

# Rock boys picked fourth in competitive PSAC West

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University, and Bruce Spruell, a junior guard from American International College, were starters in the exhibition against the Panthers. Bivens, who is from Bakersfield, California, started six games and shot 56 percent from the field at FIU. Spruell was the only player to start all 28 games for the Yellow Jackets in the previous season and was the team's second-leading scorer.

The other three recruits, Evan Chandler, Karlyn Garner and Simon Mulaa, are all freshman guards coming from high school. The trio were all standout performers during their time as high schoolers. Chandler was an all-conference player at Central Dauphin East High School in Harrisburg.

Named to the Fab 15 as a senior at West Mifflin High, Garner also led the WPIAL 3A classification in scoring last season. From Fairfax, Virginia, Mulaa was a first-team All-Patriot League Defense honoree as he led WT Woodson High to the 2017 VHSL 6A state title.

Along with the new talent he has stockpiled, Reynolds stresses the importance of effort in practicing. "The biggest transition to a four-year level of basketball, whether you're in high school or junior college or prep school, is the daily grind," he said. "At that other level, you're the best guy and whether you bring it every day or not, you're going to play the majority of the minutes. I think the biggest difference when you come to a winning team like ours is the ability to bring your 'A' game on a daily basis."

The recognition in practice that the players strive to attain will be key in deciding who plays on a given night. Due to the interchangeable parts that this team has, Reynolds plans to play different lineups and make steady use of his reserve players.

The depth on the roster fosters the ability for Reynolds to return to a fast-break offense predicated on speed and spreading the ball.

"We've never played a star-studded system here. We've always played, whoever's day it is, it's their day and it's their team and we play



Senior guard Khyree Wooten looks to pass the ball in the Rock's 71-59 loss to Pittsburgh. Wooten is one of The Rock's four returning players this season.

for the team," coach said. In his first season at SRU, five players averaged double-figures in scoring. "[In the past], we were able to win a lot of games because teams couldn't just key on one or two guys and I'm hoping that's the case again this season."

The team begins the season on the road on Nov. 11 and 12 for the Jakobi's Journey Basketball Classic against Glensville State College and West Virginia Wesleyan College.

Reynolds stated, "We're the only team that's played the conference challenge on the road each year we're eligible. A lot of teams play it at home, [but] we feel like it's a great way to see what our team is made of."

The team's following games will be big, early back-to-back home tests against the top two

teams in the PSAC Eastern Division preseason poll. The defending conference champion Shippensburg Raiders, ranked fourth in the DII Bulletin Top-25 preseason poll, will visit Morrow Field House on Nov. 18 and the Kutztown Golden Bears, who reached the Atlantic Region quarterfinals in the NCAA DII tournament last year, will follow the next day.

The Rock will face three teams who won at least 20 games and three teams that made the NCAA tournament last season.

"We've got guys who want to win," said Wooten. "We feel as if we're the best team in the PSAC. I feel like we can win it all this year."

# SUCCESS WITH LESS

## Slippery Rock men's basketball has one of the best turnarounds in Division II

By Justin Kraus  
Sports Editor

For any small college team, branding is important. For the Slippery Rock men's basketball team, theirs is not only catchy, it's true-- #SuccessWithLess.

The saying and subsequent hashtag's creation are credited to graduate assistant, Thomas "Tank" Shiffert.

"The coaches were telling me the scholarship money situation, I thought 'they've been really successful with not as much [funding] as the other schools, so it was success with less,' Shiffert said. "I thought it was only for certain times, it just kind of sticks now."

"Social media is such an important way to get your message out there," Graduate assistant Aaron Kollar said. "The way to do it is just to hit it hard and they are going to associate those hash tags with our program, it's going to help us stay around."

The meaning of the Rock men's team social media branding stems from the achievements the program has brought with much less financial help available. Slippery Rock ranks dead last in the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) in total scholarship aid available with \$114,188, \$327,537 dollars less than Merchyhurst who The Rock faced in the first round of the PSAC playoffs last year.

"Success with less' is that we haven't had for nine years what the other teams have had, but we've had success," Slippery Rock head coach Kevin Reynolds said. "We don't make excuses, we knew we had to work harder."

While financial struggles are common for small-college athletics, the results SRU has churned out while being so financially restricted is outstanding.

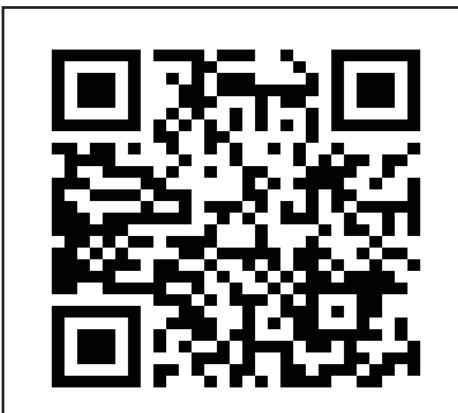
Compared to 1998-2008, the Rock has a plus 98 win differential from 2008-2017; which is the fifth-most in the contry and more than 30 wins better than the second-most in the PSAC.

"We used to be that kind of team where the other team could put in their 13th, 14th and 15th guys versus us, and the crowd goes nuts because those guys work hard in practice," Reynolds said.

"When you play Slippery Rock now, you know that it's going to be a big game. No matter where we go, it's the best crowd of the year at their place."

Reynolds attributes this success to the players that he has had, and his assistant coaching staff.

"The other part of the success with less coach Grady and the GAs," Reynolds



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said. "There isn't a more valuable assistant coach in the PSAC for any sport, that's just what it is. Look at the wins and look what we've done it with."

Attracting coaches and players to a program that receives weak financial support can't be easy, but Kollar jumped at the chance to come back to SRU.

"Any opportunity to continue my education and continue working in basketball was obvious," Kollar said. "Working for Coach Reynolds for two years as a manager was a great

+98

Slippery Rock men's basketball has a +98 win turnaround in the past decade, compared to the previous ten-year period. 98 wins is the fifth-best in Division II, and the best in the PSAC.

experience, so I definitely wanted to stay as a GA."

Reynolds has been at SRU since 2008, meaning his first year was the first of the huge turnaround that the Green and White are in the midst of. While Reynolds is never one to speak on his own behalf, his assistant coaches have a high opinion of his work.

"He's been very successful out here, so it was a no brainer [to join the program]," Shiffert said.

The branding of the Slippery Rock team, which also includes the social media slogans of #RockBoys and #GlassCleaners (relating to the team's rebounding proficiency) has done a great job of bringing everyone around the program together.

"[The hash tags] mean that we work with what we have and we find ways to break the mold. If you've ever watched Moneyball, that's the kind of mindset we have," Kollar said. "Everybody else has a lot more than we do, and we need to find a way to stay competitive, even though we aren't up there with the other teams in terms of funding."

"Everybody's got a chip on their shoulder now, knowing that we're working with less but we're at the same level as those other teams competing," Shiffert said. "We're grinding as coach [Reynolds] would say."

Even though Slippery Rock has done a tremendous job with their turnaround, they are still hungry to further improve what they've done.

"We're not satisfied. We're happy with what we've done, we're proud of what we've done, but we're not done yet," Reynolds said.

Slippery Rock will look to build even further upon that win differential when they start play on November 11th, versus Glensville State.

This season is Reynolds 10th, which came as a surprise to the coach that he had been at the Rock that long.

"I don't think if you asked me when I first came that I would [have thought] I'd be here for ten years. It's been a great ten years and I've really enjoyed it," Reynolds said. "The people inside the buildings at SRU are what have made these ten years good. Time flies when you're having fun."