



## Chronology of Flames Basketball

### 1971

Lynchburg Baptist College was founded by Dr. Jerry Falwell, pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church.

### 1972

Lynchburg Baptist gained affiliation with the National Christian Collegiate Association. The first men's basketball team was coached by Dan Manley. Dale Gibson was the first assistant. The team practiced at the City Armory and Lynchburg Christian Academy. Games were held at Jefferson Forest High School. The first game was against Southland College with LBC winning, 88-45. LBC finished its first season with a 7-1 mark.

### 1973

Lynchburg Baptist played its first varsity schedule and finished with a 13-14 record.

### 1975

Lynchburg Baptist College was renamed Liberty Baptist College with the colors changing from green and gold to red, white and blue. The Flames joined the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) as an associate member. Mike Goad was named Liberty's first basketball All-American.

### 1976

The first Flames road basketball game was broadcast on radio station WWOD-FM. Liberty won its first NCCAA district title.

### 1977

Harley "Skeeter" Swift was named Liberty Baptist College's second basketball coach. Mark Chafin was named the Flames' second NCCAA All-American.

### 1978

Dale Gibson was named the third basketball coach of the Liberty basketball program with Mike Goad being selected as LU's assistant coach. Goad's jersey, number 44, became the first Flames basketball jersey to be retired.

### Nov. 30, 1979

The Flames opened Liberty Gym against Mt. Vernon Nazarene with a 95-81 win.

### Dec. 8, 1979

The Flames played VMI in Lexington, Va., their first NCAA Division I opponent. The Keydets won the game, 106-58.

### 1980

Liberty Baptist joined the NCAA at the Division II level as an associate member. The Flames won the NCCAA National Championship and posted a 28-11 record. Karl Hess and Ed Vickers

were named NCCAA All-Americans. Hess was also named a CoSIDA Academic All-American.

**March 25, 1981**

Jeff Meyer was selected as the fourth head basketball coach at Liberty Baptist.

**1981**

Liberty Baptist became a full member at the NCAA Division II level, and also became eligible for NAIA postseason competition. The Flames Sports Network began with Jerry Edwards handling the play-by-play. LBC moved into the new Liberty Gym.

**1982**

Steve Isaacs became Liberty's first NAIA All-American.

**Sept. 1, 1983**

Liberty is accepted as a member of the East Coast Athletic Conference (ECAC).

**1983**

The Flames finished fifth in the NAIA National Championships with a 23-9 record. Steve Isaacs was named NAIA All-American for the second straight year. Liberty Baptist joined the Mason-Dixon Athletic Conference.

**1984**

The Flames dropped their NAIA affiliation and became eligible for NCAA Division II postseason competition. Ezra Hill became the first Liberty Baptist player drafted in the NBA. He was drafted by the Phoenix Suns in the 10<sup>th</sup> round.

**1985**

Liberty Baptist College became Liberty University. Cliff Webber was named a Division II All-American by Basketball Times. Webber was drafted by the Boston Celtics in the fourth round.

**Sept. 1, 1988**

Liberty was accepted for NCAA Division I membership.

**Nov. 26, 1988**

Liberty defeated Brooklyn College, 80-65, for its first NCAA Division I victory.

**Nov. 30, 1990**

Liberty opened the Vines Convocation Center against VMI. VMI defeated the Flames, 69-61.

**July 1, 1991**

Liberty became an official member of the Big South Conference.

**1992**

Liberty completed the 1991-92 season with a 16 1/2 game turnaround which tied the NCAA record for the best turnaround, by a Division I school. The Flames finished with a 22-7 mark and concluded the regular season with a second-place finish in the Big South Conference. Liberty finished second in the country in field goal percentage (.520) and 11th in three-point field goal percentage (.421). Julius Nwosu was named first team all-conference and Keith Ferguson was a second team selection. Head coach Jeff Meyer earned Virginia Sports Information Directors Coach of the Year honors. Mike Coleman was invited to the Atlanta Hawks' Rookie Camp. He went on to play professionally in Portugal.

