



OHIO VALLEY CONFERENCE

Morehead State and Murray State Tabbed as Co-Favorites in 2009-10 OVC Men's Basketball Race; Faried Named Preseason Player of the Year

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BRENTWOOD, Tenn. - In a vote of Ohio Valley Conference head men's basketball coaches and sports information directors, **Morehead State** and **Murray State** each received 10 first-place votes and were picked as co-favorites for the 2009-10 season. Morehead State finished last season 12-6 in league play (4th place) and went on to win the OVC Tournament Championship. Murray State was tied for second overall last season with a 13-5 record and lost in the OVC Tournament semifinals.

It marks the 13th time in the last 21 years that Murray State has been picked the preseason favorite and second year in a row. Morehead State is tabbed first for the first time since the 1983-84 season (when they went 25-6 and won the OVC regular season and tournament championships). It marks just the third time since 1980-81 (when preseason polls were first available) that co-favorites have been picked in the preseason poll (it also happened in 1991-92 and 1994-95).

Morehead State and Murray State each received 154 points and were followed next by **Austin Peay** who had 114 total points. **Eastern Illinois** was picked fourth (105 points) and followed by **Eastern Kentucky** (93), **Jacksonville State** (86), **Tennessee Tech** (76), **UT Martin** (55), **Tennessee State** (44) and **Southeast Missouri State** (19).

After being picked first a season ago and coming up just short, Murray State will look to win its record 21st OVC Championship this season and its first since 2005-06. **Billy Kennedy** enters his fourth season on the bench in Murray and has four starters and 10 letterwinners returning from last year's second place team. Among those returning are three selections to the preseason All-OVC team: senior forward **Danero Thomas**, junior guard **Isacc Miles** and sophomore forward **Ivan Aska**. Thomas was a second-team All-OVC pick a year ago after averaging 12.5 points and 4.3 rebounds a contest. Miles made league history by recording just the ninth triple-double in OVC history against UT Martin in February; Miles had 13 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists in the Racer victory. Aska took home the hardware as OVC Freshman of the Year after averaging 10.3 points and 5.8 rebounds per game and connecting on 52.7 percent of his field goal attempts, fifth best in the league.

Morehead State head coach **Donnie Tyndall** not only led his alma mater to the NCAA Tournament a season ago, but picked up a victory in the Opening Round, notching the league's first win in the NCAA Tournament in 20 years (1989). After topping Alabama State 58-43 in that game, the Eagles stayed in Dayton and lost to No. 1 overall seed Louisville in the next round. All that was made possible by capturing the OVC Tournament Championship, which MSU did by beating perennial power Austin Peay 67-65 in a thrilling, double-overtime game in Nashville. Tyndall lost just one key contributor from last year's team (leading scorer Leon Buchanan) but does return a host of talented players including OVC Preseason Player of the Year **Kenneth Faried**. Faried notched the second-most double-doubles in the country last season (25) while finishing third nationally in rebounding (13.0/game). He was named OVC Tournament MVP after several big plays down the stretch of the title game, including a key alley-oop dunk and a big blocked shot.

Austin Peay has had tremendous success in the league over the last decade, including advancing to the OVC Tournament Championship game in six of the last seven seasons. The Governors claimed that crown in 2008 but came up just short in 2007 (1-point loss) and a year ago (2-point loss in double overtime). One thing that remains consistent for the program is head coach **Dave Loos** who enters 20th season on the bench in Clarksville. The "Dean of OVC Coaches," Loos has won 314 games at Austin Peay, which ranks as the second-most wins in OVC history. Loos trails Cal Luther (319 wins at Murray State and UT Martin) by just five victories and should become the all-time leader in that category before the New Year. Loos has eight players and three starters back from last year's team. The Govs will look to senior point guard **Wesley Channels** as the team's leader now that Drake Reed has graduated. Channels was a second-team All-OVC selection last season after averaging 16.5 points and 3.1 assists per game.

Fourth place is the highest preseason pick for Eastern Illinois since the 2002-03 season when the Panthers were also tabbed fourth. Fifth-year head coach **Mike Miller** has equaled or bettered his team's Conference mark each of the last four seasons, building to a talented group of returnees for 2009-10. EIU has 11 letterwinners and four starters back from last year's 8-10 squad that came within three points (and just one missed jumper) of upsetting Austin Peay in the first round of last season's OVC Tournament. Senior guard **Romain Martin** is back to 100 percent about missing most of his sophomore season due to injury. Martin played in all 30 games a season ago, leading the team with a 15.4 points/game average. Martin knocked down 78 3-pointers a season ago and is considered one of the top outside threats in the OVC. Eastern also returns senior center **Ousmane Cisse**, junior guard **Tyler Laser** and senior guard **T.J. Marion**. Newcomer **Shaun Pratl** should be one of the top freshmen in the league.

