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WKU WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Tashia Brown ditches goggles, enters last season with clear vision

Lady Topper senior expecting big final year without signature goggles

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Western Kentucky forward Tashia Brown poses for a photo on Friday, Oct. 27, 2017, at E.A. Diddle Arena(Austin Anthony/photo@bgdailynews.com)

Austin Anthony

She's been most recognizable as the kid with the goggles.

For three years, there was no missing Tashia Brown anytime she was on the court. She wore No. 10, had a mean jumper and was going to score plenty as the kid wearing goggles. In a sense, it became her brand.

Going into her senior season, the Lady Toppers' 6-foot-1 forward has made a name for herself as the second piece of an All-Conference USA 1-2 punch at Western Kentucky.

But she'll do it this year without the goggles. Her play has spoken louder than the goggles were noticeable anyway.

"I told her once she got here that it'd be pretty cool to be the kid that has the goggles," WKU women's basketball coach Michelle Clark-Heard said. "You know that kid, No. 10 that wears the goggles? Now she's like, 'They can't say that anymore coach.' Well, they know your name now."

Brown has astigmatism in one eye and never found the right comfort in contacts when she arrived at WKU in 2014. The goggles were introduced her freshman year and weren't ever an issue except for very few occasions.

Fellow senior Ivy Brown told a story on the Lady Toppers' Twitter account (@LadyTopperHoops) in October on how in a game against Louisville their freshman year, Tashia Brown let a ball slip through her hands on what would've been an easy fast-break layup because her goggles were foggy and she couldn't see.

"Every year, the coaches kind of mention getting contacts because with the goggles, the range is limited," Tashia Brown said. "Finally, we're trying contacts out and I'm OK with it. They won't get fogged up.

"We didn't want to switch at the last minute and me not be used to the contacts. We did it right after the season and changed to get some contacts. I just got used to them over the summer. It's just about being comfortable and putting them in every day. I'm OK with it now."

She did pretty well without contacts. The Valdosta, Ga., native enters the season having earned All-C-USA honors the last two years after starting every game and has averaged 13 points per game for her career. She was a First-Team All-C-USA player as a sophomore when she averaged 17.5 points, 3.7 rebounds and 2.2 assists.

In leading WKU to a C-USA tournament championship in March, Brown averaged 13.4 points and 4.1 rebounds as a junior.

“I think she was doing pretty well with the goggles on,” Heard said. “She’ll feel more comfortable. At times they would fog up on her or get sweaty. Now she doesn’t have to deal with that. Now she can go out and do what she needs to and be the player she is.



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“She’s actually excited she can see both ways. We used to tease her a lot about missing the extra pass. She’s without her goggles and doing well and passing the ball well. It’ll give her an added punch to her game.”

Which WKU needs desperately this year. As the only returning starters, the Brown duo, each named to the Preseason All-C-USA team, at least gives WKU back two of its top three scorers from last year. The Lady Toppers are the only team in the conference with two players on the preseason all-conference list. Brown has played a flexible guard/forward combo to fit anywhere needed as each year as offered different skills from each roster.

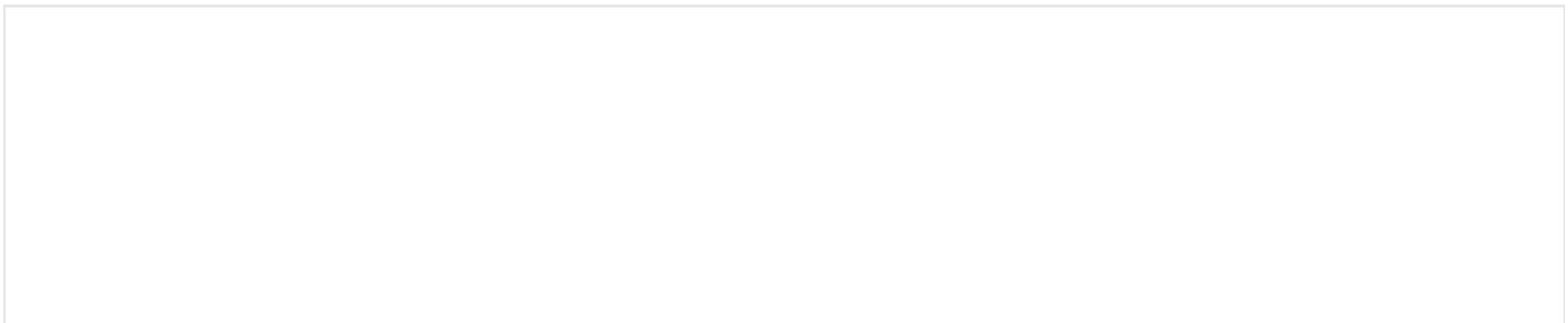
When guard Micah Jones missed the 2015-16 season, the sophomore Brown stepped over and played significant time at the point position. She tallied 74 assists that season, a number that dropped by 20 last year when Jones returned.