**1993**

Liberty finished the 1992-93 season with a 16-14 mark. Julius Nwosu was named first-team all-conference and Parish Hickman was selected to the second team. The Flames posted their first win ever over in-state opponent Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va.

**1994**

Liberty claimed its first-ever Big South Conference Tournament title against Campbell, 76-62. The championship game was featured on ESPN with over 800 students making the trek to Charleston, S.C. Liberty qualified for the NCAA Tournament and faced defending national champion North Carolina. The Flames were a tough match for the Tar Heels, leading as much as four points and trailing by a difference of six at half, 32-26. Liberty also claimed the lead with under 10 minutes left, 47-46. The Tar Heels ended with the win, 71-51, but the Flames proved to be a strong competitor in the biggest game in the history of the program.

**1995**

Julius Nwosu was signed by the San Antonio Spurs, making him the first Flame basketball player to play on a NBA team. Matt Hildebrand became the second Liberty player to ever have his jersey retired.

**March 2, 1996**

Liberty played in the championship game of the Big South Conference Tournament for the second time. The Flames dropped a 79-53 decision to UNC Greensboro.

**May 1996**

The Big South Conference presidents awarded the Big South Tournament to the city of Lynchburg for the next two seasons. The format will be a combined men's/women's tournament for the first-time ever.

**August 1996**

Julius Nwosu was signed by the Boston Celtics after playing a year in Moscow, Russia. He was released before at the end of preseason camp and finished his season playing in Greece.

**March 1, 1997**

Liberty played in the championship game of the Big South Conference Tournament for the second straight year and third time in the past four years. The Flames dropped a 64-54 decision to Charleston Southern. Peter Aluma finished his career as the school's and conference's leading shot blocker. He also was selected as the Big South Tournament's MVP for the second time in his career and was named to the NABC all-district second-team.

**Nov. 1, 1997**

Jeff Meyer, head coach of the Flames basketball program for 16 years, stepped down to accept the position of assistant to the president of Liberty University. Randy Dunton was named interim head coach.

**Jan. 7, 1998**

Liberty defeated Virginia for the first time in the school's history, 69-64, in Charlottesville, Va. That also marked the first Atlantic Coast Conference opponent that the Flames had ever defeated.

**April 8, 1998**

Mel Hankinson was named the fifth head coach in the school's history, coming to Liberty after serving as the top assistant coach at West Virginia for the previous five years.

#### **November 1998**

Hankinson's first recruiting class was ranked between 20<sup>th</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> by four major recruiting publications, marking the best recruiting class by Liberty and in the Big South Conference.

#### **September 1999**

Future Stars rated Hankinson's first fall recruiting class as 36<sup>th</sup> best in the nation.

#### **April 2000**

Carl Williams finished the season as the nation's leader in steals per game, averaging 3.8 takeaways per contest, becoming the first player in school history to lead the nation individually in a statistical category.

#### **March 1, 2002**

The Big South Conference announced that the 2003 Big South Men's and Women's Basketball Championships would be hosted in Lynchburg, Va. Under a newly-installed format, first round games were to be played at the site of the higher seed, while the semifinals and championships games were to be played in the Vines Center.

#### **March 6, 2002**

Randy Dunton was named the sixth head coach in the school's history. He returned to the Liberty campus after serving two years as the head coach at Marshalltown Community College and as an assistant coach at Binghamton University.

#### **March 6, 2004**

Liberty claimed its second-ever Big South Championship with an 89-44 victory over High Point in the championship game in front of 8,515 fans in the Vines Center. The win marked the largest margin of victory in the history of the Big South Championship.

#### **March 18, 2004**

Liberty made its second-ever appearance in an NCAA Tournament game as the 16<sup>th</sup>-seeded Flames squared off against top-seeded St. Joseph's at the HSBC Arena in Buffalo, N.Y. The Flames dropped an 82-63 decision to the eventual "Elite Eight" team.

#### **Nov. 25, 2005**

Liberty traveled to play the Kentucky Wildcats. There were 22,717 fans crammed into the famous Rupp Arena, serving as the largest crowd to ever see a Liberty game, as Kentucky defeated the Flames by a score of 81-51.

