ers Men's Basketball team will look to their seniors to provide a great deal of leadership during the course of the upcoming season, as they look to navigate COVID-19 as well as a successful 2020-21 season.

Many obstacles may arise this season, but the 49ers hope to play a full and successful season.

With a lot of experience, senior Milos Supica is up for the task to navigate this uncertain season.

Milos Supica was born in Serbia, however he played high school basketball at Freedom Christian Academy in Fayetteville, NC. In his senior campaign, Supica averaged 21.3 points and 11 rebounds a game, along with 2.4 blocked shots per game. He was awarded all-state honors as well as being named in Charlotte Observer's top 25 recruits of the 2017 season in North Carolina.

Supica has made steps throughout his 49er career to be a proven leader.

Supica saw action in 28 games and started in eight his freshman year, contributing two double doubles as well. In his sophomore year, Supica played in 29 games and started in 18. He grabbed a career-high 12 rebounds in a win against Oklahoma State. In his junior season, Supica saw action in all of the games that season, scoring double figures in more than six games. He had 10 games with more than five rebounds.

Being a senior during a pandemic isn't an easy task. Supica is well aware of that and ready for the task.

"Being a senior this year will be very different because of COVID. It is a challenging time for sure. I feel like setting an example for the team is important," Supica said.

Supica said that following the protocol's the University has implemented is important as well.

COVID-19 has caused many challenges for athletes across the country, from cancellations to postponements of events. Challenges that student athletes face everyday is something that they have

never had to experience before. Supica felt that it is a very odd time that we are navigating.

"We've never seen a time like this and it presents a lot of challenges. We all have to be very careful because if one player gets COVID, then practice gets canceled and potential postponement to the start of the season too," Supica said.

Being cautious is the most critical component in all of this. Players must follow the guidelines in order to be safe and stay healthy.

COVID-19 has also changed the way in which the conference has done their scheduling this season. As a brief description, during the conference season, a team will play the same opponent twice in a row at the same venue. These games will also be played back-to-back.

Supica knows the new schedule format won't be easy by any means.

"It is going to be hard to play a team, and turn around and play them again with little preparation or rest."

Managing the new schedule will be a challenge that Supica as well as the rest of the team will be facing this season, but he believes that they are prepared for the challenge.

As many will recall, the 2019-20 basketball season was abruptly interrupted by COVID-19, causing many cancellations of conference tournaments, as well as the NCAA tournament. As Supica, the news was crushing as the team was close to the end of a great year and a chance at winning a conference championship ripped from them.

"It was very disappointing. We were actually in a shoot-around when we were told that the tournament was canceled," Supica said when asked about the disappointment of the C-USA tournament being cancelled last season.

With COVID-19 still very much a threat it will be crucial for athletes to be safe so that they can have a conference tournament at the end of this season.

"We look to play well and make a run for the championship this year. Hopefully we can play a full season so that we can play a tournament this year."

At the helm of every great team is a great coach. Head coach Ron Sanchez for the 49ers has had great success in his few years with the program so far. He has recruited many top tier players and brought in many transfers to the program as well. His leadership this far will be crucial this season.

"Coach is a phenomenal guy. He is never going to embarrass any of his players. He is a great leader and has had a big impact on my development as a player," said Supica.

Supica and the team will look to improve upon what was a terrific season last year, and get back to the conference tournament with a chance to play for a C-USA championship. Supica's leadership on and off the court will be something that is crucial to the 49ers success this season.



Photo of Milos Supica by Chris Crews

HER HEART IS ON THE COURT

Mariah Linney looks to leave it all out on the court during her senior season

by Lanese Dell
Staff Writer

Mariah Linney is a senior point guard at Charlotte. Since joining the team her freshman year, she is now one of the oldest players on the team with the most seniority and is looked upon as a leader for the team.

Recently, Linney was named to the preseason All-Conference USA team. She is the only player from Charlotte to be named to the team and she can be credited with being selected due to her leading in minutes played and three-pointers made.

“It’s truly a blessing,” said Linney. “It really kind of caught me off guard because I didn’t think that a lot of other people saw the things that I did last year. It motivates me.”

While juggling this recent accomplishment, she also has to juggle taking on a leadership role for the team. She is one of the three senior players on the team so the underclassmen are looking to her for some guidance for the upcoming season.

Linney says that it has been challenging since she has never been the type to be a vocal leader, but she knows and is aware that her team needs her to be more vocal. It has also given her confidence because her teammates trust her. She is going to have to step up to the plate in order to be the leader that they need her to be.

The fourth-year senior is also aware that her seniority and level of experience can benefit the team in the upcoming season. This can be applied to not just helping out the underclassmen during practice, but also while playing on the court against their opponents.

“I think experience always benefits somebody’s position because you really know how everything is gonna go so like the pace of the game is much different of what I know now than when I came in as a freshman so your experience means a lot,” said Linney.

Even though she does have experience and playing abilities that can benefit her team as they play against their opponents, she also recognizes that there are improvements that she wants to make as a player.

