

Future bright after women make eighth straight postseason run

On Dec. 17, with his team off to its slowest start (3-6) in years, JMU women's basketball coach Kenny Brooks ('92) received what seemed like the worst possible news. Senior captain and 2012 Colonial Athletic Association Defensive Player of the Year Nikki Newman ('13) was out for the season with a broken foot.

An eighth straight 20-win season and trip to postseason play seemed nearly impossible.

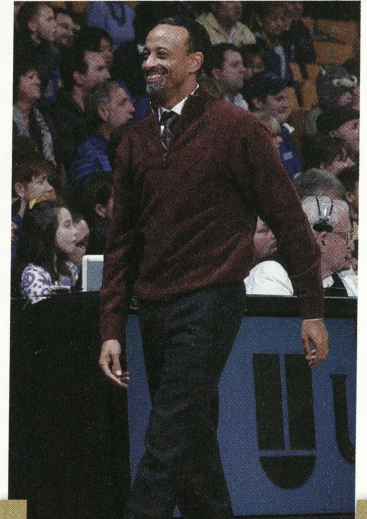
"We had to reinvent ourselves," Brooks remembers. "But we didn't panic." And with the emergence of senior Tarik Hislop ('13) and junior Kirby Burkholder ('14) as first-team All-CAA performers and lineup that included freshmen Precious Hall ('16), the CAA Rookie of the Year, and Jazmon Gwathmey ('16), a CAA All-Rookie Team player, the "reinvented" Dukes went 18-3 over the remainder of the regular season, posting 21 regular-season wins and finishing second in the CAA.

After a loss in the CAA tournament semifinals, Madison accepted its eighth straight postseason bid - to the Women's National Invitation Tournament. JMU, which advanced to the

WNIT final in 2012, was poised to make another run in 2013, dispatching North Carolina A&T, North Carolina State and Fordham before falling to Florida, 85-80, in a hotly contested "Elite Eight" game at the JMU Convocation Center.

Hislop finished her brilliant career with 1,847 points, third best in JMU history, and the Dukes ended the year with a record of 25-11. Next season, Newman will return to join the youthful core of the team. Brooks can hardly wait. "The sky's the limit for next year's team," he says. **■**

Eleventh-year head coach Kenny Brooks ('92) collects his 250th win during JMU's WNIT run. (Below): The Dukes defeat N.C. State 72-66 at the Convo in the second round.



Amazing consistency!