#### **Dec. 6, 2005**

In the Vines Center, Larry Blair became the 19<sup>th</sup> Flames player to reach the 1,000-point plateau when he knocked down a first-half jumper at the 13:59 mark against Buffalo.

#### **July 6, 2006**

Larry Blair earned VaSID all-state basketball first team honors, becoming just the second Flames player to earn first-team honors, joining Peter Aluma who was named to the first team in 1996 and 1997. Blair also joined Aluma as the only Flames to have earned VaSID honors twice.

**Dec. 2, 2006**

Liberty honored all-time leading scorer Karl Hess by retiring his jersey prior to the Flames' 64-56 victory over Conference USA foe East Carolina.

**Dec. 9, 2006**

Larry Blair scored 18 points against Longwood to pass Peter Aluma (1,715 points), becoming Liberty's all-time leading Division I scorer.

**Jan. 30, 2007**

With 15 points against visiting UNC Asheville, Larry Blair became the third player in Liberty and Big South Conference history to reach the 2,000-point plateau.

**Feb. 21, 2007**

Larry Blair scored 28 points in Liberty's 118-108 victory at VMI to pass Tony Dunkin of Coastal Carolina, becoming the Big South Conference's all-time leading scorer. Blair's second field goal of the evening, at the 11:19 mark in the first half, broke the record when the senior guard dunked home two points on a fast break.

**Feb. 26, 2007**

Larry Blair was named to the Big South all-conference first team for the third consecutive year, making him the fourth player in school history to earn all-conference honors four times. Blair earned second team honors as a freshman as well as being named Big South Freshman of the Year.

**March 26, 2007**

Ritchie McKay was named the seventh head coach in school history. McKay spent the previous 11 years as a head coach at Portland State, Colorado State, Oregon State and New Mexico.

**May 15, 2007**

Liberty University Founder and Chancellor Dr. Jerry Falwell went home to be with the Lord as he passed away at the age of 73. Seven days later, a funeral service was held at Thomas Road Baptist Church with 10 Liberty University student-athletes serving as honorable pallbearers, reflecting on Dr. Falwell's love for athletics. Anthony Smith represented the men's basketball program as one of those pallbearers.

**May 29, 2008**

Peter Aluma became the first Liberty men's basketball player enshrined in the Big South Conference's Hall of Fame. The Liberty standout was honored during a special ceremony as part of the conference's annual spring meetings in Hilton Head, S.C.

**Oct. 14, 2008**

Anthony Smith was tabbed Big South Preseason Player of the Year, marking the first Liberty men's hoopster to garner such honors.

**Feb. 16, 2009**

The Flames secured their 20<sup>th</sup> victory of the season, marking the first time since 1997 that Liberty reached the 20-win plateau. The Flames would end up tallying 23 victories, tying the best mark in the program's Division I era.

**March 2, 2009**

Anthony Smith was named to the Big South All-Conference first team, marking the seventh-

straight year Liberty has placed a player on the first team, marking the second-best streak in conference history. Seth Curry was named freshman player of the year, while Jesse Sanders was named to the all-freshman squad and Kyle Ohman received all-academic honors.

### **March 17, 2009**

Liberty defeated Rider in the CollegenInsider.com Postseason Tournament (CIT), marking the program's first victory in a postseason tournament at the Division I level. The victory also served as the first in the history of the CIT, as 2009 served as the event's inaugural year.

### **April 8, 2009**

Dale Layer was named the eighth head coach in program history. Layer previously served as a head coach at Colorado State and Queens College. Layer returned to Liberty where he previously served as an assistant coach during the 2007-08 season. Other assistant coaching stops include Colorado State and most recently Marquette prior to third head coaching stint at Liberty.

### **July 12, 2009**

After becoming the first Liberty freshman to lead the nation's freshmen in scoring at 20.2 points per game, Seth Curry led the USA U19 men's squad to the Gold at the World Championships in Auckland, New Zealand. Curry finished his lone season at Liberty with 707 points, giving him the fifth-most for a season in Big South history, while being the only freshman on the league's top 10 scoring list for a season. Curry received 13 postseason honors, including CollegenInsider.com Freshman All-American distinction.