Eastern Kentucky won 18 total games and was 10-8 in the league (fifth place) last season for head coach **Jeff Neubauer**. Neubauer has won 10 or more league games in each of his first four seasons in Richmond. The Colonels have three starters and eight total letterwinners back from last year's team but do have to replace guard Mike Rose who led the country in 3-point field goal percentage (48.1%) last season. This year's team will feature senior forward **Josh Taylor**, who hit the game-winning shot in EKU's 2007 OVC Championship victory, and junior **Justin Stommes**. Taylor averaged 10.9 points and 3.0 rebounds a game last season while Stommes averaged 10.1 points and 3.3 boards a game. The duo combined for 106 made 3-pointers last season; as a team EKU hit 320 trifectas, which set the OVC

single-season record.

Picked last in the preseason poll a year ago, Jacksonville State got off to a hot start in 2008-09 under first-year head coach **James Green**, going 7-1 in the first eight games of the season with road wins over Massachusetts and Georgia State and a home victory over a high-scoring VMI squad. Although the team cooled off near the end of the season, Green has set a solid foundation for the Gamecocks. This season the team has six players back including junior swingman **Nick Murphy** and junior guard **Jeremy Bynum**. Among the key newcomers for Jax State is point guard **Jay-R Strowbridge**, who sat out last season after transferring from Nebraska, and junior college transfer **Trenton Marshall**.

Tennessee Tech has four starters returning from last year's squad that was eighth in the league standings. Eighth year head coach **Mike Sutton** has backcourt mates **Frank Davis** (10.0 points/game, 76 made 3-pointers) and **Will Barnes** (9.8 points, 2.7 assists/game) and forward **Kevin Murphy** (9.6 points, 2.9 rebounds/game) among the returners.

UT Martin made league history last season by winning its first OVC regular season title since becoming a member of the OVC in 1992-93. The Skyhawks compiled a 14-4 league mark and were led by two-time OVC Player of the Year Lester Hudson, who was second nationally in scoring (27.5), trailing only Davidson's Stephen Curry. UTM will have to replace Hudson, who is now a member of the Boston Celtics. The program also had to replace 2008-09 OVC Coach of the Year Bret Campbell in the off-season, and turned to **Jason James**, who spent six seasons with the program as an assistant coach. James is just 32 years of age, which makes him the second youngest Division I men's basketball coach in the nation (behind IPFW's Dane Fife). James has OVC All-Newcomer selection **Delrico Lane** (5.1 points, 4.5 rebounds, 4.9 assists and 2.3 steals/game) back along with junior sharpshooter **Marquis Weddle** (192 made 3-pointers in two seasons).

Tennessee State also welcomes a new coach this season as former Auburn associate head coach **John Cooper** takes over the Tiger program. Cooper has almost a brand new team to start with this year, as just four players who saw action a season ago return; those players accounted for just 25.8 percent of TSU's scoring and 33.6 percent of its rebounding in 2008-09. That group is led by preseason All-OVC selection **Darius Cox** who averaged 10.7 points and 7.0 rebounds/game last season while hitting 52.2 percent from the field.

Southeast Missouri is the third team with a new coach, as former Arkansas State head coach **Dickey Nutt** takes over in Cape Girardeau. Nutt has won nearly 200 games in his 13-year career including leading ASU to the 1998 NCAA Tournament. The Redhawks have just four players back from a team that was winless in OVC competition last season (0-18). Junior **Jajuan Maxwell** will be one of the team's top players; he averaged 7.2 points and 6.0 rebounds a contest last season.

SIU Edwardsville enters year No. 2 of its reclassification effort to Division I. The Cougars became members of the OVC in July 2008 but will not begin regular season competition until 2011-12 and will not be eligible for postseason play until the following year. Second year head coach **Lennox Forrester** saw his team score Division I victories over the likes of Western Michigan and UMKC last season and this year return seven total players. Among those players is sophomore **Mark Yelovich** who averaged a team-best 13.7 points a game last season.

The 2009-10 season kicks off with an exhibition game involving Tennessee State on Nov. 3. The regular season begins on Monday, Nov. 9 when Murray State plays at California as part of the Coaches vs. Cancer Classic. The first Conference games will take place on Thursday, Dec. 3. The 2010 Ohio Valley Conference Tournament will be held March 2, 5-6. The first round (March 2) will be held at campus sites (the top four seeds will host games) and the semifinals and finals will be held at the Sommet Center in Nashville. The semifinals will be carried live on ESPNU with the championship game being broadcast to a national audience on ESPN2.

2009-10 All-OVC Preseason Men's Basketball Team

The 2009-10 All-OVC Preseason Men's Basketball team is headlined by Morehead State junior center **Kenneth Faried**. Faried is coming off a season where he was named OVC Defensive Player of the Year and OVC Tournament MVP.

Overall six different schools were represented on the team with Murray State's three selections leading the way. Eastern Illinois and Morehead State each had two selections while Austin Peay, Eastern Kentucky and Tennessee State had one player apiece on the squad.

