

SEASON OUTLOOK

RETURNING PLAYERS	
00	ROYCE O'NEALE (F, 6-6, 215, Sr., Killeen, Texas) Throwback small forward started final 31 games a season ago ... Averaged 7.1 points, 5.4 rebounds and 2.9 assists in 27.3 minutes per game ... Transferred to BU from Denver after 2012-13 season.
1	KENNY CHERY (G, 5-11, 180, Sr., Montreal, Quebec) Steady All-Big 12 point guard ... Return to health sparked last season's 12-3 run over final 15 games ... Led Big 12 with .879 free throw percentage in 2013-14.
2	RICO GATHERS (F, 6-8, 280, Jr., LaPlace, La.) Bruising power forward, averaged 6.4 points and 6.4 rebounds in 17.8 minutes per game off bench last season ... Second cousin of late Loyola Marymount All-American Hank Gathers.
13	JOHN HEARD (F, 6-5, 200, Jr., Houston, Texas) Walk-on, spent 2012-13 season as student manager before joining team ... Played limited minutes in 11 games off bench last season ... Both parents are Baylor graduates.
21	TAUREAN PRINCE (F, 6-7, 215, Jr., San Antonio, Texas) Versatile forward, capable of scoring from all over the court ... Minutes more than doubled last season to 14.2 per game ... Switched from No. 35 to 21 in honor of former teammate Isaiah Austin.
24	ISHMAIL WAINRIGHT (G/F, 6-5, 250, So., Kansas City, Mo.) Physical player with versatility to play anywhere from point guard to power forward ... Started first seven games last season before settling into reserve role.
25	AL FREEMAN (G, 6-3, 200, RFr., Charlotte, N.C.) Physical guard with ability to get into paint ... Missed first eight weeks of 2013-14 season with wrist injury, took redshirt to retain four years of eligibility.
35	JOHNATHAN MOTLEY (F, 6-9, 230, RFr., Houston, Texas) Long, athletic forward with wealth of potential ... Added 20 pounds of muscle while sitting out 2013-14 season as redshirt behind big men Cory Jefferson, Isaiah Austin and Rico Gathers.

Coming off a third Sweet 16 appearance in the last five years, Baylor is again looking to make history in 2014-15. While even years have been highly successful, featuring a 2008 NCAA Tournament berth, Elite Eight appearances in 2010 and 2012 and a Sweet 16 in 2014, the Bears have never made the NCAA Tournament in an odd year.

BU will look to change that trend with a new squad that's personnel is quite different from a year ago.

"Each team has different strengths, and one thing that we've always done is we've adapted our style of play to meet whatever our team's strengths might be," 12th-year head coach Scott Drew said. "The great thing is if you look at our offense, in the last three years, it's the third-best offense in the country in offensive efficiency ranking, behind Duke and Michigan. So we've been very efficient on the offensive end. We always find a way to make sure our guys are able to perform at their highest levels."

The Bears return two starters and five letterwinners from last year's 26-12 squad that won a pair of NCAA Tournament games before falling to Wisconsin in the Sweet 16. BU welcomes four signees, including a pair of junior college transfers that will provide some collegiate experience, along with a pair of highly-ranked recruits from the 2013 signing class who sat out last season as redshirts.

"I like accomplishing firsts, and with us, for some reason, Baylor University basketball has never gone to the NCAA Tournament on an odd year," Drew said. "We've never gone in back-to-back years. There's some firsts that we'd like to take care of, but each and every game, we want to win, we want to be competitive and put ourselves in position to win conference titles and win national championships. We believe in the people we have. Obviously, with a lot of transition, as far as players go, we'll be a lot better at the end of the year than the beginning of the year, but there's nobody we face that we can't beat."

The Bears came together to pull off one of the most remarkable turnarounds in Big 12 Conference history last season. After climbing as high as No. 7 in the national rankings, BU started Big 12 play 2-8 and its NCAA Tournament hopes were hanging in the balance. The return of a healthy Kenny Chery sparked the Bears to wins in seven of their final eight Big 12 games, then on to three straight wins to reach the Big 12 Championship title game and two NCAA Tournament wins to advance to the Sweet 16.

"We liked the beginning and the ending of last season," Drew said. "That middle part wasn't as nice. Anytime you have experiences and returning players, they can build and talk about all those experiences with the younger guys. First and foremost, hopefully the way we played at the end of the year, which was sound defensively, efficient on the offensive end, we were good at the free-throw line compared to the middle of the year, hopefully those things will all carry over to the beginning. The returning players should obviously share with the younger guys the importance of that."

Baylor's loss of three starters off that squad and the Big 12 Conference's projected depth contributed to the team being picked tied for sixth in the league in this season's preseason coaches' poll, the lowest the Bears' have been picked since 2009-10. BU was projected behind Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas State and Iowa State, respectively, and tied with West Virginia.