One of the improvements that Linney wants to make is being a more consistent shooter, especially when she is being contested. She also wants to work on being a better scorer compared to her previous years of playing basketball for the team since she believes that is what her team needs from her this season.

Along with this, she wants to be able to learn everything that she needs to know in order to be the best player that she can be, not just for herself, but also while she is on the court playing with her teammates.

“I do believe that I am learning to be the best player because I feel like the best player still has things to learn,” said Linney. “The best player should never

be satisfied so they’re always learning and always getting better and always willing to get better.”

Outside of working on her abilities and utilizing her experience to benefit the team, this season is not going to be a normal season for basketball due to COVID-19 and sports have been affected by the pandemic. Nevertheless, Linney and her teammates have been preparing for this season and making adjustments when needed along with the guidance from Head Coach Cara Consuegra.

“Everything got pushed back so we started practicing later,” said Linney. “We gotta learn how to play with each other quicker than normal, playing a lot in practice and I think Coach Cara does a good job of that.”

Although the season may be different compared to previous years due to the pandemic, there are some things that people should watch out for when they play this season.

Linney says that they have a lot more depth on the bench where they can play all players because everyone works hard. They are also well-balanced in terms of their abilities which will make it harder for their opponents can’t focus on a single player.

In preparation for this season, Linney and her teammates have focused on what their mindset is going to be and it has remained consistent while Linney has played for the team.

Their mindset for the past three years has been the obstacle is the way, and this is especially true when navigating through the pandemic. As players, they can only control what they can control and that has to be their focus. If anything were to happen that is out of their control, they have to be able to deal with it and push through it all.

One of her most important lessons while being on the team, and she has learned a lot of lessons, is the same obstacle that she has had to overcome which is her confidence.

“It’s something that I struggle with and still to this day but, something that pushes me is when other people believe in me because if I don’t have confidence in myself, everything changes,” said Linney.

Even with confidence being her most important lesson and obstacle that she has had to overcome while being on the team, basketball has taught her something that carries over into other areas of her life.

Accountability transfers over into the real world, and Linney has recognized that. It is in everyday life and it is really important when it comes to basketball.

With their season being just around the corner, and even with having to adjust with the pandemic, the team is already very well aware of what the goals for the team are.

“Same as every season: win a Conference USA championship,” said Linney.



Photo of Mariah Linney by Chris Crews

FROM THE SIDELINES



Photo by Chris Crews

Members of the Niner Times sports staff gives their thoughts on the 2020-21 basketball season

While writing this year's basketball preview, some of the Niner Times Sports staff pondered what they are looking forward to most this year as basketball is finally back. This year will be different. Stands will no longer be packed and games might be cancelled. Nonetheless, we finally get to watch both the women's and men's basketball teams compete for Conference USA championship and maybe even more. Here is what the NT Sports staff is looking forward to this basketball season:

Bradley Cole, Sports Editor:

When it comes to Charlotte 49ers sports, there hasn't been much to watch. Except for football and cross country, all of the fall sports were moved to the spring season. There have been some cancellations on that end, too. It will be nice to have a couple games to look forward to each week from both the women's and men's basketball teams. I can't wait to see Charlotte play against Tennessee in their first game as

that would be a huge win for the program. And I can't wait for the women's team to play at UNC-Chapel Hill, which could be another big win for the program. Things are going to be different, but a small sense of normalcy will return when the first ball swishes through the net on Nov. 25.

Miles Ruder, Asst. Sports Editor:

Honestly, I'm just looking forward to college basketball being back on. Last season ended so abruptly and everything shut down right before March Madness which really bummed me out because that's one of my favorite times of the year. I can't wait to watch Charlotte basketball this year especially with all the new players coming in for both the men's and women's teams. I probably won't be able to attend every game because of COVID-19 regulations but I'm still very much looking forward to the season and all the exciting players who are returning as well.

Lanese Dell, Staff Writer:

With basketball being right around the corner, I'm looking forward to the feeling that you get when you watch your school's team play. I watch a variety of sports for both college and professional but the feeling is different when you get to see your school team play. My first game that I watched after transferring to Charlotte was a basketball game and it was an amazing experience. I miss it and I want to be able to have that experience at least one more time before I graduate this semester.

Bryson Foster, Staff Writer:

I am excited for many things this coming basketball season. It will be refreshing to have a new sport to cover and be able to report about. These teams took so many great strides last year and it will be great to see what they do this year. It will be fun to see how the team and players have grown through these tough times.

There is so much to be hopeful about and it will be great to have that spotlight back on our basketball program.

Cameron Williams, Staff Writer:

I am looking forward to seeing the development of the team from last year. I think Jahmir Young will have an awesome season and really take a leadership role this season. It will be interesting to see how the season goes with the new format. Hopefully there are not many cancellations due to COVID-19. I am looking forward to the teams having another shot at the C-USA Championship. There has not been much going on other than football, so it will be nice to be able to write about a different sport as well.