



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Region V Director Stan Feaster

[sfeaster@rangercollege.edu](mailto:sfeaster@rangercollege.edu) or (432) 816-9480.

Tournament Director, National Junior College Athletic Association

Or Debi Schultz, Sales Director Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau

325-676-2556 or [debi@abilenevisitors.com](mailto:debi@abilenevisitors.com)

<https://www.abilenevisitors.com/Press-Releases>

**Region V Basketball Championships set to tip off in Abilene**

RANGER – LeBron James may be the world’s greatest basketball player, but you won’t have to travel to La-La Land to find the best small college basketball. In fact, you won’t even have to leave the Big Country.

Some of the nation’s top small school-college basketball teams will land in Abilene next week to participate in the 2019 Region V Men’s and Women’s Basketball Championships. A total of 16 teams from throughout Texas and New Mexico will participate in the four-day tournament at Abilene Christian University’s Moody Coliseum beginning March 6. The winner of the men’s and women’s championship games will advance to the NJCAA national tournaments the following week.

“This is one of the best tournaments of its size,” said Ranger College head coach Billy Gillispie. “You will have the chance to see a lot of players here that will be playing on Division I teams soon. If you want to see some great college basketball, I encourage you to come out and watch.”

“There are going to be some great athletes, and great teams, on the floor,” he added.

Gillispie, a former head coach at the University of Kentucky and tradition-rich programs at Texas A&M and Texas Tech, isn’t kidding when he says that some of the players whose talents will be on display will be playing the Division I level soon. Former guards Jordan Geist and Kris Clyburn starred under Gillispie three years ago and now plays for the University of Missouri and the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, respectively.

At the event, the top four men’s and women’s teams from the Western Junior College Athletic Conference (WJCAC) and the Northern Texas Junior College Athletic Conference (NTJCAC) come together for a single-elimination tournament to determine the region’s qualifiers for the national tournament.

Ranger College is back in the men’s Region V field for the fourth consecutive season. The Rangers roll into the tournament ranked No. 4 in the latest NJCAA Division I poll. Ranger College wrapped up the No. 1 seed from the NTJCAC last week with a close 83-82 victory over Temple College.

The Rangers are led into the tournament by sharp-shooting guard Brayan Au, point guard Keyshaad Dixon and Jonathan Jackson, a potential All-American selection at forward. Sophomores Jaren English and Coryon Mason also provide plenty of punch to an RC lineup that has averaged just under 90 points per game during its 27-2 run.

Ranger will face off with the No. 4 seed from the WJCAC in the first round of men's play on Friday, March 7.

Joining Ranger College on the NTJCAC's side of the bracket will be Collin County, who finished just behind the Rangers in the conference's regular-season race. Also qualifying for the tournament from the NTJCAC race is No. 3 seed Temple College and fourth-seeded McLennan Community College.

On the WJCAC side, Odessa College and South Plains College come in as the teams to keep an eye on. Odessa College, the WJCAC champion, will face off with McLennan Community College in the first round, while South Plains will draw the unenviable task of facing Temple, a 26-win team in the regular season.

Odessa heads into the tournament ranked No. 7 nationally. South Plains, the defending NJCAA national champion, is ranked ninth.

The WJCAC's No. 3 seed, New Mexico Junior College will draw Collin College, which may well feature the region's top player in sophomore guard Tajzmel Sherman.

During the regular season, Sherman averaged just over 26 points per game and led the Cougars to a 24-5 mark. Collin County has been ranked as high as No. 5 in the national rankings this season.

Just like on the men's side, the women's bracket will showcase some of the top teams in the country, including a pair of top 10-ranked teams in South Plains College and New Mexico Junior College.

South Plains, coached by Cisco native Cayla Petree, will enter the women's tournament as the odds-on favorite to win the Region V championship – and a berth in the women's national tournament, which will be held in Lubbock the following weekend. The Lady Texans come into the tournament ranked No. 3 in the women's Division I poll.

Joining South Plains in the tournament from the WJCAC is rival New Mexico Junior College, which netted the No. 2 seed. The Lady Thunderbirds, who shared the WJCAC championship with SPC, are ranked No. 10 nationally.

No. 19-ranked Odessa College and No. 24-ranked Midland will round out the WJCAC's entries in the Region V tournament.

On the NTJCAC side, Hill College will enter the women's bracket as the NTJCAC champion. The Lady Rebels, who are ranked No. 25 nationally, are 20-9 this season and are riding a 12-game win streak.

Collin County, Weatherford and Ranger will also advance.

**What:** 2019 Region C Basketball Championships

**When:** March 6-9

**Where:** Moody Coliseum, Abilene Christian University

**Tickets:** \$10 per day.

**Brackets:** Updated brackets are available on [www.njcaaregion5.com](http://www.njcaaregion5.com)