The team features just one player (Faried) who was a first-team All-OVC selection last season. The team does have three second-team All-OVC picks from 2008-09 and two players who were on last season's All-Newcomer Team.

Faried made a splash last season being named the Conference's first OVC Defensive Player of the Year after ranking third nationally in rebounding (13.0/game), 52nd nationally in blocked shots (1.9/game) and 69th nationally in steals (1.9/game). Faried also added 13.9 points per game and connected on 55.6 percent of his field goal attempts (36th nationally). The 6-8 native of Newark, N.J. also tallied 25 double-doubles, which was the second most nationally, trailing only National Player of the Year Blake Griffin (29).

Austin Peay's **Wesley Channels** (16.5 points, 3.1 assists/game, 79 made 3-pointers), Eastern Illinois' **Romain Martin** (15.4 points, 3.7 rebounds/game, 78 made 3-pointers) and Murray State's **Danero Thomas** (12.5 points, 43. rebounds, 1.5 steals/game) were each second-team All-OVC picks last season and are each on the preseason team this year.

Murray State's **Ivan Aska** (10.3 points, 5.8 rebounds/game, 52.7 FG%) and **Isacc Miles** (10.6 points, 3.0 rebounds, 3.8 assists/game, and the 9th triple-double in league history) were two of the five All-OVC Newcomer selections in 2008-09 who are also on this year's All-OVC preseason squad.

The Preseason All-OVC team is rounded out by Tennessee State's **Darius Cox** (10.7 points, 7.0 rebounds/game, 52.2 FG%), Eastern Illinois' **Tyler Laser** (11.4 points, 3.1 assists/game, 96.2 FT%), Morehead State's **Maze Stallworth** (12.1 points, 4.1 rebounds/game, 87 made 3-pointers) and Eastern Kentucky's **Justin Stommes** (10.1 points, 3.3 rebounds, 1.9 assists/game, 41.9 3FG%).

2009-10 OVC Men's Basketball Predicted Order of Finish

(Selected by OVC Head Basketball Coaches and Sports Information Directors)

	<u>Order of Finish</u>	<u>Points</u>
1.	Morehead State (10 first-place votes) Murray State (10)	154 154
3.	Austin Peay	114
4.	Eastern Illinois	105
5.	Eastern Kentucky	93
6.	Jacksonville State	86
7.	Tennessee Tech	76
8.	UT Martin	55
9.	Tennessee State	44
10.	Southeast Missouri	19

(9 points awarded for a first-place vote, 8 for second, etc. - Coaches and SID's could not vote for their own teams)

2009-10 Preseason All-Ohio Valley Conference Men's Basketball Team

(Selected by OVC Head Basketball Coaches and Sports Information Directors)

Preseason OVC Player of the Year: Kenneth Faried, Morehead State

<u>NAME. SCHOOL</u>	<u>POS.</u>	<u>HT.</u>	<u>WT.</u>	<u>CL.</u>	<u>HOMETOWN</u>	<u>KEY STATS FROM 2008-09</u>
Ivan Aska, Murray State %	F	6-7	230	So.	Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.	10.3 ppg, 5.8 rpg, 52.7 FG%
Wesley Channels, Austin Peay #	G	6-3	210	Sr.	Memphis, Tenn.	16.5 ppg, 3.1 apg, 1.3 spg, 38.9 3FG%
Darius Cox, Tennessee State	F	6-7	200	Jr.	Monroe, N.C.	10.7 ppg, 7.0 rpg, 52.2 FG%
Kenneth Faried, Morehead State *	F/C	6-8	225	Jr.	Newark, N.J.	13.9 ppg, 13.0 rpg, 1.9 bpg, 55.6 FG%
Tyler Laser, Eastern Illinois	G	6-1	185	Jr.	Hillsdale, Mich.	11.4 ppg, 3.1 apg, 40.7 3FG%, 96.2 FT%
Romain Martin, Eastern Illinois #	G	6-3	190	Sr.	Minneapolis, Minn.	15.4 ppg, 3.7 rpg, 39.8 3FG%
Isacc Miles, Murray State %	G	6-2	205	Jr.	Kansas City, Mo.	10.6 ppg, 3.0 rpg, 3.8 apg, 43.2 FG%
Maze Stallworth, Morehead State	F	6-4	215	Sr.	Elizabethtown, Ky.	12.1 ppg, 4.1 rpg, 38.0 3FG%
Justin Stommes, Eastern Kentucky	G/F	6-7	200	Jr.	Cold Spring, Minn.	10.1 ppg, 3.3 rpg, 1.9 apg, 41.9 3FG%
Danero Thomas, Murray State #	F	6-4	190	Sr.	New Orleans, La.	12.5 ppg, 4.3 rpg, 1.5 spg, 42.2 FG%

* - 1st team All-OVC team in 2008-09

- 2nd team All-OVC team in 2008-09

% - OVC All-Newcomer team in 2008-09

