Basketball

Field Set For 2009 Bank Of The West

Don Haskins Sun Bowl Invitational

TOURNAMENT HISTORY PDF

The field has been set for the 49th annual Bank of the West Don Haskins Sun Bowl Invitational, slated for December 28-29 at the Don Haskins Center on the campus of the University of Texas at El Paso. This year's field includes Niagara University of the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, the United States Air Force Academy of the Mountain West Conference, Norfolk State University of the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference and UTEP of Conference USA.

The Niagara University Purple Eagles (26-9, 14-4) are coached by 11th-year head coach Joe Mihalich, who led the squad to its best record since 1922. The Purple Eagles, who finished 49th in the final Ratings Performance Index (RPI) last season, return four of five starters. Niagara finished second in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference and advanced to the finals of the conference tournament. The Purple Eagles have appeared in the postseason in four of the last five years, making NCAA Tournament appearances in 2005 and 2007 and played in the NIT in 2004 and 2008. Niagara returns four of its top five scorers from last year, led by 5-11 senior guard Tyrone Lewis (16.2 points per game).

The United State Air Force Academy Falcons (10-21, 0-16) are led by fourth-year head coach Jeff Reynolds and have appeared in the post season in two of the last four years. Air Force hopes to rebound from a disappointing season and return to the form that saw the Falcons become one of the winningest teams in the Mountain West Conference this decade. Previous to last season, Air Force had strung together 5 consecutive winning seasons and was ranked as high as No. 14 in the country in 2007.

Air Force last appeared in the Sun Bowl Tournament in 2002.

The Norfolk State University Spartans (13-18, 9-7) are coached by third-year head coach Anthony Evans, who paced the squad to the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Tournament finals last season. The Spartans, who struggled to a 1-10 start last season, closed out the year with a 12-8 mark and a third place finish in the MEAC. Norfolk State's up-tempo offense is paced by 6-0 junior guard Michael Deloach, who averaged 21.5 points per game last season. Joining Deloach in the backcourt is 6-0 junior guard Aleek Pauline, who chipped in 6.5 points and 3.8 assists last season.

The UTEP Miners (23-14, 10-6) are led by fourth-year head coach Tony Barbee, who led the Miners to the College Basketball Invitational Finals last season. The Miners return three starters and seven letterwinners from last season after a fourth place finish in Conference USA. The trio of returning starters are junior guards Randy Culpepper (17.5 ppg), Julyan Stone (5.6 ppg and 6.4 apg) and sophomore forward Arnett Moultrie (8.8 ppg and 8.2 rpg). UTEP has reached the postseason in four of the last six years.

Beginning Dec. 1, tournament tickets will be available at the Sun Bowl Association office at (915-533-4416 or 800-915-BOWL), the UTEP Ticket Center (915-747-5234) and TicketMaster outlets. Tournament tickets can be reserved now by calling the Sun Bowl Association office. Tournament tickets are also included in UTEP season ticket packages.

Ticket prices are as follows: Four-Game, Two-Night Package:

$40 (rows 1-34) and $20 (rows 35-39);

* $20 UTEP students, plus one guest

Two-Game, One-Night Package (Day of Game Only):

$22 (rows 1-34) and $12 (rows 35-39),

* $12 UTEP students, plus one guest

* - Must purchase at the UTEP Ticket Center Only