https://www.bgdailynews.com/sports/wku/hudson-has-heart-full-of-gratitude-after-memorable-season/article_8c2569f3-d1c8-526c-b2e0-7fafd05de44d.html

WKU volleyball

Hudson has 'heart full of gratitude' after memorable season

WKU finished 32-2, hosted over 5,000 in Diddle Arena for NCAA Tournament

By ELLIOTT PRATT epratt@bgdailynews.com Dec 8, 2019

Western Kentucky volleyball coach Travis Hudson waves to the crowd before the Lady Toppers' NCAA Tournament first-round match against Kennesaw State on Thursday at E.A. Diddle Arena.

Austin Anthony/photo@bgdailynews.com

Buy Now

The unexpected surprise season that Western Kentucky volleyball had in 2019 turned the spotlight on a university that became a volleyball school for two days.

A record crowd attended the first NCAA Volleyball Tournament ever hosted at E.A. Diddle Arena, and many thought that energy would help the Lady Toppers continue pushing the boundaries the program had never reached.

But the Louisville Cardinals were the only roadblock this year, and that was the program that brought an end to WKU's historic run.

Don't even begin to think there's bitterness of what could've been in the Lady Toppers' locker room. Coach Travis Hudson, ever the one for a memorable speech, views the best season in WKU volleyball history in a different light.

"I'm frustrated and disappointed as a competitor, but how many good things have to happen before you're just grateful?," Hudson said during his postgame news conference Friday. "My heart is full of that gratitude and that's what I'll carry out of this season with me."

WKU finished the year 32-2 with the best record in the program's 39-year history. The Lady Toppers' two losses both came against Louisville – the first in a Sept. 6 regular-season match that predated Friday night's second-round NCAA Tournament loss by exactly three months.

In between that, WKU had the nation's longest winning streak at 28 matches and had the highest winning percentage (.969) among NCAA Division I volleyball. The season produced four superlatives in Conference USA between Hudson as Coach of the Year, sophomore Lauren Matthews as Player of the Year, junior Nadia Dieudonne as Setter of the Year and Paige Briggs as Freshman of the Year.

WKU reached No. 19 in the AVCA national rankings and No. 15 in the RPI, greatly boosted by its wins over C-USA foe Rice in two five-set victories. That was good enough for the NCAA Tournament selection

committee to award WKU with a 15-seed in the tournament as one of the 16 host sites.

Attendance for Thursday's first round of 4,154 more than tripled the previous record attendance that watched WKU's Senior Day match against UAB. Those fans saw Louisville and WKU sweeps over opponents Samford and Kennesaw State, respectively, setting up the rematch three months in the making.

Fans showed up again Friday with WKU attempting to reach the NCAA Sweet 16 for the first time, but it would require the program's first win over Louisville to do it.

WKU won the first set before Louisville took the next two. The Lady Toppers had a furious rally in front of the 5,023 in attendance to win the fourth set and force a fifth. That's when Louisville took control and won the most lopsided game of the night.

Hudson, who just completed his 25th season as the head coach, shared similar emotions after WKU's 2017 season ended in five sets in the second round at the University of Kentucky. After that match, Hudson had a viral statement about his commitment and honor of wearing the WKU brand across his chest, thwarting any statements about his need to jump to a bigger school for validation.

On Thursday night, Hudson spoke of crossing the last item off his bucket list by seeing Diddle Arena filled for a volleyball match. He thanked those supporters after the season officially came to a historic

conclusion Friday.

“I’m telling you, everybody from (athletic director) Todd Stewart throughout this athletics department, throughout this whole entire Bowling Green community have wrapped their arms around our program and they have shown this country that there are all kinds of places you can go have success, but there is no better place that you can come and feel the love and support of a community like you can right here in Bowling Green, Kentucky. I find myself full of gratitude.”

– Follow WKU athletics beat writer Elliott Pratt on Twitter @EPrattBGDN or visit bgdailynews.com.



VIDEO: WKU falls to Louisville for second time, ending their post-season run
Jordan Smith Dec 7, 2019

MORE INFORMATION



Lady Toppers' historic run ends in tournament thriller at Diddle

+39 SLIDE SHOW: WKU loses 2-3 to Louisville

How To Make Your Dark Spots Fade (Effortless 2 Minute Routine)

Gundry MD | Sponsored

These People Finally Found Privacy With These Expertly Hidden Rooms

Post Fun | Sponsored

Ashton Speaks Out About His Twin Brother

Ask | Sponsored

If You Like to Play, this City-Building Game is a Must-Have. No Install.

Forge Of Empires - Free Online Game | Sponsored

Cut Your Cellphone Bill By Switching to This Provider

Consumer Cellular | Sponsored

How To Entirely Empty Your Bowels Every Morning - Top Surgeon Explains How

Gundry MD | Supplements | Sponsored

You Should Never Shop on Amazon Without Using This Trick – Here's Why

Honey | Sponsored

Bowling Green: US Pensioners Are Snapping Up These Invisible Hearing Aids

HearClear | Sponsored

Chandler, Simpson buying portion of Park Mammoth

Bowling Green Daily News

Arrested pair accused of robbing, threatening man

Bowling Green Daily News

VIDEO: Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin concedes election after recanvass

Bowling Green Daily News

Rare Pics Of Princess Diana That Tell Us What We Knew All Along

Car Novels |

Sponsored

Which PM Software is Best For You? Compare Services Here

Software Advice |

Sponsored

Which 2019 Pickup Truck Is Worth Buying?

Kelley Blue Book |

Sponsored

Kentucky Senior Drivers Who Drive Less Miles a Day Are Entitled for Extra Rate Decrease

Better Insurance Direct |

Sponsored

At 56, Wesley Snipes Is Living With His Partner In This House

FinancialAdvisorHeroes |

Sponsored

40 Things Producers Of 'I Love Lucy' Hid From Fans

Definition.org |

Sponsored

RANKED: The 29 Worst Owners in Sports History

New Arena |

Sponsored

See The Best Adults Only Jamaica Vacations For Under $1000

Sponsored

Chandler, Simpson buying portion of Park Mammoth

Bowling Green Daily News

Arrested pair accused of robbing, threatening man

Bowling Green Daily News

VIDEO: Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin concedes election after recanvass

Bowling Green Daily News

Elliott Pratt

Covering the Western Kentucky University athletics beat for the Bowling Green Daily News.