### **Feb. 12, 2010**

Liberty defeated High Point inside the Vines Center, 65-54, capturing its 13<sup>th</sup> Big South Conference win of the season. The mark set a new single-single season record for most conference victories.

### **Feb. 28, 2010**

Head Coach Dale Layer was named the 2010-11 Big South Coach of the Year, becoming the first coach in program history to receive the award. Point guard Jesse Sanders also received top conference honors, as he became the first player in school history to be named Big South Player of the Year.

### **Jan. 21, 2012**

Point guard Jesse Sanders became the first player in NCAA Division I history to garner a triple-double in each of his four collegiate seasons, following a 14-point, 10-rebound and 13-assist performance at High Point.

### **March 10, 2013**

Liberty claimed its third Big South Championship in program history with an 87-76 victory over Charleston Southern at The HTC Center in Conway, S.C. Upon winning four straight games in a span of five days, the 15-20 Flames became second 20-loss team in Division I history to reach the NCAA Tournament.

### **March 18, 2013**

The Flames made their third-ever NCAA Tournament appearance, squaring off with North Carolina A&T inside UD Arena in Dayton, Ohio. The Aggies edged Liberty in the NCAA First Four matchup, 73-72.

**April 1, 2015**

After spending the previous six seasons working under Tony Bennett as associate head coach at Virginia, Ritchie McKay returned to Liberty as the head coach. McKay previously served as head coach during the 2007-08 and 2008-09 seasons, posting a 39-28 overall record and a 19-13 mark in Big South play.

**March 1, 2016**

Ritchie McKay became the second Liberty coach to earn Big South Coach of the Year honors. The Flames' season included a seven-game win streak in conference play, helping Liberty finish with a top five seed in the 2016 Big South Championship after being predicted to finish the year 11th in the conference's preseason poll.

**February 23, 2017**

Liberty defeated Longwood in the Flames' final Big South home game to win a school-record 14 games in the Big South during the regular season.

**March 13, 2017**

Liberty wins the second annual CIT John McLendon Classic defeating Norfolk State at home. Ryan Kemrite was named MVP with a McLendon Classic record 30 points.

**March 26, 2017**

Liberty's season ended at UMBC in the quarterfinals of the CIT. The Flames posted the schools fifth 20-win season ending with a 21-14 record.

**Nov. 14, 2017**

Liberty's win over Wake Forest was the Flames' first win over an ACC opponent since Nov. 25, 2008 at Virginia. It was the Big South's first win over an ACC opponent since 2014.

**March 4, 2018**

Liberty advanced to the Big South Championship for the first time since 2013. Liberty's Lovell Cabbil and Scottie James were named to the Big South All-Tournament team.

**March 28, 2018**

Liberty's had its longest season ever, advancing to the CIT Semifinals, posting back-to-back 20-win seasons for the first time in school history.

**December 29, 2018**

Liberty defeats UCLA at the historic Pauley Pavilion for the school's first-ever win over a Pac-12 school.

**March 1, 2019**

Liberty defeats NJIT in the regular season finale, winning the ASUN Regular Season championship, along with Lipscomb, in Liberty's first season in the ASUN Conference.

**March 10, 2019**

In their first season in the ASUN, Liberty wins the ASUN Conference Championship defeating Lipscomb 74-68 on the road, punching its ticket to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2013.

**March 22, 2019**

Liberty defeats Mississippi State. 80-76, for the school's first-ever win in the NCAA Tournament.

The Flames end the season with a school-record 29 wins and eight votes in the USA Today Coaches Top 25 Poll for the first time in school history.

**Dec. 21, 2019**

Liberty started the season 14-0, the longest winning streak in school history (at the time) and the was the third final undefeated team in Division I (Auburn and San Diego State). Liberty received a school-record 40 votes in the AP Top 25 poll.

