

2025-26 FDU WBB GAME NOTES

FDU MEDIA RELATIONS 201-692-2149 FDUKNIGHTS.COM X @FDUKNIGHTS @FDUKNIGHTSATHLETICS



**FDU
KNIGHTS**
0-1 (0-0 NEC)

HC: Stephanie Gaitley (3rd Season, Villanova '83)

AT



**15 NOTRE DAME
FIGHTING IRISH**
0-0 (0-0 ACC)

HC: Niele Ivey (6th Season, Notre Dame '00)

Thursday, Nov. 5, 2025 | 7:00 p.m.
Purcell Pavilion | South Bend, Ind.

FOLLOW THE ACTION

TV
ACCNX



@FDUKnightsWBB
@FDUKnightVision

LIVE STATS
Stats Broadcast



@FDUKnightsWBB

LAST GAME'S STARTERS

#4 AVA RENNINGER | So. | G | 5-6 | Yardley, PA.
10.0 PPG | 2.0 RPG | 4.0 APG | 25.0 FG% | 20.0 3PT% | 36.0 MPG

#24 KAILEE McDONALD | So. | G | 5-9 | Lowell, Mass.
1.0 PPG | 5.0 RPG | 0.0 APG | 0.0 FG% | 0.0 3PT% | 36.0 MPG

#0 MADLENA GERKE | Gr. | G/F | 5-10 | Riga, Latvia
9.0 PPG | 0.0 RPG | 1.0 APG | 36.4 FG% | 20.0 3PT% | 21.0 MPG

#15 LEAH CROSBY | Fr. | F | 6-0 | Plainfield, N.J.
9.0 PPG | 1.0 RPG | 0.0 APG | 33.3 FG% | 33.3 3PT% | 26.0 MPG

#21 REBECCA OSEI-OWUSU | Jr. | F | 5-11 | Brooklyn, N.Y.
5.0 PPG | 10.0 RPG | 1.0 APG | 33.3 FG% | 0.0 3PT% | 22.0 MPG

LAST TIME OUT

The Knights opened their regular season with a loss at Purdue on Monday night. FDU dropped the contest to the Boilermakers by a score of 67-48. FDU's defense held down Purdue for most of the game; the Knights trailed 16-13 after the first quarter, and outscored Purdue 27-25 in the second half. A 19-3 run by Purdue to close the second quarter was the difference in the game. Ava Renninger led the Knights in scoring with 10 points, while freshman Leah Crosby poured in nine. Rebecca Osei-Owusu grabbed a game-high 10 rebounds in her first ever start.

2025-26 SCHEDULE

11/3	at Purdue	L, 67-48
11/5	at Notre Dame	7 p.m.
11/10	vs. Bloomfield	7 p.m.
11/12	at Manhattan	7 p.m.
11/16	at Rutgers	1 p.m.
11/19	vs. Delaware State	7 p.m.
11/25	at NJIT	6 p.m.
11/29	vs. Monmouth	2 p.m.
12/4	vs. Lafayette	7 p.m.
12/10	at Saint Peter's	6 p.m.
12/20	vs. Ursinus	2 p.m.
12/29	vs. Binghamton^	7 p.m.
12/30	vs. TBD^	4 p.m.
1/2	at Mercyhurst*	5 p.m.
1/4	at Saint Francis U*	1 p.m.
1/8	at Chicago State*	7 p.m.
1/10	vs. New Haven*	2 p.m.
1/15	at Wagner*	7 p.m.
1/17	at LIU*	TBD
1/22	vs. CCSU*	7 p.m.
1/24	at Le Moyne*	1 p.m.
1/29	vs. Stonehill*	7 p.m.
1/31	vs. Wagner*	2 p.m.
2/5	at Stonehill*	6 p.m.
2/7	vs. Mercyhurst*	1 p.m.
2/14	at CCSU*	1 p.m.
2/19	vs. Chicago State*	7 p.m.
2/21	at New Haven*	1 p.m.
2/26	vs. Le Moyne*	7 p.m.
2/28	vs. LIU*	2 p.m.
3/5	vs. Saint Francis U*	11 a.m.
3/9	NEC Quarterfinals**	TBD
3/12	NEC Semifinals**	TBD
3/15	NEC Championship**	TBD

Home games in **BOLD** played at
Bogota Savings Bank Center

* Northeast Conference Game

** Northeast Conference Tournament

^ FDU Christmas Classic

MEDIA CONTACT

JOE MATTHEWS

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Media interested in setting up interviews with
student-athletes and/or coaches must coordinate
all requests through Joe Matthews.

