

## Lallathin's Owls to be frequent fliers

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by John Bednarowski  
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09.10.14 - 01:09 am

Trips to the Carrier Dome and Hinkle Fieldhouse — and other reaches of the U.S. mainland — and a visit from Kent State will highlight what will likely be a challenging 2014-15 [schedule](#) for the Kennesaw State men's basketball team.

The Owls will [play](#) nine teams that played in the postseason last season, including three — Syracuse, Mercer and North Dakota State — that advanced to the second round of the NCAA tournament.

It's an ambitious schedule for Kennesaw State, which is coming off a 6-25 season that saw the Owls go 3-15 in the Atlantic Sun Conference. But to coach Jimmy Lallathin, the team is ready to meet the challenge.

"I like the guys and their maturity," said Lallathin, who is entering his first full season as head coach after serving as the Owls' interim coach for the final 16 games of the 2013-14 season. "I think it's big just going from their sophomore to junior year. The guys have worked harder than ever before, and this will be a good way to showcase it."

The players will have to be ready, because there won't be any easing into the schedule this fall.

Kennesaw State will begin the season Nov. 14 in the [Carrier Dome](#) against Syracuse, in the opening round of the 2K Classic. Lallathin will be facing off against Jim Boeheim, who has coached the Orange since 1976.

"It will be unique and awkward," Lallathin said. "The longest-tenured coach in college basketball on one bench and the shortest-tenured on the other bench."

From there, the Owls will [start](#) collecting some serious frequent-flier miles.

They will fly from Syracuse to play at California on Nov. 16 for another 2K Classic game, then come back to Georgia to face former conference rival Mercer — last year's NCAA tournament darling after its first-round upset of Duke — on Nov. 19 in Macon.

Two days later, Kennesaw State will head to Fargo, N.D., [to complete](#) the 2K Classic. The Owls will face North Dakota State on Nov. 21 and then either Hampton or Alcorn State the following day.

Kennesaw State's home opener will come the day before Thanksgiving, when it hosts Samford for a 2 p.m. tip. The remainder of the non-conference home slate includes

Chattanooga (Nov. 29), perennial Mid-American Conference contender Kent State (Dec. 6), Maryland-Baltimore County (Dec. 20), Elon (Dec. 22) and a pair of lower-division opponents, Thomas University (Jan. 3) and [Paine College](#) (Feb. 3).

Kennesaw State will also travel to Hinkle Fieldhouse to face two-time NCAA tournament runner-up Butler on Dec. 8, and to Illinois on Dec. 27.

“The Carrier Dome, Hinkle Fieldhouse and Illinois are all amazing places to play,” Lallathin said. “I haven’t been to Syracuse, but when I was at Miami (Ohio), we beat Illinois at Illinois.”

Trips to Florida International, Youngstown State and Tennessee State are also on the schedule.

The Owls will open play in the eight-team A-Sun on Jan. 10 at USC Upstate, with the conference home opener a week later against Lipscomb. Florida Gulf Coast, which could regain its place as the A-Sun’s prominent team with Mercer’s departure for the Southern Conference, will visit Kennesaw on Jan. 24.

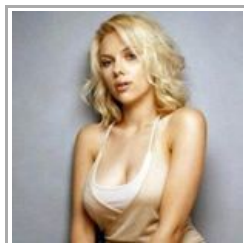
The A-Sun tournament will begin March 3 at campus sites, with the championship set for March 8 at the highest remaining seed.

While Kennesaw State’s schedule has a variety of major-conference opponents and regional rivals, there will be no other in-state matchups, aside from Mercer.

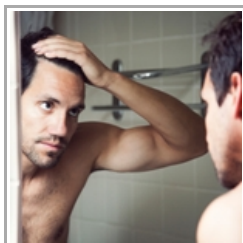
Lallathin said scheduling just didn’t work out.

“We’ve been working with Georgia State and working with Georgia trying to get something together,” he said. “But with scheduling, when you sit down, you say, ‘OK, I have these dates available. What dates do you have available?’ The dates just didn’t add up this year.”

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