**Feb. 27, 2020**

Liberty defeated Kennesaw State to ear a share of the ASUN Regular Season championship, along with North Florida.

**March 8, 2020**

Liberty defeated Lipscomb for the second straight in the ASUN Championship. The Flames defeated the Bison 73-57 in front of 7,728 fans in the Vines Center, which is an ASUN Championship record. Caleb Homesley was named the Tournament MVP.

**March 12, 2020**

The NCAA cancelled the NCAA Tournament due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Dec. 3, 2020**

Liberty men's basketball played its first game ever in the brand-new Liberty Arena against St. Francis (Pa.). The Flames defeated St. Francis 78-62.

**February 27, 2021**

Liberty won its third straight ASUN Regular Season title on the road, defeating Bellarmine 94-78.

**March 7, 2021**

Liberty claimed its third straight ASUN Tournament Championship, defeating North Alabama 79-75 at UNF Arena. Darius McGhee was named the Tournament MVP.

**March 19, 2021**

As a No. 13 seed, Liberty played the No. 4 seed Oklahoma State in the NCAA Tournament, where the Flames suffered a 69-60 loss.

**Dec. 2, 2021**

For the first time in program history, Liberty hosted an SEC opponent, and the Flames defeated Missouri 66-45 in front of a sold out Liberty Arena.

**Dec. 13, 2021**

Darius McGhee became Liberty's all-time three-pointer leader with 259 made three-pointers, passing Ryan Kemrite.

**Dec. 25, 2021**

Darius McGhee was named MVP of the Diamond Head Classic, setting the tournament record for most points in the tournament, scoring 92 points.

**Jan. 15, 2022**

Darius McGhee set the program record for most points in a single game, scoring 48 points in Liberty's win over FGCU.

**March 1, 2022**

For the first time in program history, a Liberty player won back-to-back conference Player of the Year awards, as Darius McGhee was named the ASUN Player of the Year.

**Feb. 4, 2023**

Darius McGhee etched his name in the record book by becoming the program's new all-time leading scorer. He broke Karl Hess' record of 2,373 career points which had stood for 43 years and ended up finishing his time as a Flame with 2,685 career points.

**Feb. 22, 2023**

Darius McGhee set the ASUN Conference all-time career scoring record in Liberty's 85-77 win at Queens. McGhee scored 35 points in the record-setting effort and also became the fourth player in NCAA Division I men's basketball history to make 500 career three-pointers. McGhee's 500th career triple career with 18:50 remaining in the contest. McGhee finished his career with 528 makes from long distance, second most in NCAA history.

**Feb. 27, 2023**

Darius McGhee is named ASUN Player of the Year for the third straight season. The Roxboro, N.C. native is one of only two players in ASUN history to earn the award three times, joining Centenary's Willie Jackson (1982-84).

**March 14, 2023**

Darius McGhee was named a 2022-23 Associated Press All-America men's basketball honorable mention selection. McGhee is only the second player in program history to garner the prestigious distinction from the AP and first since Jesse Sanders in 2011.

**March 14, 2023**

Making its first-ever appearance in the National Invitational Tournament (NIT), Liberty defeated Villanova 62-57 at Liberty Arena. The Flames' victory was their second-ever BIG EAST win and first since 2000. Liberty closed the year with a 19-1 mark at Liberty Arena.

**Nov. 19, 2023**

Liberty topped Vermont 71-61 in the title game of the Myrtle Beach Invitational, completing a 3-0 weekend at the event. The Flames also bested Furman (quarterfinals) and Wichita State (semifinals) on the way to the title. Kyle Rode is named Myrtle Beach Invitational MVP.

**Jan. 18, 2024**

The Flames picked up their first-ever Conference USA victory, defeating the FIU Panthers by a 78-69 score at Liberty Arena. The Flames assisted on 26 of their 27 made field goals (96.3 percent) on the night and were 16-of-33 (48.5 percent) from three-point range.