2025-26 FDU WOMEN'S BASKETBALL WORD ROSTER

#	NAME	POS	CL	CL	HOMETOWN/H.S./PREVIOUS SCHOOL
0	Madlena Gerke	G/F	Gr.	5-10	Riga, Latvia / Rigas 45.vidusskola / Evansville
2	Akeelah Lafleur	F	Fr.	6-3	Willingboro, N.J. / Burlington County Institute of Technology
3	Bella Toomey	F	Jr.	6-2	Philadelphia, Pa. / Penn Charter
4	Ava Renninger	G	So.	5-6	Yardley, Pa. / Archbishop Wood
5	Talia Baptiste	G	So.	5-7	Maplewood, N.J. / Columbia
12	Sydney Stokes	F	So.	6-1	Linwood, N.J. / Mainland Regional
14	Joi Johnson	F	So.	5-11	Ewing, N.J. / Ewing
15	Leah Crosby	F	Fr.	6-0	Plainfield, N.J. / St. Thomas Aquinas
20	Madison Stuart	F	Fr.	5-11	Voorhees, N.J. / Eastern Regional
21	Rebecca Osei-Owusu	F	Jr.	5-11	Brooklyn, N.Y. / Monsignor Scanlan
22	Jada Elston	G	Jr.	5-8	Woodbine, N.J. / Middle Township
23	Tyler Edwards	G	So.	5-6	Townsend, Del. / Sanford
24	Kailee McDonald	G	So.	5-9	Lowell, Mass. / Worcester Academy
25	Reese Downey	G	Fr.	5-6	Galloway, N.J. / Absegami
45	Lilly Parke	F	Sr.	6-2	Auckland, New Zealand / Baradene / AUM

COACHING STAFF

Head Coach - Stephanie Gaitley, 3rd Season (Villanova '83)

Associate Head Coach/Recruiting Coordinator - Jessica Simmonds, 6th Season (George Washington '06)

Assistant Coach - Jeremy Thompson, 3rd Season (Muhlenberg '08)

Assistant Coach - Ty Rozier, 3rd Season (Boston College '23)

Director of Basketball Operations - Nickie Carter, 2nd Season (FDU '24)

SUPPORT STAFF

Sport Administrator - Cathy Liggett (Deputy Director of Athletics)

Media Relations - Joe Matthews (Athletic Media Relations Graduate Assistant)

Athletic Trainer - Beatrice Pocher (Assistant Athletic Trainer)

Strength and Conditioning - Jahaad Anderson (Strength and Conditioning GA)

Academic Support - Franni DeSilvio (Assistant AD, Academics)

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Note: FDU does not refer to its athletic teams as "Fairleigh Dickinson." Please use "FDU" in all references to the Knights.

#0 Madlena Gerke	mad-LAY-nuh GURR-key
#2 Akeelah Lafleur	uh-KEEL-uh luh-FLUR
#3 Bella Toomey	TOO-mee
#4 Ava Renninger	RENN-inn-gurr
#5 Talia Baptiste	TAH-lee-uh bap-TEEST
#15 Leah Crosby	LEE-uh
#21 Rebecca Osei-Owusu	OH-say oh-WOO-soo
#24 Kailee McDonald	KAY-lee
#45 Lilly Parke	PARK
Ty Rozier	ROH-zee-ay

