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WKU WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Brewer jumping into early leadership role with Lady Toppers

Buffalo native, West Virginia transfer sat out last season

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Western Kentucky redshirt junior guard Alexis Brewer runs drills Tuesday, September 25, 2018, during practice at E.A. Diddle Arena. (Bac Totrong/photo@bgdailynews.com)

Bac Totrong/Daily News

Alexis Brewer hasn't played a minute yet for Western Kentucky and is already held in high regard in the Lady Toppers' locker room.

She's earned that reputation with past experience, a year of sitting the bench and a contagious knack for leadership.

Brewer is the first name mentioned by first-year coach Greg Collins regarding who an inexperienced Lady Topper basketball roster is looking toward in leading a new era.

The redshirt junior is at the forefront of WKU's new identity moving forward.

"We've got the most vocal leader as Alexis Brewer," Collins said before a WKU practice last week. "She's the one in the locker room keeping everyone on track. She has some goals in mind and belief in herself and that's what we need."

Brewer watched from the bench last year after transferring to WKU from West Virginia. The 6-foot- guard watched Ivy Brown and Tashia Brown lead WKU to 24 wins and another Conference USA championship and NCAA Tournament appearance.

Like many who redshirt after a transfer season, Brewer believes it was the best way to learn and prepare for her new opportunity closer to home.

"Sitting out a year really makes you hungry and want to get back out on the court," Brewer said. "Sitting out has definitely made me a better player than I was before."

The Buffalo native, who once prepped at LaRue County with Ivy Brown, transferred from West Virginia after shooting better than 38 percent from 3-point range as a freshman and sophomore. In 2016-17, she led the Mountaineers and ranked second in the Big 12 Conference with a 42.2 percent 3-point shooting mark.

Brewer finished her prep career as a finalist for Kentucky's Miss Basketball award and was the Region 5 Co-Player of the Year in 2015.

A First-Team All-State selection as a senior, Brewer finished her prep days with 2,869 points and 963 rebounds between LaRue County and Bardstown.

Sitting on the bench for home games last year allowed her to take a new perspective on the game and learn from the then-assistant coach Collins.

That the new coach is publicly praising his new guard's leadership abilities before playing an official minute at WKU was good for Brewer to hear.

"It means a lot to me," Brewer said. "It means he has faith in me, but this is my fourth year in college basketball. Just experience is what makes me a leader.



"Both our leaders graduated, so there's a spot open and I guess I naturally took that spot. Not meaning to, but just trying to lead by example."

It's a trait that runs in Brewer's blood. Her father is James "Boo" Brewer, a star 3-point shooter at the University of Louisville from 1988-93 and now the head boys' basketball coach at Bardstown High School.

The Brewers got the team together outside the locker room in April to grill outside and watch the WNBA Draft.

“I thought that was a good indication of leadership, team chemistry and hopefully in the direction this team is moving,” Collins told the Daily News in the summer. “She has confidence in who she is and what she can do. I think the other players recognize that.”

Brewer’s 3-point shooting is her obvious strength, but most of sitting out last season was about expanding her arsenal. Collins compared it to the development of Tashia Brown, whom with a 6-foot-1 frame developed a lethal pull-up jumper on top of her ability to drive to the basket.

Collins has worked with the 5-9 Brewer on the same skills.

“Sometimes people are quick to close out on that 3-point shooter,” Collins said. “By the time you get to the basket, sometimes that thing gets crowded again. Sometimes a player will dribble right through the open midrange jump shot.