"At Baylor, we reload, we don't rebuild," Drew said. "So, we're excited about the new year. We've got a lot of new faces and a lot of players that are really excited. You can always tell the first day of practice, because you've got a gym full of guys and they're ready to get going. And I know with our coaching staff, especially, it's always exciting when you have a transition, meaning a lot of new faces, because there's so much to work on."

BACKCOURT

Baylor has a wealth of options in the backcourt, but it all starts with the steady hand of senior point guard **Kenny Chery** (11.5 ppg, 4.7 apg). Chery, a former junior college transfer, was an AP All-Big 12 honorable mention selection in his first season at Baylor a year ago. He led the Big 12 with an .879 free throw percentage, and his return from a turf toe injury spurred the Bears' 12-3 run over the final 15 games. Chery will be counted on for even more leadership in 2014-15 as one of only two seniors.

"When you have two seniors like Kenny Chery and Royce O'Neale, the great thing about that is you have two seniors that are diligent, they're great teammates, they're about the right things," Drew said. "As a coach, you feel very good that your team is going to be able to look up to guys like that who are servant leaders."

Senior **Royce O'Neale** (7.1 ppg, 5.4 rpg, 2.9 apg) is back after starting the final 31 games at small forward a season ago. A steady presence who does a little bit of everything, O'Neale came on strong at the end of the season, averaging 8.6 points, 8.3 rebounds and a team-high 3.6 assists over Baylor's seven postseason games. He'll be leaned on heavily as a leader with 101 games of Division I experience.

"I think the great thing is we have Kenny and Royce, who are both seniors, and both of them complement each other well," Drew said. "We need Kenny to be more boisterous, hold his teammates more accountable than he did last year when he wasn't a senior and it was his first year in the program. You look at those two, and Taurean Prince and Rico Gathers, and those four have done a very good job getting our guys to work hard, take care of business, making sure they're doing the right things on and off the court."

Joining O'Neale and Chery in the backcourt is redshirt freshman **Al Freeman**, a combo guard who missed the first eight weeks of last season with a wrist injury and ended up taking a redshirt to retain four years of eligibility. Freeman was ranked No. 62 in the 2013 signing class by *Scout.com*, and he's expected to help fill the hole left by the graduation of Brady Heslip and Gary Franklin.

SEASON OUTLOOK

NEWCOMERS

11	LESTER MEDFORD (G, 5-10, 175, Jr., Tucson, Ariz.) Big bodied JuCo transfer guard ... Two-time NJCAA All-American, first at Arizona Western in 2011-12, then at Indian Hills in 2013-14 ... Averaged 15.2 points, 6.1 assists as IHCC last season.
23	DEE DURHAM (G, 6-4, 175, Fr., Oakwood, Texas) Explosive guard capable of scoring in bunches ... Scored 2,720 points during four-year prep career, also played QB on 6-man football team ... From small East Texas town with population of 510.
31	T.J. MASTON (F, 6-7, 220, Fr., DeSoto, Texas) Long, athletic forward, No. 20 recruit in Texas according to 247Sports.com ... Nephew of Tony and Derrick Battie, who played at Texas Tech and Temple, respectively.
33	AUSTIN MILLS (G, 6-1, 175, Jr., Beverly Hills, Calif.) Walk-on guard, transferred to Baylor after playing two seasons as reserve at Pepperdine ... Averaged 2.4 points and 0.7 assists over 46 games played for Waves.
45	DENG DENG (F, 6-8, 205, Jr., Melbourne, Australia) Athletic JuCo transfer ... Born in Sudan, moved to Egypt at age four and Australia at age nine ... No. 4 ranked JuCo recruit according to 247Sports.com ... Averaged 19.8 ppg, 11.0 rpg in 2013-14.

"Al Freeman is somebody that's a strong guard that can score, play multiple positions, can defend," Drew said. "There are a lot of things he can do. At the same time, I think he became a lot more consistent last year, going every day and chasing Brady around screens and guarding Gary has definitely helped him."

Another member of the 2013 signing class who is back for his second year in the program is **Ishmail Wainright** (1.9 ppg, 1.5 rpg). The broad-shouldered sophomore started the first seven games as a freshman last season before settling into a reserve role for the remainder of the year. A strong ball handler despite his bulk, Wainright is capable of playing point guard through power forward.

"Ishmail is such a unique player because of the things he can do at his size," Drew said. "It's extremely difficult to come in and play Big 12 basketball as a freshman, but he's had a year to adjust and we're excited about his progress. He's a great teammate and a great presence in the locker room."

Baylor has also added a pair of signees in the backcourt. **Lester Medford** is a two-time NJCAA All-American who led Indian Hills to a 34-3 record and averaged 15.2 points and 6.1 assists last season. He's another strong bodied combo guard capable of getting to the rim.

"Lester has the speed and athleticism that will definitely excite Baylor Nation," Drew said. "Both his offense and defense are pretty good. But I'm like most fans, I like guys that can score. Defensively, we know that night-in and night-out, that should be a constant. Nowadays if you can find people that can score, that makes it a lot easier to coach."

