

# SPORTS

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## SEC ROUNDUP

### There are rough waters ahead for Missouri

BY LIAM QUINN  
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The SEC East is still wide open ... technically. But Georgia's convincing win over Florida could be a sign that the status quo remains unchanged.

Georgia has won the East each of the past two seasons, and the Bulldogs entered the season as favorites to three-peat.

After a shocking loss at home to South Carolina nearly a month ago, Georgia looks to be back on track. It wasn't a blowout, but in the battle of top-10 teams, Georgia clearly looked superior, winning 24-17 in Jacksonville.

Missouri's next two games are against Georgia and Florida, games which will determine if any remaining hopes for a positive season for the Tigers are justified.

Mathematically, Missouri still controls its own destiny, even coming off two straight losses to Vanderbilt and Kentucky. If the Tigers can somehow win out, they would find themselves in first place in the SEC East, thanks to tiebreakers that they would hold.

The only problem? Georgia and Florida are really good.

Missouri will head into Athens on Saturday to face a Bulldogs team that is now ranked No. 6 in the country. Georgia is currently a 17-point favorite. The following week, the Tigers head home to face Florida, which is now ranked No. 10, and Missouri will likely be an underdog then, too.

This past Saturday's game in Jacksonville shows just how tall of a task Missouri currently faces. Here's what happened.

Jake Fromm, Georgia's quarterback, looked like his best self, throwing for 279 yards and two touchdowns with no interceptions. It was a more modest performance for Georgia star running back D'Andre Swift, who ran for 86 yards.

Georgia's defense looked particularly good Saturday, holding the Gators to just 21 rushing yards. Florida only had three points entering the fourth quarter but scored two in the final period, including one with three minutes to go to cut it to a 7-point game.

If Fromm plays like he did against Florida when he plays Missouri this weekend, it's hard to imagine the Tigers hanging with Georgia. To its credit, Missouri's pass defense has played well this season, but it is yet to face a quarterback as skilled as Fromm. Swift is also one of the nation's best backs and will also give the Tigers something to think about. And Missouri's offense, which has now scuttled two

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## MISSOURI WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

### Tigers tip off season against Western Illinois

*Former Hickman  
standout Danni Nichols  
now plays for Leathernecks*

BY OWEN KRUCOFF  
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More than seven months after the final buzzer sounded in Iowa City, Iowa, to end Missouri women's basketball's 2018-19 season, the Tigers return to the court to open their new campaign against Western Illinois on Tuesday.

MU hopes to reach its fifth straight NCAA Tournament this season, but it will have to do so with a much-changed team from the squad that fell to Iowa in the second round in March. The graduations of Sophie Cunningham, Lauren Aldridge and Cierra Porter and the transfers of Akira Levy, Emmanuelle Tahane and Kelsey Winfrey left coach Robin Pingeton with plenty of offseason roster-building to do.

Pingeton brought in transfers from South Carolina, Tulsa and Utah State, but all three will have to redshirt the season due to NCAA rules. That leaves the Tigers with 11 active players, including three in-state freshman recruits.

Aijha Blackwell of Berkeley, Missouri, and Hayley Frank of Strafford are both highly-rated prospects who could make an immediate impact on this year's team, while Pingeton has said she has been impressed by the offseason progress of Micah Linthacum of Jefferson City.

With all the turnover, national media has been hesitant to expect much from the Tigers. MU did not receive votes in the AP preseason Top 25, nor was it included in ESPN's preseason projection of the NCAA Tournament field. The SEC coaches placed Missouri ninth in the conference's preseason poll.

"I was speaking at a speaking engagement, and they asked me if this was a rebuilding year, and I almost took offense to that," Pingeton said. "We don't look at it that way at all. I think the expectations that we have of our program is that we're going to continue to raise the bar and compete for championships."

If the Tigers are to live up to that expectation, they must replace the production of Cunningham, the program's star on and off the court for the last four years. Amber Smith, who was named to the preseason All-SEC first team, will be a prime candidate to do so.

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QINGHUI KONG/Missourian

Missouri guard Jordan Roundtree goes up for a layup in February at Mizzou Arena. The Tigers begin their season at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Mizzou Arena against Western Illinois.

## HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER

### Columbia's teams locking in for postseason play

BY ANDERSON KIMBALL  
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The high school soccer regular season ended this past weekend, and now Columbia's teams kick off postseason play in the district tournaments this week.

