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Georgia Southern University Athletics



Sun Belt Forecasts Men's Basketball Smart Schedule for 2019-20

Smart schedule will be used next season.

John McElwain - Sun Belt Conference

Men's Basketball

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NEW ORLEANS – While the 2018-19 season carries on, the Sun Belt Conference is gearing up for what will be a significant change to its men's basketball schedule next season.

The conference adopted a 20-game smart schedule format last June for the 2019-20 men's basketball season with the aim of matching the conference's top teams against each other several times. The goal of the scheduling format is to boost teams' NCAA NET Rankings and other important factors taken into consideration by the NCAA Men's Basketball Committee used to help select and seed teams in the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship.

"The Sun Belt membership is committed to continuing to strengthen men's basketball and this new format is clear evidence of that," said Sun Belt Commissioner Karl Benson, a former member of the NCAA Men's Basketball Committee. "Our new scheduling model will improve the seed of the conference's automatic qualifier while also improving the résumés of the best conference teams in order to receive additional bids to the NCAA Tournament. Men's basketball is too important to not be willing to try different things in order to better our position within the sport."

The conference will split into two divisions (East: Appalachian State, Coastal Carolina, Georgia Southern, Georgia State, South Alabama and Troy; West: Little Rock, Arkansas State, Louisiana, ULM, UTA and Texas State). Each team will play a 16-game schedule with five home and five away games against divisional opponents and three home and three away games against non-divisional opponents.

Based on the results of those 16 games, teams will be ranked 1 through 12 and placed in four pods – Pod A (#1, #2, #3), Pod B (#4, #5, #6), Pod C (#7, #8, #9) and Pod D (#10, #11, #12).

Each team will play the other two pod members once at home and once away for the final four games of the 20-game schedule. The pod schedule is slated to begin on Saturday, Feb. 22 and conclude on Wednesday, March 3.

Teams will be seeded for the 2020 Sun Belt Men's Basketball Championship based on the results within their pod. For example, a team in Pod A (#1, #2, #3) cannot be seeded lower than the No. 3 seed. However, it is possible, that the regular-season champion would not be the No. 1 seed in the conference tournament should that team not have the best pod record. The regular-season champion will be awarded based on the results of the full 20-game conference schedule.

Here's what the pods would look like this season based on the results to date:

POD A

1. Texas State (11-4)
2. Georgia Southern/Georgia State (10-5)*
3. Georgia Southern/Georgia State (10-5)*

POD B

4. UTA (9-6)
5. Coastal Carolina/Louisiana/ULM (7-7)*
6. Coastal Carolina/Louisiana/ULM (7-7)*

POD C

7. Coastal Carolina/Louisiana/ULM (7-7)*
8. Arkansas State/South Alabama (6-8)*
9. Arkansas State/South Alabama (6-8)*

POD D

10. Little Rock (5-9)
11. Appalachian State/Troy (4-10)*
12. Appalachian State/Troy (4-10)*

* All ties would be broken using the conference's tiebreaking procedures (<https://sunbelt.me/tiebreakers>).

The 2020 Sun Belt Men's and Women's Basketball Championships will take on a significant format change as the New Orleans Smoothie King Center, home of the NBA's New Orleans Pelicans, will host games of both semifinal rounds as well as both championship games. The men's and women's tournaments will each see 10 total teams selected with the No. 1 and No. 2 seeds receiving byes directly to the semifinal rounds at the Smoothie King Center. The No. 3 and No. 4 seeds will host quarterfinal games at home against winners of games from the first and second rounds. The quarterfinal winners will join the No. 1 and No. 2 seeds in New Orleans for a "Final Four" experience.

The 2019 Sun Belt Men's Basketball Championship is set for March 12 and 14-17. The tournament begins on Tuesday, March 12, with two first-round games taking place at on-campus sites. The remaining eight teams converge on Lakefront Arena in New Orleans starting on Thursday, March 14, with the winner earning the league's automatic bid to the 2019 NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship. First-round, second-round, quarterfinal and semifinal games are set for live coverage on ESPN+. The men's championship game is scheduled for Sunday, March 17 at 1 p.m. CT on ESPN2. Complete ticket information is available on SunBeltSports.org.

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