Freshman **Dee Durham** is a volume scorer who hails from the tiny East Texas town of Oakwood, population 510. A two-sport standout who quarterbacked Oakwood's six-man football team, he put up 2,720 points over his four years of prep basketball.

"Damiyne is an explosive guard who can score from all over the court," Drew said. "He's similar to LaceDarius Dunn, and he's someone the Baylor fans will certainly enjoy watching throughout his college career."

The Bears also added walk-on **Austin Mills**, who played the last two seasons as reserve point guard at Pepperdine. Mills played in 46 games over two years for the Waves, averaging 9.8 minutes per game. He'll be eligible immediately as a non-recruited student-athlete.

FRONTCOURT

Baylor has large shoes to fill in the frontcourt with All-Big 12 players Cory Jefferson and Isaiah Austin leaving for the NBA. Jefferson was a second-round draft pick, while Austin was diagnosed with a career-ending medical condition during pre-draft workouts. He's back at Baylor pursuing his degree and working as a student assistant on the basketball staff.

While the majority of BU's frontcourt players are inexperienced, the Bears have a rock to build on with junior power forward **Rico Gathers** (6.4 ppg, 6.4 rpg). The 6-foot-8, 280-pound bruiser has come off the bench in his first two years as a Bear while playing behind Jefferson and Austin, but he's the clear leader of an inexperienced frontcourt in 2014-15.

"Anytime you've had freshmen and sophomores, by the time they're a junior or a senior, they're going to be in a leadership role, whether they want to be or not," Drew said. "Rico's got a great personality, he's infectious, and people gravitate to him. It's one of those big-guy syndromes, everybody looks up to the big guy. He's always been a tremendous rebounder. We need him to be able to play longer and be able to stay out of foul trouble, because you don't have Cory and Isaiah to put back in the game. But at the same time, I know he's excited for an expanded role and an opportunity to show what he can do and what he's worked on."

Another player in line for an increased role is junior **Taurean Prince** (6.2 ppg, 2.8 rpg), a versatile athlete who can play small forward or stretch the floor at the four spot. Prince saw his minutes double from his freshman to sophomore year, and he's expected to play significantly more minutes as one of two returning lettermen in the frontcourt.

"Taurean has played a lot of minutes in the front line over his first two years, but he's also had times when he's had to wait patiently for his chance to come," Drew said. "He's really improved his defense, and he's always been capable offensively, so we're excited to see what he can do with an increased role."

One of the keys to Baylor's success this season will be how much the Bears get from redshirt freshman big man **Johnathan Motley**. He sat out last season due to the Bears' loaded frontcourt, but he's now the tallest player and best shot blocker on the team.

"Johnathan Motley going against Cory and Isaiah every day, that's something that anytime you can play against two pros every day you're

going to get better," Drew said. "He put on a lot of size and strength and improved his vertical jump with (strength coach) Charlie Melton. He's somebody that I know a lot of people thought coming out had potential, and I think his production will start to back up some of that potential."

"Redshirts are huge for programs, especially because after a year they've adjusted academically, socially, they know their system," Drew added. "It really puts them a lot further ahead of all the other incoming players, so that means you expect a lot more out of them, especially in a year where we lost a lot of production and a lot of players."

The Bears also gain a pair of 2014 signees to provide depth in the frontcourt. **Deng Deng** is a long, athletic forward who lived in Sudan, Egypt and Australia before heading to Lee College in Baytown, Texas, for the last two seasons.

"Deng is similar to the past frontline players we've had - size and athleticism and length," Drew said. "On the slender side, only about 210 pounds, but somebody that when the ball's up there around the rim, you're always looking for him to come up with one of those big tip dunks or alley-oop plays. So, he's similar to Cory, Isaiah, some of the longer players we've had, just a little bit shorter."

"He's experienced a lot in the few years that he's lived so far," Drew added. "He's somebody that when you talk to him, it's a great smile, great personality, someone you want to cheer for, and someone you want your little kids to have a chance to see, because he is a great role model."

Incoming freshman forward **T.J. Maston** joined the program out of DeSoto (Texas) High School. At 6-foot-7, 220 pounds, he's another long, athletic forward with great basketball bloodlines. Maston is the nephew of Tony and Derrick Battie, who played at Texas Tech and Temple, respectively.

Maston helped DeSoto to a 31-4 record and No. 22 national ranking while playing Texas' highest level of prep basketball. A McDonald's All-America nominee, he averaged 13.7 points, 7.8 rebounds and 1.4 blocks per game as a senior.

"T.J. is a skilled post player who always manages to be in position to make plays," Drew said. "He's got a strong body, and he's only going to get stronger as he spends more time in our program. We're really excited about his potential."

The Bears also return walk-on **John Heard**, who spent the 2012-13 season as a student manager before playing limited minutes in 11 games last season.