

# Blackburn Women's Basketball Showed Great Growth in 2019-2020

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CARLINVILLE - The Blackburn College women's basketball team showed plenty of growth in 2019-20 as the program made great strides throughout the year.

Despite low roster numbers, Blackburn matched last season's win total with a 5-19 overall record, and opened eyes with their hustle and determination as first-year head coach Nick Morgan put his stamp on the program.

Morgan, a native of the Peoria area, played collegiately at Illinois Central College and Judson College. He later was an assistant coach at both Illinois Central and Beloit, and has extensive coaching experience on the AAU level.

Blackburn was led by junior forward Savannah Kruse (Lake St. Louis, Mo.), who averaged 15.7 points and hit double-digits in 20 of her 23 games. She hit 20 points in five straight games from January 22 – February 5, including a season-high 27 in a St. Louis Intercollegiate Athletic Conference road game at Iowa Wesleyan.

Junior guard Jenna Dudra (Pana, Ill.) averaged 10.3 points per game and, with 773 career points, is on track to break the 1,000 mark next year. Sophomore guard Lexie

Black (Bellevue, Mo.) averaged 9.2 points, while senior forward Maria Cline (Springfield, Ill.) contributed 9.1 points and 7.8 rebounds per game.

Sophomore forward Callista Francis (Fredericktown, Mo.) rejoined the team for the second semester and pulled down a team-high 9.5 rebounds per game. She ripped down 10 offensive boards and 17 rebounds overall at MacMurray on February 12. Season highlights included a pair of blowout wins over Principia and victories over Alverno and Mount St. Mary at a tournament in Wisconsin in November.

One of the most decorated athletic programs on campus, Blackburn is eyeing a return to the glory days of the 1990s. Blackburn collected nine SLIAC titles between 1990-97 and played in six National Small College Athletic Association tournaments during the decade, winning a national title in 1993.