**Nov. 25, 2024**

Liberty defeated McNeese (2025 NCAA Tournament team) 62-58 to claim the 2024 Paradise Jam title in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. Two nights prior, the Flames collected a Power 4 win in the semifinals, besting Kansas State 67-65. Colin Porter is named Paradise Jam MVP and is joined on the All-Tournament team by Kaden Metheny.

**Jan. 11, 2025**

Taelon Peter scored a career-high-matching 33 points off the bench at Louisiana Tech, the most by a Liberty player of the bench in program history. Peter went on to replicate the feat with

another 33-point effort off the bench at Middle Tennessee just under two months later (March 6).

### **Jan. 25, 2025**

Liberty upended FIU 82-59 in a CUSA road game. With the win, Flames head coach Ritchie McKay became the winningest head coach in program history. McKay earned his 260th victory as head coach at Liberty, moving past Jeff Meyer (259 wins, 1981-97) for first place all-time.

### **March 6, 2025**

The Flames knocked off Western Kentucky 90-61 on the road to claim the outright Conference USA regular season title and the No. 1 seed for the CUSA Championship. The victory gave Liberty its sixth regular season (or division) title in the last seven years.

### **March 15, 2025**

No. 1 seed Liberty defeated No. 2 seed Jacksonville State 79-67 in the 2025 CUSA Championship title game to claim its first CUSA title in its second year in the league. Kaden Metheny (20.3 ppg, 16 threes in three games) was named CUSA Championship MVP for his efforts and was joined on the All-Tournament team by Taelon Peter. This is Liberty's fourth conference championship title in the last seven years and seventh conference crown overall. The Flames now have 10 total titles (four conference tournament, six regular season and/or division crowns) over the last seven years.

### **March 20, 2025**

Liberty, a No. 12 seed, faced No. 5 seed Oregon in the NCAA Tournament Round of 64 at Climate Pledge Arena in Seattle, Wash. The Ducks prevailed 81-52 over the Flames. Liberty finishes the year with a 28-7 overall record.

### **June 26, 2025**

Taelon Peter was taken in the second round of the 2025 NBA Draft as the 54th overall pick by the Indiana Pacers. Peter became the third player in program history and the first in the Division I era to be taken in the NBA Draft, also becoming the first Flame selected in the draft in 40 years.

### **October 24, 2025**

Taelon Peter made his NBA debut with the Indiana Pacers after making the opening night roster. Peter and the Pacers squared off with the Oklahoma City Thunder in a rematch of the 2025 NBA finals. Peter finished the night with three points on 1-of-2 shooting, one assist and one steal in 17 minutes of action.

### **December 20, 2025**

Liberty prevailed 64-61 over Dayton on the road, snapping the Flyers' 33-game home non-conference winning streak in what was the first-ever matchup between the two programs. Zach Cleveland posted a double-double of 12 points and a career-high 16 rebounds, along with seven assists, three blocks and two steals.

### **February 11, 2026**

Liberty's Zach Cleveland hit the game-winning shot as time expired, lifting the Flames to their program-record-setting 15th straight victory, a 77-75 CUSA road triumph at New Mexico State. Liberty's 15 wins in a row established a new program record, breaking a tie with the 2019-20 squad which won 14 straight games to open the 2019-20 season.

**February 19, 2026**

The Liberty Flames topped the FIU Panthers in dramatic fashion, 90-89 in overtime for their 17th straight win. With the victory, Liberty improved to a perfect 15-0 in conference play, its best start to a conference slate in program history. The Flames' streak ended at 17 games, the longest in school history by three games (2019-20 team, 14-game winning streak).

**February 28, 2026**

Liberty claimed an 81-78 road win at Jacksonville State to earn the CUSA outright regular season title for a second consecutive year.

**March 9, 2026**

Zach Cleveland was named Conference USA Player of the Year, Liberty's first CUSA Player of the Year in program history. Liberty Men's Basketball Head Coach Ritchie McKay was voted the CUSA Gene-Bartow Co-Coach of the Year along with Sam Houston's Chris Mudge. McKay's honor was his fourth career conference coach of the year recognition (ASUN 2020-21 and 2019-20, Big South 2015-16).