The three public schools — Rock Bridge, Battle and Hickman — face off in the Class 4 District 9 tournament with Jefferson City at Battle on Tuesday, while Tolton began postseason play with a 8-0 win over Stover in the Class 1 District 4 semifinals Monday. Below is a breakdown of the postseason outlook for all four of Columbia's teams:

#### Rock Bridge (20-4)

The Bruins are the top team in town behind a fast-paced attack that produces a ton of goals. That attack is led by the junior duo of Lucas Godon (18 goals and 10 assists) and Jeremiah Johnson (13 goals and eight assists).

Preston Fancher, an all-region player last season, has been a rock in the midfield, with first-year varsity goalkeeper Cooper Deneke leading a back line that has improved as the season has gone on.

The Bruins are one of the favorites to get to the state final four in St. Louis after falling in the state quarterfinals on a bicycle kick last season, but the Bruins will

have a tough matchup in the district with Jefferson City.

Scott Wittenborn's team is the No. 2 seed in its district after being upset 2-0 by the Jays on Oct. 8. The game was back-and-forth, but a defensive error by the Bruins and a quick counter attack by Jefferson City was the difference in a game that determined the district's top seed.

Rock Bridge will likely get a second crack at the Jays in the district title game, with both teams heavily favored in the semifinals. The Bruins have won seven of their last eight since that game, with the only loss coming at the hands of 23-1 Fort Zumwalt South.

Rock Bridge is ranked fifth in the Missouri soccer coaches poll and will be slightly

favored over 13th-ranked Jefferson City.

Prediction: Rock Bridge avenges its loss in October with a 3-2 win in the district championship, but the Bruins fall again in the state quarterfinals.

#### Tolton (7-10)

The Trailblazers have an underwhelming record, but that figure is deceiving due to the strength of schedule of Chuck Register's team. It has played a schedule almost entirely made up of larger schools, including wins over Battle and Hickman.

The win over Hickman, a classic on Sept. 30 that ended with a couple of clutch saves by Tolton goalkeeper Blake Hinerman in extra time and

in a penalty shootout, showed that the Class 1 school can play up to stronger competition.

Tolton is led by attackers Tyler Stevens (11 goals and three assists in the regular season) and Lael Haile (seven goals and seven assists), with Holden Petri pulling the strings from midfield.

The team is already in the Class 1 District 4 final after an 8-0 win over Stover on Monday and are the top seed in the title game Thursday.

"We think we're strong enough to win this district," Register said.

That would be a historic feat for the Trailblazers, who haven't won a district title

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## MISSOURI FOOTBALL

### Coach Pinkel, Maclin honored by Missouri Sports Hall of Fame

BY BRIAR NAPIER  
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As a player and young coach in Ohio, Gary Pinkel didn't think he'd be honored as a Missouri Sports Legend one day.

But sure enough, the longtime MU football coach who won 118 games in 14 seasons leading the Tigers was bestowed that award this weekend by the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame.

With a bronze-casted bust unveiled of him that will sit on display in the Hall, Pinkel plus 16 other nominees were ushered in as the Class of 2019 on Sunday afternoon at the Holiday Inn Executive

Center in Columbia.

It's another achievement in the storied career of the winningest coach in MU football history. Already nominated into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame in 2016, his bust will sit alongside busts of fellow Missouri athletic greats such as Stan Musial, Norm Stewart and Ozzie Smith in the Hall's Legends Walkway.

But Pinkel, while grateful for the honor, continually stated that the award was not about just him. He gave more credit to the people that gave him opportunities and helped him along the way.

"It's not (about) Gary Pinkel," Pinkel said. "It's about

everybody pulling and pulling on the rope in the right direction. Mike Alden (MU athletic director from 1998-2015) ... I believed in him and I came (to MU) for that reason, or I wouldn't have ever come. I've lived here 20 years now, so this is the longest place I've ever lived in my life. I'll be here forever."

Since Pinkel retired from coaching in 2015, he's still stayed active in mid-Missouri. He founded the GP Make A Difference Everyday Foundation earlier this year, a non-for-profit organization providing support and research for

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EMMALEE REED/Missourian

Jeremy Maclin and Gary Pinkel talk before the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame award ceremony Sunday at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Columbia. Pinkel was honored with the title of Missouri Sports Legend.