

Mid-Major Matchup in the Mountains

Among other things, the state of North Carolina is known for BBQ, craft beer and college basketball. In fact, CBS Sports recently ranked North Carolina as the top state for college basketball in the nation. This does not come as a surprise with programs such as UNC and Duke producing powerhouse teams year after year, as well as other notable ACC programs such as NC State and Wake Forest, and mid-major juggernaut Davidson. While these programs seem to garner the most attention, there are many other exciting mid-major programs in the state worth following during college hoops season; Wednesday night's match up between the Western Carolina Catamounts and the North Carolina Central Eagles should prove to be testament to this.

Western Carolina University has made some historical contributions to the world of college basketball. Henry Logan became the first African-American student-athlete in North Carolina when he took the court as the Catamounts shooting guard in 1964. History was also made in Cullowhee when Western Carolina's Ronnie Carr drained the first three-point shot in college basketball history on November 29th, 1980. The Catamounts are currently sitting at 1-1 on the young season with a blowout loss to University of Miami to tip-off the season (92-43) followed by a convincing win over Hiwassee College in their home-opener (87-47). Head Coach Larry Hunter is entering his 12th season at the helm of the Catamounts and will be looking to reach his 700th career win this season.

North Carolina Central will be looking to collect their first win of the season against the Catamounts. The's early record of 0-2 this season is slightly deceiving as they are coming off close losses to Marshall (81-69) and Ohio State (63 - 69). Head Coach LeVelle Martin is going into his 8th season leading the program after spending two years as an assistant and four years playing as a shooting guard for the Eagles. Assistant Coach Eric Wilson will be making his return to Cullowhee where he spent six seasons as an assistant coach for the Catamounts and four years as a student-athlete.

The last and only meeting between these two teams took place in Cullowhee on December 5th, 2007 with the Catamounts defeating the Eagles (84-64). Eagles Assistant Coach Eric Wilson played along side Catamount Assistant Coach Brigham Waginger during this meeting, contributing six and nine points respectively. Wednesday's contest will be held at 7:30 at the Ramsey Center in Cullowhee, NC. The game will be broadcast on ESPN3 as part as the Global Sports Invitational.

WCU Players to Watch:

Deriece Parks - G - Returning from injury that held him out of last season after transferring from South Georgia Tech, Parks is ready to step up and run Larry Hunter's offense.

Haboubacar Mutombo - G - Nephew of NBA All-Star Dikembe Mutombo, Haboubacar's ability to play as both a guard and small forward makes him a very versatile weapon for the Catamounts.

Marc Gosselin - F - Coming off a productive freshman season that saw him earn a role in the teams starting lineup, Gosselin looks to continue this success from the power forward position.

NCCU Players to Watch:

Patrick Cole - G - Despite coming off the bench during the majority of last season, Cole still finished second on the team in scoring; look for him to lead the team in scoring this season.

Dajuan Graf - G - Graf sat out last season due to NCAA Transfer rules after transferring from Florida Gulf Coast; the former "Dunk City" resident hopes to make a name for himself in NC

Pablo Rivas - F - After playing two years of college basketball for Sheridan College in Ontario, Canada, the Panama native brings his experience at the post position to the Eagles.