ROSTER BREAKDOWN

BY CLASS

Grad Student (1): Madlena Gerke

Senior (1): Lilly Parke

Junior (3): Bella Toomey, Rebecca Osei-Owusu, Jada Elston

Sophomore (6): Ava Renninger, Talia Baptiste, Sydney Stokes, Joi Johnson, Tyler Edwards, Kailee McDonald

Freshman (4): Akeelah Lafleur, Leah Crosby, Madison Stuart, Reese Downey

BY STATE/COUNTRY

New Jersey (8): Akeelah Lafleur, Talia Baptiste, Sydney Stokes, Joi Johnson, Leah Crosby, Madison Stuart, Jada Elston, Reese Downey

Pennsylvania (2): Bella Toomey, Ava Renninger

Delaware (1): Tyler Edwards New York (1): Rebecca Osei-Owusu

Massachusetts (1): Kailee McDonald

Latvia (1): Madlena Gerke New Zealand (1): Lilly Parke

STORYLINES

F-D-U - All references to the team should be by "FDU". This includes both written and broadcast references. "Fairleigh Dickinson" is no longer the athletic identity of the school and SHOULD NOT be used in any circumstance.

HISTORY ON THE HACKENSACK - The 2024-25 FDU Knights season was undoubtedly the best in program history. The Knights won their first NEC title in 33 years, behind the best record in program history. The Knights finished 29-3, shattering their previous program-record win total of 24. The Knights' 29-3 record is also the second-best mark in the 38-year history of NEC women's basketball. Only 2012-13 Quinnipiac at 30-3 has a better mark all-time. The season culminated in FDU's first ever trip to the NCAA Tournament. The Knights earned a #15 seed in the field, and travelled to Fort Worth, TX to face #2 TCU. The historic season came to a close in a 73-51 loss to the Horned Frogs.

SOMETHING TO PROVE - The Knights were picked as the unanimous number one team in the 2025-26 NEC Preseason Coaches' Poll. It is the second year in a row that the Knights have earned such an honor. The Knights head into the year with a fresh outlook, and will battle to remain as a competitive program in the NEC.

THE RENNINGER SHOW, SEASON 2 - Ava Renninger is coming off of one of the greatest rookie campaigns in both FDU and NEC history. Renninger finished the 2024-25 campaign with 13.8 PPG, 4.7 RPG, and 2.7 APG. Renninger was named the 2024-25 NEC Rookie of the Year, and was also named to the All-NEC First Team and the NEC All-Rookie Team. As Renninger heads into her sophomore campaign, expectations are high. The Yardley, Pa. native was unanimously named to the 2025-26 Preseason All-NEC Team.

MORE THAN A GAME - FDU women's basketball senior Lilly Parke has been selected as a Kay Yow Servant Leader for the 2025-26 season. The Kay Yow Servant Leader Award is an honor presented annually by the Kay Yow Foundation. The award is given to a selection of student-athletes who embody the characteristics of servant and selfless leadership both on and off the court. "I am honored to receive the Kay Yow Servant Leader Award," said Parke. "It is an amazing opportunity to learn more about Coach Kay Yow's legacy, and my goal is to help continue the fight against cancer."

THE JERSEY FOUR - The Knights head into the 2025-26 campaign with five newcomers, highlighted by a freshman class of four rookies, all hailing from the Garden State. Akeelah Lafleur, Leah Crosby, Madison Stuart, and Reese Downey all join the ranks in Hackensack to try and help the Knights continue to compete.

BECCABALL - Rebecca Osei-Owusu has taken over a spot in the starting lineup in her third season on the banks of the Hackensack. The junior from Brooklyn, N.Y. started the Knights' exhibition matchup against Villanova, and earned her first career start in the season opener at Purdue on November 3. Against Purdue, Osei-Owusu played a career-high 22 minutes, while scoring five points and grabbing a both a career and game-high ten rebounds.

GAITLEY'S GREATNESS - FDU head coach Stephanie Gaitley heads into the 2025-26 campaign as one of the most prolific head coaches in Division I women's basketball history. Gaitley currently ranks fifth in all-time wins amongst active coaches. She ranks 15th on the all-time wins leaderboard for Division I women's basketball coaches. Gaitley also has the second-most mid-major victories of all-time. In 2024-25, Gaitley became just the fourth coach in history to take four different programs to the NCAA Tournament (Richmond, St. Joe's, Fordham, FDU). Gaitley was inked to a contract extension with FDU ahead of the upcoming 2025-26 campaign.