Brown’s reliability at different positions offers an opportunity for coaches to experiment where she can work best this season as more players step up in other roles.

In WKU’s 101-58 exhibition win over Union (Tenn.) last week, Brown’s six assists in 32 minutes were the most since dishing out seven against Austin Peay in 2015.

“We need her to score and do all the things she’s been doing,” Heard said. “It will be different. You had Kendall (Noble) and Micah and a lot of the focus will be on Tashia and Ivy now. We’ve talked to our young players about that and they are able to understand that. The great thing about Tashia is her and Ivy both are two of the most humble players I’ve ever been around. She just wants to win, so she’ll do whatever it takes for this team to be able to win. She’s up to the challenge.”

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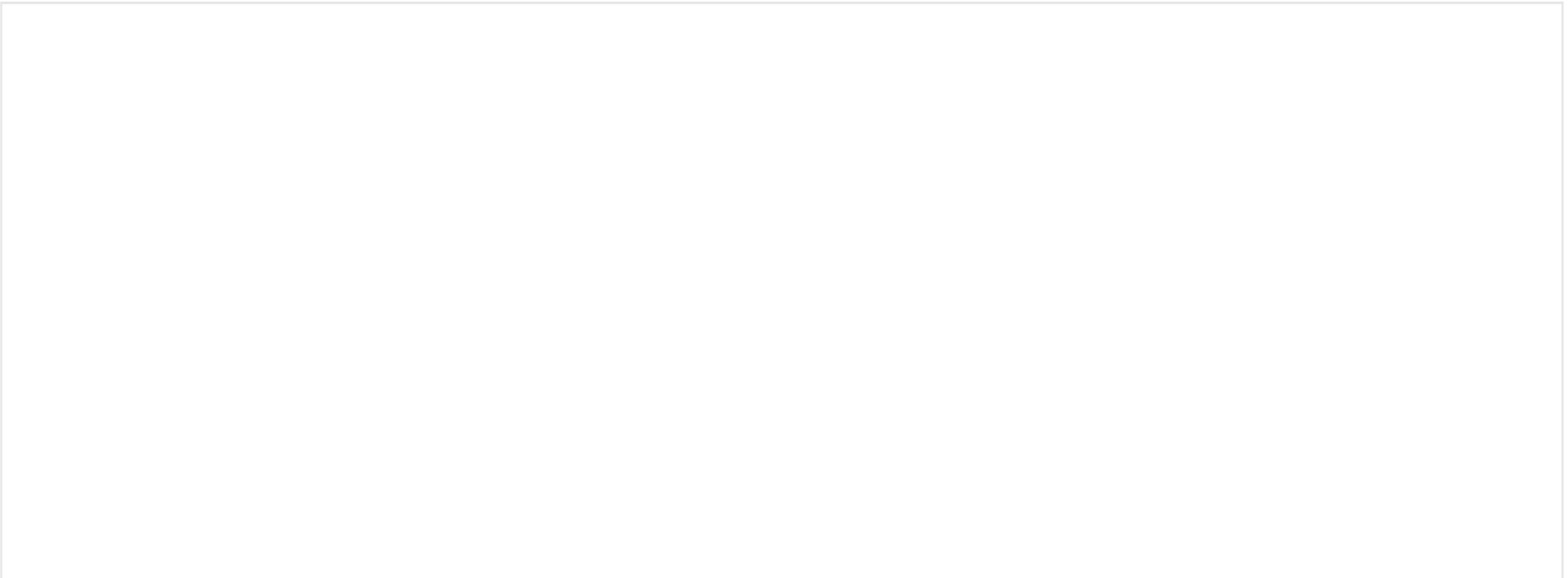


VIDEO: Lady Toppers Ivy Brown, Tashia Brown and Whitney Creech Media Day, Part 2
ELLIOTT PRATT ep Pratt@bgdailynews.com Oct 27, 2017



VIDEO: Lady Toppers Ivy Brown, Tashia Brown and Whitney Creech Media Day, Part 1
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Covering high school sports and Western Kentucky women's basketball for the Bowling Green Daily News.