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Georgia Southern University

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Georgia Southern Starts Basketball Season with Hoops Breakfast

The season begins in November for both the men and women's basketball programs.

Marc Gignac

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Men's coach Mark Byington speaks at the Hoops Tipoff Breakfast.

Men's Basketball | 10/19/2016 2:58:00 PM

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STATESBORO, Ga. – Georgia Southern officially kicked off basketball season with the second annual Hoops Tipoff Breakfast, sponsored by Beacon Place luxury apartments, Wednesday morning in Hanner Fieldhouse.

Local businessmen and businesswomen and Eagle fans had breakfast on the Hanner

Fieldhouse arena floor and heard from women's basketball coach [Kip Drown](#) and men's basketball coach [Mark Byington](#) about the upcoming season. Student-athletes [Patrice Butler](#) from the women's team and [Shawn O'Connell](#) and [Devonte Boykins](#) from the men's team also spoke.

The women return all five starters from last season, [Angel McGowan](#) was named Preseason First-Team All-Sun Belt and Butler earned third-team honors. The Eagles lost eight Sun Belt games by seven points or less last year, and Drown talked about his challenge to the team this year.

"I challenged them with three words, and the words were simply this - why not us?" said Drown. "We feel like we're as talented, and we feel like we work as hard as anybody in the Sun Belt so the question then becomes why not us? The question was asked to look at your confidence and to look at yourself and say we can compete with anybody in this league."

After finishing fifth in the Sun Belt Conference last season, the Georgia Southern men return all five starters and 11 lettermen to the 2016-17 squad, including 94 percent of its scoring and rebounding. The Eagles were picked fourth in the Preseason Poll, [Tookie Brown](#) was named Preseason first-team all-league and [Mike Hughes](#) was chosen second-team all-conference. Byington talked about the outside expectations for his team.

"We have to be motivated intrinsically, motivated by things besides what other people think of us," he said. "I know the expectations I have for this program, I know the expectations that I have for our guys and the expectations they have for themselves. Right now, we're competing for a championship, and we have a good enough team to win a championship. We have to make sure we grow and keep getting better and keep going forward and by the time we get to March, be in a place where we can have a special moment."

Georgia Southern will hold a Hoops Fan Fest Oct. 26, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in Hanner Fieldhouse. Fans will have the chance to meet student-athletes and coaches from the men's and women's basketball teams. Admission and parking is free, and the first 200 fans in attendance will receive free T-shirts.

Season tickets, which are good for both men's and women's home games, start as low as \$90, and fans can save over \$200 by purchasing season tickets.

The Georgia Southern women tip off the 2016-17 season with a home exhibition game against Coastal Georgia Nov. 1. The Eagles' regular-season will then officially begin with a pair of home games on Friday, Nov. 11 and Sunday, Nov. 13. The Eagles will tip off the season against North Carolina A&T and then turn their attention to the Night Hawks of Thomas University.

The Eagle men host Lees-McRae in an exhibition game in Hanner Fieldhouse Nov. 3,

before opening the season at NC State Nov. 11.

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