CROSBY'S CORNER - Freshman Leah Crosby has made an immediate impact on the Knights, taking over a starting role in her first-ever collegiate appearance. The Plainfield, N.J. native played 26 minutes in the Knights' loss to Purdue, scoring nine points including a three-point basket to open the scoring for both her game and career.

HOME DOMINANCE - The Knights are currently on one of the most impressive home winning streaks in the entire country. The last time the Knights lost a game in the Bogota Savings Bank Center was February 24, 2024. The Knights have won 18 straight at home since that loss.

JERSEY MADE - The Knights' 2025-26 roster is heavily comprised of New Jersey products. Eight Knights hail from the Garden State, making up more than half the roster.

STILL EATING GOOD - FDU has partnered with Segovia Steakhouse for the second consecutive season. Segovia Steakhouse is located at 217 Main Street in Little Ferry, N.J. They offer a menu inspired by the diverse flavors of Spain and influenced by local and seasonal products. The steakhouse's warm and inviting décor reflects the essence of Spanish hospitality, including a commitment to food and family. Segovia Steakhouse will serve as the presenting sponsor for the 2025-26 FDU women's basketball season.

CHRISTMAS IN HACKENSACK - The Knights will host the FDU Christmas Classic for the second consecutive season. Binghamton and UPenn will head to the banks of the Hackensack to participate in the classic with FDU. The tournament will begin on December 29, and conclude on December 30.

YES, WE'RE BACK ON TV! - FDU will have three home games broadcasted live on the YES Network this season. YES, which is the broadcast home of the New York Yankees and Brooklyn Nets, is the preeminent regional sports network in the country. The Knights now align themselves with the popular New York sports franchises by having their games aired on the YES Network for a third-straight season.

SIMPLER, SHARPER, STILL US - Traditionally known as the Northeast Conference, the NEC has rebranded. The conference that calls FDU a founding member is now to be referred to as simply the "NEC". The name "Northeast Conference" has been retired.

KNIGHT TALES

FIRST SEASON: 1977-78 (48 seasons)
2024-25 RECORD: 29-4
2024-25 NEC RECORD: 16-0 (1st)
2024-25 HOME/ROAD/NEUTRAL: 17-0/12-3/0-1
LETTERWINNERS RETURNING/LOST: 10/6
STARTERS RETURNING/LOST: 2/3
CAMPUS LOCATION: Teaneck/Hackensack, N.J.
ADDRESS: 1000 River Road, Teaneck, N.J. 07666
FOUNDED: 1942
ENROLLMENT: 6,913
NICKNAME: Knights
MASCOT: Knightro
COLORS: Burgundy (#72293C) and Blue (#28334A)
ARENA (CAPACITY): Bogota Savings Bank Center (1,852)
CONFERENCE: NEC
PRESIDENT: Michael J. Avaltroni
SR ASSOCIATE VP/DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS: Bradford Hurlbut
ATHLETIC DEPT. PHONE #: 201-692-2208

