

# ASU women hope to build off NCAA Tournament appearance

Stephanie Hammon, Special for azcentral sports 8:13 p.m. MST October 22, 2014



(Photo: Michael Chow/azcentral sports)

SAN FRANCISCO –

Coming off its first NCAA Tournament appearance in three years, the Arizona State women's basketball team has changed its motto from "GRIT" to "GUTS."

Instead of "Greatness Resides In Toughness," the Sun Devils' focus has evolved to "Grit (plus) Unstoppable and Teachable Spirit."

"That just epitomizes and encapsulates our values and who we want to be," ASU coach Charli Turner Thorne said during Pac-12 media day Wednesday in San Francisco.

With the conference expected to be more balanced and competitive than ever, the gist of that motto — finding a way to win — will be critical every game.

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"On paper, this is the best our conference has ever been," said Turner Thorne, who has been part of the Pac-12 as a player and coach for nearly three decades.

Despite the difficulty of the Pac-12 this season and the losses of leading scorer Deja Mann and center Joy Burke, Turner-Thorne thinks the Sun Devils can build off last season's success when they finished fourth in the Pac-12 and held a Top25 national ranking for part of the season.

Conference coaches picked ASU to finish seventh in the Pac-12, but with 10 returning players, the ceiling is much higher.

The Sun Devils still have dynamic and experienced guard Promise Amukamara along with shooter Katie Hempen and a pair of sophomores that blossomed as freshmen in Kelsey Moos and Sophie Brunner.

Moos, ASU's leading rebounder last season, will shift to the wing from the post with the addition of some bigger players to the roster.

"Our perimeter rebounding was tragic last year," Turner Thorne said. "I think it's really going to help our rebounding."

Newcomers also are expected to contribute, including Amukamara's younger sister, Peace. The Mesa Community College transfer was the NJCAA Division II Player of the Year.

ASU's biggest goal in the offseason has been improving statistically, from field-goal percentage and assist-to-turnover ratio on offense to getting back into the top third in the conference in several defensive categories.

"One of the main things we focused on was just attention to detail," Moos said. "Last year (Turner Thorne) relied on the freshmen just to go out and work hard. This year we know where we're supposed to be, the position we're supposed to be in."

Plus, there's that trait that doesn't show up on the stat sheet.

The Sun Devils learned the role that toughness can play last season.

"We won a lot of close games, we didn't exactly dominate anybody," Turner Thorne said. "We won with toughness and these young women playing for each other.

"Toughness is a skill. You have to keep refining it, you don't just have it. We've been working on that a lot."

**Pac-12 coaches' poll**

**Team (first-place votes), points**

1. Stanford (7), 116
2. California (3), 111
3. Oregon State (2), 105
4. UCLA, 84
5. Washington, 72
6. USC, 65
7. Arizona State, 64
8. Washington State, 56
9. Oregon, 48
10. Colorado, 31
11. Utah, 28
12. Arizona, 12

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