

Little Rock to Join the Ohio Valley Conference in 2022-23

December 26 2021 7:25 AM



BRENTWOOD, Tenn. – The University of Arkansas at Little Rock has accepted an invitation to join the Ohio Valley Conference.

Little Rock, which sponsors 13 of the OVC's 19 championship sports, and will become official members on July 1, 2022.

They will join Eastern Illinois University, Morehead State University, Murray State University, Southeast Missouri State University, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Tennessee State University, Tennessee Technological University and the University of Tennessee at Martin.

Little Rock marks only the 22nd full-time member in the 74-year history of the Ohio Valley Conference.

"The OVC is delighted to add Little Rock to its membership, given its history of competitive success and its commitment to student-athletes," said OVC Commissioner Beth DeBauche. "As we discussed the process of membership, there was an immediate acknowledgment that the values of our conference and their institution align. Our intention is to create a long-lasting partnership that will enhance the student-athlete experience and strengthen the competitive success of the entire OVC."

Since making the jump to Division I, Little Rock's athletic programs have combined for 50 conference championships, including a combined 21 for men's and women's basketball, with 40 NCAA postseason appearances by Trojan athletic programs.

In the last seven seasons, Little Rock athletic teams have combined to make nine NCAA postseason appearances, most recently being represented by men's golf and wrestling in 2021.

Additionally, Little Rock's athletic programs have excelled in the classroom with the department boasting a cumulative GPA of 3.31 through the spring 2021 semester. The Trojans have had 11 Academic All-Americans since 2000 with six Trojan athletic programs receiving academic recognition by its respective governing organizations in 2020-21.

"In accepting the Ohio Valley Conference invitation, we begin a new and exciting chapter for UA Little Rock and Trojan Athletics that better aligns our sports portfolio with available conference resources and reaffirms our commitment to athletic and academic excellence," said UA Little Rock Chancellor Dr. Christy Drale.

"I am very excited about our opportunity to join the Ohio Valley Conference as we look ahead to the future of Little Rock Athletics," said Director of Athletics George Lee. "In doing our research of the Ohio Valley Conference, the history and tradition of the league made it an enticing new conference home for our Trojan athletic programs as we look forward to adding our mark to the history of the OVC."

Founded in 1948, the OVC is headquartered in Brentwood, Tennessee and been located in the Nashville metropolitan area since 1979.

Over the past seven years OVC teams have placed multiple teams in NCAA Championship fields in baseball, men's basketball, football and rifle. Additionally, over that time frame OVC teams have won NCAA Tournament games in the sports of baseball, men's basketball, women's basketball, football, soccer, softball and volleyball.

Over that period the league has also had both a male and female golf student-athlete advance to the National Championship and in the sport of cross country had at least one athlete advance to the National Championship meet in each of the past 13 years.

Since 2018 the league has hosted its Men's and Women's Basketball Championship at the Ford Center in Evansville, Indiana, including setting attendance records in 2019. Additionally, the OVC hosts neutral site championships in the sports of baseball, softball, men's and women's indoor track and field, men's and women's golf and men's and women's tennis.

During the 2020-21 academic year, a record 1,718 student-athletes were named to the Commissioner's Honor Roll for achieving a 3.25 grade point average or higher, while a record 356 earned the OVC Academic Medal of Honor for compiling a perfect 4.0 GPA.

"The addition of Little Rock is a major step in our membership development and the Trojans will play an important part in our growth and evolution," DeBauche added. "They bring value in a variety of ways, including competitive success and shared vision. As we look to future membership growth, our strategy is to look for institutions that bring value to all our sports, and that includes the sport of football."

About the Ohio Valley Conference

The Ohio Valley Conference was founded in 1948 and is in its seventh decade of competition, making it the eighth-oldest Division I athletic conference. Over its previous 73 years, OVC teams have garnered national championships in football along with national team or individual titles in the sports of rifle, cross country, track and golf. Over the past seven years the league has placed multiple teams in NCAA Championship fields in the sports baseball, men's basketball, football and rifle. In the 1950s the OVC became a pioneer when Morehead State became one of the first non-traditionally Black mid-southern institutions to accept an African American student. Soon after the passing of Title IX legislation, the OVC began formulating plans for women's athletics which began in 1977. The OVC has long been a national leader in sportsmanship and in 1995 implemented a first-of-its-kind Sportsmanship Statement, a policy that promotes principals of fair play, ethical conduct and respect for one's opponent. The OVC has a multi-year media rights agreement with ESPN and well as a sponsorship agreement with LEARFIELD. For more information, visit www.OVCSports.com.