QUICK HITTERS

0	Madlena Gerke G/F 5-10 Riga, Latvia	- Transferred to FDU from Evansville ahead of 2025-26. - Three-time Latvian Regular Championship MVP.
2	Akeelah Lafleur F 6-3 Willingboro, N.J.	- 2025 BCSL Player of the Year - One of four freshmen on FDU's roster from New Jersey
3	Bella Toomey F 6-2 Philadelphia, Pa.	- Scored six points in the First Round of the 2025 NCAA Tournament against TCU. - Comes from a long line of college athletes in her family
4	Ava Renninger G 5-6 Yardley, Pa.	- Named the 2024-25 NEC Rookie of the Year - Nicknamed "The General" - Was a flag football star QB in high school at Archbishop Wood.
5	Talia Baptiste G 5-7 Maplewood, N.J.	- Scored 39 points in a single game at Columbia High School, the second-most in school history. - Plays piano and produces her own music
12	Sydney Stokes F 6-1 Linwood, N.J.	- 2023 Boo Pergament Award Winner, awarded to the most improved player in the Cape-Atlantic League. - Avid cook and baker.
14	Joi Johnson F 5-11 Ewing, N.J.	- 1,000 point scorer for Ewing High School. - Johnson's mother Elandra was coached by Stephanie Gaitley at St. Joe's in the 1990s.
15	Leah Crosby F 6-0 Plainfield, N.J.	- 2025 County Conference MVP - 2025 Jersey Sports Zone MVP
20	Madison Stuart F 5-11 Voorhees, N.J.	- All-South Jersey Group 4 in high school - First Team All-Olympic Conference
21	Rebecca Osei-Owusu F 5-11 Brooklyn, N.Y.	- An aspiring journalist, wrote for her high school newspaper - Grabbed ten rebounds in first career start at Purdue (11/3/25). - One of the most infectious and energetic players on the team.
22	Jada Elston G 5-8 Woodbine, N.J.	- Played against Coach Gaitley's Ocean City team in high school. - 2x Cape Atlantic League Player of the Year
23	Tyler Edwards G 5-6 Townsend, Del.	- Father Micah played basketball at University of Delaware - Plays both the flute and tuba.
24	Kailee McDonald G 5-9 Lowell, Mass.	- Described by Coach Gaitley as the "best offensive rebounder I have ever coached" - Led FDU with a 43.5% 3PT% last season
25	Reese Downey G 5-6 Galloway, N.J.	- Absegami High School's All-Time leading scorer (boys and girls) with 2,092 points. - 2025 NJ.com Group III Player of the Year.
45	Lilly Parke F 6-2 Auckland, N.Z.	- Named a Kay Yow Servant Leader for the 2025-26 season. - Named to the 2024-25 NEC All-Tournament Team - Will miss the 2025-26 season with a knee injury

GET TO KNOW GAITLEY



STEPHANIE GAITLEY

HEAD COACHING RECORD

727-413

- 5th in active DI wins amongst NCAAW coaches
- 15th winningest coach at the DI level all-time

EXPERIENCE

Head Women's Basketball Coach, FDU
(NCAA Division I - NEC) - 2023-Present
Head Women's Basketball Coach, Fordham
(NCAA Division I - A-10) - 2011-2022
Head Women's Basketball Coach, Monmouth
(NCAA Division I - NEC) - 2008-2011
Head Women's Basketball Coach, LIU-Brooklyn
(NCAA Division I - NEC) - 2002-2008
Head Women's Basketball Coach, Saint Joseph's
(NCAA Division I - A-10) - 1991-2001
Head Women's Basketball Coach, Richmond
(NCAA Division I - CAA) - 1985-1991

ACCOLADES

- Ten NCAA tournament appearances
- 11 WNIT appearances
- Philadelphia Big Five Hall of Famer
- 3x Metropolitan Basketball Writers Association (MBWA) Coach of the Year
- 1982 CoSIDA All-American as a player at Villanova
- Member of Villanova Athletics Hall of Fame
- 2x Brenda Reilly NEC Coach of the Year (2006-07, 2024-25)

PERSONAL

- Born and raised in Ocean City, N.J.
- Bachelor of Arts, Communications, Villanova (1983)
- Master of Arts, Secondary Education, Villanova (1983)
- Gaitley and her husband Frank have three adult sons: Dutch, D.C. and Jordan "Coop" Gaitley
 - Dutch is currently an Assistant Coach with the Brooklyn Nets.
 - Jordan is a Video and Player Development Assistant with the Phoenix Suns
- Gaitley's sister Coco (Vanderslice) played for FDU's women's program in the 1980s.

