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## WBB Season Preview Part 2: Five Newcomers Add Needed Depth for Eagles

*Eagles will be at least three deep at every position this season*



Women's Basketball | 10/31/2016 1:37:00 PM

### Story Links

Preview schedule:

Oct. 28 – Veterans

**Today – Newcomers**

Nov. 2 – The Schedule

Below is the second in a three-part series previewing the Eagles' 2016-17 season.

**STATESBORO** – Last season, the Georgia Southern women's basketball team had to shuffle personnel around at times, forcing some players to play at positions they were not fully comfortable with. During the off-season, the Eagles added five fresh faces to the program, and all five freshmen fill voids for the Eagles and will add depth across the board, setting the Eagles up for growth not just this season, but well into the future.

The five newcomers include guards [Amira Atwater](#), [Alexis Brown](#) and [Nakol Franks](#) along with forwards [Hailey Dias-Allen](#) and [Victoria Stavropoulos](#).

"All five freshmen are going to play at some point in their careers here," head coach [Kip Drown](#) said. "We as a staff really like all five of them. How quickly they see the court and make the adjustment from high school to college is going to be at a different rate, but all five will play and will be good players for our program for years to come."

A point guard out of Douglasville, Ga., Atwater was a four-time letterwinner with the Tigers of Douglas County High School. As a junior, she was named her team's Most Outstanding Offensive Player and was named to the Peach State All-Tournament Team. During that campaign, she was a two-time athlete of the week and was named to the all-county first team after averaging 11.3 point, 6.5 assists, 3.3 rebounds and 3.3 steals per game.

"Amira has tremendous court vision. She is probably one of the best players I've ever coached as far as her ability to see the floor," Drown said. "She can really push the basketball up the floor, she's a great open court player who is also a great pull up jumper. She's going to be one of those guards that will be able to change the tempo of the game for us. She's going through what the other four freshmen are going through, and probably what most freshmen are going through across the country right now and that is the adjustment from high school to college. That includes playing with and managing the 30 second shot clock and just the depth of things she is having to learn. I thought two weeks ago she really stepped things up and started playing at a different level and we continue to see her moving forward. We're excited about her this year and she is going to definitely play and help us get better."

Brown is the sister of Georgia Southern men's basketball standout Tookie Brown and she comes to Statesboro from Morgan County High School where she was a four-year letterwinner. While at Morgan County, the 5-6 guard was a four-time All-State honoree; she was named a second-team selection following both her freshman and sophomore years and was a first-team selection as a junior and senior. She was also a four-time All-Region First-Team honoree and was named the Region Player of the Year last season. As a senior, Brown averaged 17.4 points, 6.0 rebounds and 4.0 assists per game and eclipsed 1,000 career points en route to leading her team to the GHSA AAA State Championship with a record of 28-2.

"Alexis comes from a basketball legacy here in Georgia with her brother, Tookie, having a great freshman year here last season," Drown said. "But she also won her own state title as a senior at Morgan County and she's a great shooter. She can score and shoot the basketball really well. Like our other freshmen, she's adjusting to our system and college basketball, but she's been a really coachable player and is a great person. Her ability to score, her physical strength and her basketball IQ are going to put her in a position to help us this year and in the future."

Franks joined the Eagle women's basketball program this summer after five years with the Wren High School varsity girl's team. A starter since her eighth grade year, Franks earned playing time on the varsity squad as a seventh grader and ended her prep

career with over 1,500 career points and over 300 rebounds. Franks was named the 2013-14 Max Preps Player of the Year for South Carolina, earned multiple all-region nods and was a two-time South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association (SCBCA) All-State selection (2013-14, 2014-15). As a junior in 2014-15, she was named to the High School Sports Report (HSSR) All-State team, the HSSR All-Rookie Team and was also named to the 2015 HSSR-SCHSL Statewide Girls Team. She finished her career ranked as one of the top senior players in South Carolina by Southern Hoops after being a top-five senior in SC-AAA as listed by the SCBCA. Her team won the conference championship in 2012-13 and was the Upper State Finalist that same season.

"Nakol is a tremendously pure shooter," Drown said. "Anybody who was at Hoops Fan Fest saw her in the three-point contest and know that she has one of the best strokes I have ever coached. She came in this summer and I think she was probably more ready than anybody else, both mentally and physically, to step out on the court. From her first workout, day one I didn't think you could tell she was a freshman. The work ethic, tempo, everything was really there. She's going to have a really good career here. She has the ability to score, but also to guard and is a good athlete."

Dias-Allen is a forward/center out of Greensboro, N.C. where she was a four-year letterwinner for Southeast Guilford High School. She was a three-time All-Conference selection (2014, 2015, 2016). Following her senior season, Dias-Allen was named to the All-Area as well as All-Region teams and was twice named her team most valuable player (2014, 2016). As a senior, she averaged 11.0 points, 7.4 rebounds, 1.3 steals, 1.0 blocks and 0.9 assists and scored her career-high of 32 points against Reidsville on Jan. 19, 2016.

"Hailey is someone I feel that we got a real steal on. We didn't sign her until the late period in April and didn't really get onto her until late in the process, but man she's been a real pleasant surprise," Drown said "She's very athletic, we knew she could run the floor well, but she also picks things up very quickly and is going to play an awful lot at the five position for us. We're hoping that as she goes through her career, we can work on some skill things with her so we can also play her at the four. She rebounds tough and is a raw player who is getting better every day. She's going to be so much better late in the season than she is now. I'm excited to see her continue to grow, but as she goes through that growth, she will play because she is just a natural athlete and has the ability to help us immediately."

The final student-athlete added to this year's roster is Stavropoulos. A four-year starter at Sandburg High School in Orland Park, Ill., Stavropoulos brings a unique mindset to the program as she competed overseas twice with the Greek national team. As a sophomore, she was a member of the U16 squad and this past summer, she made the cut and helped the U18 team finish second in the 2016 FIBA U-18 Women's European Championship held this past summer in Sarajevo, Bosnia. She was named to the Hinsdale South All-Tournament team as a sophomore (2013) and junior (2014) and was also named to the Oak Lawn Holiday Tournament All-Tournament team as a junior. As

a junior (2014-15), she earned All-Area second team honors after being an honorable mention the year before. During her junior campaign (2014-15), Stravropoulos averaged 14.8 points, 5.3 rebounds and 2.2 blocks per game.

"Victoria had the summer with the U18 Greek National Team, which was a positive for her and a great experience, but it did keep her away from summer workouts here with the team. I feel like that probably did cost her a little bit as far as learning our system and building rapport with the rest of the team," Drown said. "She had to start at ground zero whereas everybody else had five weeks under their belts. So, she's probably had a bit of a steeper learning curve, even more so than the other freshmen. She shoots the ball well, did a great job in our conditioning and is a tough player who pushes herself very well. She needs to get a little stronger, she knows that and just needs to continue to learn and grasp the system and be able to not think, just react. I think as the year and her career go on, she will be a very solid player for us."

The quintet of newcomers coupled with the 10 returners from last year's team will look to navigate a tough schedule this season that includes 11 non-conference games and 14 total home games. Included in this year's campaign will be seven teams that competed in a post-season national tournament and six teams that finished the 2015-16 season with 20 or more wins.

Georgia Southern will open the pre-season with a home exhibition game against Coastal Georgia on Tuesday, Nov. 1. The Eagles and Mariners will tip off at 7 p.m. in Hanner Fieldhouse. The Eagles will then open the regular season against North Carolina A&T on Friday, Nov. 11 at 7 p.m. with a second home game on Sunday, Nov. 13 at 2 p.m. against Thomas University.

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