

ATHLETICS

Gardner-Webb Introduces New Head Women's Basketball Coach Scott Merritt at May 2 Event

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New Coach is Experienced Player, Teacher, Recruiter and Leader

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb announced April 22 that Scott Merritt is the University's next head women's basketball coach. He will be introduced to the campus and community on May 2 at 2 p.m. in Stewart Hall, Tucker Student Center.

"I am excited to welcome Scott Merritt as the next Head Coach of GWU's Women's Basketball team," said GWU President Dr. William M. Downs. "Coach Merritt has already impressed me as a tenacious competitor and as an effective communicator; equally important, he understands the mission of a university that wants its student-athletes to be truly outstanding in all that they do. With Coach Merritt's leadership, Gardner-Webb's Women's Basketball program can now elevate to the next level by winning games in the NCAA Tournament. That makes this another great day to be a Runnin' Bulldog!"

Merritt comes to Gardner-Webb from the University of Wisconsin, where he has served as Associate Head Coach since 2021.

"The members of our women's basketball team asked me to ensure our next head coach was a confident and consistent winner, was a strong cultural fit, and had the ability to help them find opportunities to play professional basketball worldwide after graduation," said Vice President and Director of Athletics Dr. Andrew T. Goodrich. "Coach Merritt is all of these things and more. He was a championship caliber player at Marquette, including making it to the 2003 Final Four. As an assistant coach he helped lead the top-10 ranked Golden Eagles to three Big East Conference Championships and played nine seasons of professional basketball all over the world."



Goodrich continued, “After conversations with some of the best college basketball coaches in the country and hearing his vision and strategies to lead the program, it became clear to me that Scott is an incredible coach, teacher, recruiter, and leader who has the knowledge, skills, ability, and passion to take this program to the next level.”

This past season, Merritt helped the Badgers to their highest Big Ten win total since 2010-11 and the program’s highest Big Ten finish in 11 seasons. A late-season win over 12th-ranked Michigan gave Wisconsin a first-round bye in the Big Ten Tournament.

“I am thrilled to be the new Head Coach at a faith-based University that’s so rich in tradition,” said Merritt. “The vision and leadership of Dr. Downs and Dr. Goodrich, coupled by the support of the campus and surrounding community are what make this such an exciting opportunity. I cannot wait to get to work!”

Merritt was an assistant coach at Illinois during the 2020-2021 season and spent the previous six seasons as an assistant coach at his alma mater, Marquette University.

During his time at Marquette, Merritt helped the Golden Eagles steadily improve. Marquette reached 25 wins by his third season on staff, a season that was capped by the school’s first ever Big East championship and the program’s first NCAA Tournament berth since 2011.

He helped the Golden Eagles to three Big East titles. In addition to the 2017 tournament championship, Marquette won regular season titles in 2018 and 2019. The program also notched four consecutive 20-win seasons, including a school-record 27 wins in 2018-19 – when Marquette soared as high as No. 8 in the Associated Press national poll.

Marquette reached three consecutive NCAA Tournaments and were poised to make a fourth appearance in 2020 before the event was canceled.

Merritt recruited and coached two Big East Players of the Year—Allazia Blockton (2018) and Natisha Hiedeman (2019). One of his post players, Erika Davenport, finished her career with more than 1,000 career points and 1,000 career rebounds—becoming just the fourth woman in school history to do so.

A 6-foot-10 center at Marquette, Merritt emerged as a force down low for the Golden Eagles under head coach Tom Crean. He was a four-year letterwinner and finished his career with 1,049 points, 697 rebounds and 113 blocks—all which rank among the school's best.

Merritt finished as the program's all-time leader with 126 career games played and helped the Golden Eagles to a Final Four appearance as a junior in 2003 – averaging 10.1 points and 6.6 rebounds per game in a lineup that included future NBA superstar Dwayne Wade.

Merritt is a 2004 graduate of Marquette's College of Communications. He and his wife, Ashley, have four children – Laila, Isaiah, Mariah and Sienna.

Gardner-Webb is coming off a school and conference-record 29 wins, Big South Conference regular season and tournament titles and the program's first NCAA Tournament berth since 2011.

The Runnin' Bulldogs were the first team in Big South history to post an 18-0 league mark and won 21 games in a row heading into the NCAA Tournament.

Gardner-Webb was ranked as high as No. 9 in the CollegeInsider.com Mid-Major Top 25 this past season—which is the highest mark in school and league history.

Story content provided courtesy of gwusports.com

Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina's recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to six professional schools, 14 academic departments, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty. Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at [Gardner-Webb.edu](https://gardner-webb.edu/). (<https://gardner-webb.edu/>)