

Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

Athletics News

Athletics

8-26-2016

VBALL Season Preview: Schedule

Georgia Southern University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/athletics-news-online>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "VBALL Season Preview: Schedule" (2016). *Athletics News*. 1966.
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/athletics-news-online/1966>

This article is brought to you for free and open access by the Athletics at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Athletics News by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

VBALL Season Preview: Schedule

Last of a four-part 2016 season preview heading into tonight's opening match.

Marc Gignac



Jeremy Wilburn

Women's Volleyball | 8/26/2016 10:19:00 AM

Story Links

[Tuesday - Setters and Right Side Hitters](#)

[Wednesday - Outside Hitters and Middles](#)

[Thursday - Defensive Specialists](#)

[Friday - Schedule](#)

[Penn State Classic Tournament Central](#)

STATESBORO, Ga. – The Georgia Southern volleyball program will look to get back to its winning ways as it begins year three in the Sun Belt Conference.

Coming off back-to-back 25-win seasons and an NCAA Tournament appearance in 2013, the Eagles joined the Sun Belt in 2014 with high expectations. Injuries to three starters decimated the team in year one, and erratic, inconsistent play proved to be the Eagles' Achilles heel last season.

With five starters and all-league libero [Alex Beecher](#) back, the Eagles look to turn the corner in 2016. With a blend of 10 veterans and 10 newcomers in the gym this preseason, head coach [Dustin Wood](#) has noticed a different level of intensity and competition than in years past.

"The thing that we've noticed this year is that they are really holding each other accountable, and feelings aren't getting hurt," Wood said. "They understand that this is what we need to do to get better. They are showing signs of being direct and honest with each other and that they are out there to win."

Below is the last piece in a four-part series previewing the 2016 season.

Schedule

The Eagles will test themselves early when they travel to the Penn State Classic, home of the seven-time national champions Nittany Lions. Georgia Southern opens the season against No. 19 North Carolina before taking on ninth-ranked Penn State. A date with Big 12 opponent West Virginia rounds out the trip. Wood knows it's a tall task but says he expects the Eagles to play well and be competitive.

"The way we can be successful that first weekend is with serving and passing – that's any match but especially matches against those teams to try to break down their athleticism," he said. "All we ask our kids to do is to play well each night, and if we play well, we have a really good chance to win. What we don't want is to have that taste of 'what if' in our mouth."

Georgia Southern starts the home season with a five-team tournament Sept. 1-2, and backs it up by hosting Buffalo, coached by former Eagle assistant Scott Smith, South Carolina and Wake Forest.

"We're hosting an ACC opponent Friday night and SEC opponent Saturday night so we're hoping it's going to be pretty packed for that," Wood said. "It's a quality tournament with good teams, and people are going to see some quality volleyball."

The Sun Belt will be even better in 2016 with the addition of Coastal Carolina, which went 25-5, won the Big South and played in the NCAA Tournament last season. The league will be split into two divisions, and teams will play each team in its own division twice and teams in the other division once.

Georgia Southern was picked fourth in the East Division in the Preseason Coaches Poll, ahead of Troy and Georgia State. Coastal Carolina is picked to win the East, followed by Appalachian State and South Alabama. Defending champion Arkansas State, which is receiving votes in the AVCA Preseason Poll, is picked to win the West, followed by Texas State, UT Arlington, Little Rock, UL Lafayette and ULM.

The Eagles have the favorable schedule this year with nine home matches and seven away in the league. Next year, it will flip and the Eagles will host seven and play nine on the road. In addition, Georgia Southern hosts the top four teams from the West Division, according to the Coaches Poll.

"After we go to Louisiana, we get two weekends straight at home, which is nice at the beginning of the year so we can set the tone," said Wood. "We need to win matches at home because winning on the road in the league is always tough."

The top four teams from each division advance to the Sun Belt Tournament, which will be played at UT Arlington Nov. 18-20. Georgia Southern advanced to the tourney as the eighth seed last year, and the Eagles will look to advance to the tourney again with a better seeding this year. To do so, they will need to be more consistent and get off to better starts.

"What we're trying to do is stay consistent and start off better," Wood said. "If we play well, I like our chances, and if we don't, we're going to be going home quick. That's the reality, and I enjoy that. You have to bring your best night in and night out. It's a solid conference with good teams that are well coached."

The Eagles open the campaign tonight against No. 19 North Carolina at the Penn State Classic. First serve is set for 5 p.m.

Georgia Southern Athletics provides up-to-date information on all its sports through its official website, GSEagles.com, through social media channels facebook.com/GSAthletics, twitter.com/GSAthletics, iOS app Georgia Southern Eagles and Android app Eagles GATA. Fans can purchase tickets to Georgia Southern Athletics events by visiting GSEagles.com/tickets.

[Print Friendly Version](#)