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Gardner-Webb Winter Sports Preview

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Gardner-Webb Winter Sports Preview

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Office of University Communications

October 31, 2011



A November chill is in the air, and for sports fans, that can only mean one thing: the fall sports season is hitting the home stretch, and Gardner-Webb Runnin' Bulldogs winter sports are about to heat up! Enjoy this preview of the upcoming winter action, and visit gwusports.com for complete coverage of Gardner-Webb athletics. For ticket information, click [here](#) or call (704) 406-4340.

Click on the following links to skip straight to Women's Basketball, Men's Basketball, Wrestling, Women's Swimming, or Men's Swimming.

Women's Basketball

The 'Lady Dogs are coming off their most successful season in school history, having defeated rival Liberty University for the Big South Conference Tournament Championship in 2011 and made the school's first-ever appearance in the NCAA tournament in March. So it's no secret to Head Coach Rick Reeves that everyone else in the Big South is hoping for a little revenge against the Lady 'Dogs in 2011-12.

"We've been so blessed, and we've won so many games in the league over the last few seasons, so we know that the rest of the league is thinking they finally have us," Reeves says." When the class of 2011 graduated, the 'Dogs lost four key starters and the most accomplished group of Gardner-Webb seniors in school history: twin guards Dominique and Monique Hudson, forward Latroya Pope, and center Sandra Vaitkute.

Given such a young team in 2011-12, many coaches would have prepared a soft schedule, hoping to build some early confidence and, perhaps more importantly, pad their coaching résumé. Not Reeves. The 'Dogs will face powerhouse North Carolina in its Nov. 12 opener, before eventually meeting Duke, Notre Dame, and/or Southern California in a November tournament in the Bahamas.

"I've decided that we're going to take these young players who haven't had much experience, and throw them in the deep end of the pool. We've built probably the toughest schedule any Big South Women's team has ever played," But there is a method to his apparent madness. "We want to go to the NCAA tournament again. To do that, our players need to know that when the conference schedule rolls around, there is no mountain they can't climb. They've already faced the best of the best, and they're ready."

The 'Dogs will face Kennesaw St. in their home opener on Nov. 15 at 7:00 p.m., and will open conference play in Buies Creek against Campbell University on Dec. 30, before returning home to host conference foe Charleston Southern in the Big South home opener at 5:00 p.m. on Jan. 7. [Click here for more about the 2011-12 schedule.](#) You can also catch GWU Men's and Women's Basketball action on 88.3 WGWG, The Range.

Men's Basketball

One of the reasons Gardner-Webb hired Head Coach Chris Holtmann was his reputation as a tenacious recruiter. After inheriting and developing a young team last season, Holtmann has even higher hopes for this year's team, as he combines a solid returning group with his own first full recruiting class. "Our team really improved during the second half last season, and our returning players should grow in their understanding of our system of play," he said. "I am very excited about this team, and about the seven new pieces we've added to our solid core of returnees."

Largely because of their youth, the 2011-12 'Dogs were picked 10th in the Big South Preseason Poll. "I love that challenge," Holtmann said, "and I think our players will as well." The 'Dogs return four of their top six scorers from last season, including senior guard Laron Buggs (10.0 points per game). Holtmann will also look to Wofford transfer Jason Dawson, a junior point guard, to lead what promises to be a potent offensive unit. "We've added skill, toughness, and scoring ability to our already solid core group of players," he said. "We will be young, but we'll be fast and fun to watch."

The 'Dogs open on the road against ACC foe Clemson on Nov. 11, the first challenge in an exciting non-conference lineup that includes contests at Indiana University on Nov. 21 and then the two-time defending NCAA Championship runners-up Butler Bulldogs on Nov. 23.

The season's home opener is Nov. 16 against Lees McRae, and the 'Dogs open Big South play at home against UNC Asheville on Dec. 1. [Click here for more information about the 'Dogs 2011-12 schedule.](#) You can also catch GWU Men's and Women's Basketball action on 88.3 WGWG, The Range.

Wrestling

Entering its first year in the Southern Conference (SoCon), the Gardner-Webb Runnin' Bulldog Wrestling Team was picked fourth in the SoCon Preseason Coaches' Poll, and Head Coach Dick Wince couldn't be more pleased.

"As usual, we have a very challenging schedule. The most dramatic development, of course, is our official entry into the Southern Conference, which is something I've coveted for most of the 22 years I've been at GWU," Wince said. "Although this does mean three trips to Chattanooga, Tenn., this year, it also means that most of our matches will have meaning."

The 'Dogs grapplers will open the season in Paul Porter Arena against Belmont Abbey on Nov. 2 at 7:00, and will also host SoCon foes Appalachian St., Campbell, and the Citadel, as well as Big Ten opponent Indiana throughout the year. They open SoCon competition on the road against Chattanooga on Nov. 11. Click [here](#) for more information about the 2011-12 schedule.

Women's Swimming

The Gardner-Webb women's swimming program's 2011-12 season is highlighted by four home meets, as well as away meets stretching across four states, in preparation for the 2011-12 Coastal Collegiate Swimming Association (CCSA) Championships at season's end. The Runnin' Bulldogs will open the season Sept. 17 with an open water meet in Moss Lake, N.C. GWU will follow with a road contest in an early season bout against the University of North Carolina – Wilmington on Oct. 15, the team's second consecutive trip to Wilmington, N.C.

Gardner-Webb will open its home season Oct. 29 at 10 a.m against new swimming program Queens University. GWU then continues its home slate Nov. 5 in a meet against conference opponents Campbell University, Virginia Military Institute, and North Carolina A&T. The meet, GWU's conference opener, will begin at 1 p.m. Admission is free, and the community is encouraged to come out and support the Runnin' Bulldogs!

Men's Swimming

The Gardner-Webb men's swimming program has announced its schedule for the upcoming 2011-12 competition season, featuring three home meets including two against in-conference foes College of Charleston and Virginia Military Institute, all in preparation for the CCSA Championships Feb. 16-18, 2012.

The Runnin' Bulldogs dive into the season on Sept. 17 with an open water meet at nearby Moss Lake, in preparation for a grueling fall schedule lasting through October and November. Gardner-Webb will travel to face the Seahawks of UNC-Wilmington on Oct. 15, before turning around two weeks later to compete before a home crowd in Boiling Springs, N.C. against new opponent Queens University on Oct. 29 at 10 a.m.

November marks the opening of conference competition for the Runnin' Bulldogs when GWU hosts VMI on Nov. 4 at 6 p.m. Admission is free, and the community is encouraged to come out and support the Runnin' Bulldogs!

The Bulldog Club

The Gardner-Webb University Bulldog Club serves as the fundraising arm for the Department of Athletics and plays an important role in funding scholarships for the University's 21 NCAA Division I intercollegiate sports. Through their generosity, Bulldog

Club members provide Gardner-Webb student athletes with the opportunity to achieve their academic and athletic goals. For more information about how to get involved with the Bulldog Club, visit the Bulldog Club website or call Sarah A. Currie at (704) 406-4630.