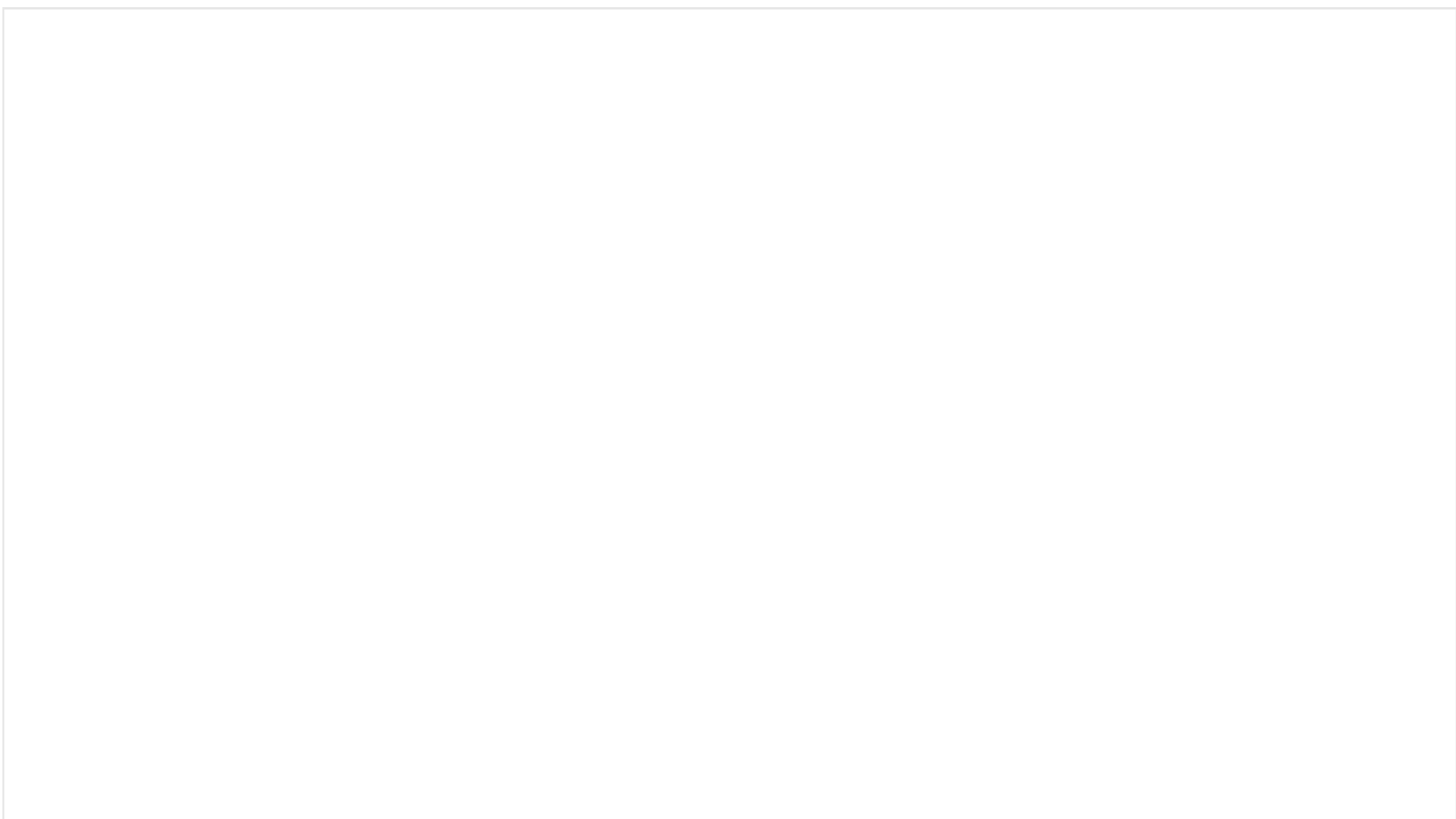
“Alexis is not Tashia Brown, but she has the same ability to make that midrange jump shot when it’s open as opposed to always trying to take that off balance or the contact inside. We don’t want her to get away from taking it to the basket, but sometimes that easy 12-footer, count those two points and go to the other end of the floor.”

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VIDEO: WKU women's basketball junior Alexis Brewer
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