THE STORY

In 2023, Stephanie Gaitley was named the eighth head coach of FDU's women's basketball program. Born and raised in Ocean City, N.J., Gaitley began her coaching career at Richmond leading the Spiders to two CAA titles, two NCAA tournament bids and one appearance in the WNIT. After six seasons at Richmond, the 1982 CoSIDA Academic All-American moved on to Saint Joseph's.

In Philadelphia, Gaitley won nearly 70 percent of her team's games with a 10-year record of 196-88 among collecting two A-10 championships, five trips to the Big Dance and an appearance in the WNIT, her second.

Gaitley moved on from the Hawks and arrived in the NEC in 2002 as the head coach of LIU-Brooklyn, a position she held for six campaigns. While at LIU, Gaitley transformed the program into 20-game winners in her last two seasons.

Staying in the NEC, the Jersey native returned home, taking over Monmouth in 2008, leading the Hawks to the 2011 NEC title game as the No. 2 seed in the conference tournament. A WNIT participant in her final season at Monmouth, Gaitley finished with a 57-37 record in West Long Branch to cap three seasons.

Moving back to the A-10, Gaitley was named Fordham's head coach in time for the 2011-12 season, transforming the Rams into a perennial conference contender. The Rams tore through the A-10 during her tenure, going from no postseason trips in the 10 seasons prior to her taking over, to nine postseason trips. Winners of 108 conference games over her 11 campaigns on Rose Hill, Gaitley twice led the Rams to A-10 titles resulting in two tickets to the NCAA tournament. Additionally, she led Fordham to seven WNIT appearances, advancing to the third round twice and earning seven 20-plus win campaigns.

Following Fordham, Gaitley came to FDU ahead of the 2023-24 campaign. That season, she led the Knights to an 11-5 record in conference play, and a trip to the NEC semi-final.

Uniquely, Gaitley and her two sisters, Courtney and Coco, hold a piece of NCAA history. During the 1981-82 season, Stephanie and Courtney, while playing for Villanova, played against Coco, marking the first time in NCAA history that three sisters competed in the same game.

Also having experience with the United States national team, Gaitley served as an assistant in 2000 at the Jones Cup, helping lead the team to a gold medal win. She also served as head coach of the West Team at the 1995 U.S. Olympic Festival, winning a silver medal.

In the 2024-25 season, Gaitley made history, becoming just the 17th Division I women's basketball head coach to reach 700 wins. Gaitley currently ranks fifth in DI wins among all active head coaches in the women's game. Gaitley has the second-most non power five wins in NCAAW history. Several of Gaitley's close friends in the coaching world helped celebrate her achievement, including Geno Auriemma, Tara VanDerveer, Nancy Lieberman, Kelly Graves, and Harry Perretta.

TV/RADIO SPOT CHART



0 Madlena
GERKE

G/F | Gr. | 5-10 | Riga, Latvia



2 Akeelah
LAFLEUR

F | Fr. | 6-3 | Willingboro, N.J.



3 Bella
TOOMEY

F | Jr. | 6-2 | Philadelphia, Pa.



4 Ava
RENNINGER

G | So. | 5-6 | Yardley, Pa.



5 Talia
BAPTISTE

G | So. | 5-7 | Maplewood, N.J.



12 Sydney
STOKES

F | So. | 6-1 | Lindwood, N.J.



14 Joi
JOHNSON

F | So. | 5-11 | Ewing, N.J.



15 Leah
CROSBY

F | Fr. | 6-0 | Plainfield, N.J.



20 Madison
STUART

F | Fr. | 5-11 | Voorhees, N.J.



21 Rebecca
OSEI-OWUSU

F | Jr. | 5-11 | Brooklyn, N.Y.



22 Jada
ELSTON

G | Jr. | 5-8 | Woodbine, N.J.



23 Tyler
EDWARDS

G | So. | 5-6 | Tonawanda, Del.



24 Kailee
MCDONALD

G | So. | 5-9 | Lowell, Mass.



25 Reese
DOWNEY

G | Fr. | 5-6 | Galloway, N.J.



45 Lilly
PARKE

F | Sr. | 6-2 | Auckland, N.Z.



HC Stephanie
GAITLEY

3rd Season, Villanova '83