POINT PARK WOMEN’S BASKETBALL GAME NOTES - Feb. 14 at IU Kokomo

(RV) Point Park University Pioneers (21-4, 8-3 KIAC) at IU Kokomo (7-18, 2-9 KIAC)

Saturday, Feb. 14 at 5 p.m. ET (Kokomo, Ind.) / ON-AIR: Point Park Sports Network

Tonight’s Game: Point Park looks to get back on the winning track as it enters Saturday night’s road game at IU Kokomo (5 p.m.) coming off a home loss to Rio Grande on Tuesday and with a 2-2 record in its last four games. Point Park has a very strong record of 13-2 on the road, which includes a 6-1 mark on KIAC road games. The Pioneers are riding a seven-game win streak in road contests and will look to take a season sweep over IU Kokomo (7-18, 2-9 KIAC). The Cougars lost at Point Park, 88-50, on Jan. 10 and are currently battling Carlow (11-10, 2-8 KIAC) for the final playoff spot. IU Kokomo entered Friday’s home game versus Carlow trailing the Celtics by half a game in the standings but could take control in that race with a big showing this weekend.

Last Game: Lost, 73-61, at home to Rio Grande on Tuesday, Feb. 10. The Pioneers were out-rebounded, 54-32, and never led in dropping the pivotal KIAC North game. Ja’Nia McPhatter had a game-high 19 points to bring the Pioneers within a point in the second half, but division leader Rio Grande (21-6, 10-1 KIAC) powered its way to the win. Kelly Johnson scored 12 for the Pioneers. Rio Grande had four starters in double figures to take a strong hold on the KIAC North.

Head Coach: Tony Grenek (IUP ‘94) is in his fourth year at Point Park. His record of 98-23 (.809) at the school gives him the all-time record for coaching wins in program history. He passed Ed Meena, who won 81 games, for the record with the Nov. 24 victory at Washington Adventist.

Key Players: The Pioneers have two double-digit scorers who are healthy with point guard Kelly Johnson (17.2 ppg, 4.4 apg, 4.4 rpg, 3.7 spg) and guard/forward Ja’Nia McPhatter (11.0 ppg, 5.4 rpg). Other starters Alexa Xenakis (9.0 ppg), Kayla Kiriau (8.4 ppg) and Carly Forse (7.2 ppg, 6.3 rpg) are all near double digits and capable of the big game. The Pioneers regularly play 10 or more players.

NAIA DII Top 25 Poll: The Pioneers are still in the ‘other receiving votes’ section in the NAIA DII Top 25 Poll that came out on Tuesday, right around tipoff time versus Rio Grande. The Pioneers came in at No. 26 in that poll, three spots ahead of Rio Grande. The KIAC North rivals figure to flip-flop spots this coming week, but Point Park can keep itself in the Top 25 conversation with a win at IU Kokomo.

National Attention: Point guard Kelly Johnson gained national attention by being named the NAIA Division II Women’s Basketball National Player of the Week from Feb. 2-8. This honor came her way Feb. 10. In two games last week, she averaged 32.0 ppg, 8.0 apg, 6.5 spg, 5.5 rpg, shot 63 percent from the field and 55 percent from long range. She was also KIAC Player of the Week for that.

NAIA DII Team Stats: The Pioneers rank highly in a number of national statistics, most notably on defense where they are 1st in 3-pt FG defense (.245), 34th in turnover margin (+8.4), 7th in total steals (324), 8th in steals per game (12.9), 17th in defensive rebounds per game (30.2) and 24th in total rebounds per game (43.5). Offensively, Point Park ranks 8th nationally in scoring offense per game (81.7), 9th in assist-to-turnover ratio (+1.1), 14th in total scoring (2042), 14th in assists per game (16.4 apg), 15th in scoring margin (+15.6).

Road Record: The Pioneers are an impressive 13-2 on the road and 6-1 in KIAC road games. They have won seven straight road games since losing at Asbury (Ky.), 66-64, on Jan. 3. Point Park is 7-2 at home, which makes it the first time under head coach Tony Grenek that the Pioneers have a better road record than at home.

Home Losses: When the Pioneers lost at home to Rio Grande on Tuesday, it marked the first time the Pioneers had lost consecutive home games under coach Grenek. Point Park had lost its previous home game to IU Southeast as well. The last time that occurred for Point Park was during the 2010-11 season with consecutive home losses to Malone (Jan. 27) and Notre Dame (OH) (Jan. 29). Point Park had been riding a 10-game home winning streak prior to losing to IU Southeast Jan. 30. Point Park finishes up its regular season with two home games and hopes to at least one playoff home game of which to turn around that trend.

After A Loss: Point Park is an impressive 21-2 in games following a loss under coach Tony Grenek. The only times Point Park has lost consecutive games under Grenek was during the 2012-13 season at Alice Lloyd (Ky.) and Asbury (Ky.) and last year at home to IU Southeast and at Asbury (Ky.).
Storm Chasers: Point Park’s hopes for a KIAC North title took a major hit with Tuesday’s loss to Rio Grande. The Pioneers must now chase the RedStorm, which must lose its final three games along with Point Park winning its final three games. Rio Grande (10-1 KIAC) leads Point Park (8-3 KIAC) by 2.0 games in the standings entering Saturday but also holds many of the tiebreakers in its favor. That essentially gives the RedStorm a 3.0 game lead with three games left.

Playoff Outlook: Point Park is shaping up as the No. 2 seed out of the KIAC North if it can finish out the season strong and maintain its position. That would pit the Pioneers hosting the No. 3 team out of the KIAC South in the first-round of the playoffs Feb. 24, which could be anyone of the top four teams in the division. The winner there would play the winner of the No. 1 South vs. No. 4 North first-round game in the semifinals Feb. 28 with the higher seed hosting. The KIAC Tournament finals are March 3 at the highest remaining seed. The regular-season, head-to-head result will determine the host team should equal seeds meet in the finals.

Four Peat?: Point Park has won three straight conference tournaments – one in the AMC and the last two in the KIAC. If it is to make it a four-peat it will likely have to do it for the first time in that stretch as something other than a regular-season conference champion. A third-straight KIAC regular-season title is likely out of reach, and the Pioneers also won the AMC regular season title three years ago.

Last Time vs. IU Kokomo: Point Park put on one of its best defensive displays of the season with the 88-50 victory over IU Kokomo on Jan. 10. The Pioneers smothered the Cougars for 31 turnovers, 28-percent field goals and 27 percent from long range (7 for 26). Point Park was already up, 44-24, by halftime and led by as many as 36 in the second half. Kelly Johnson had 21 points, 10 steals, eight rebounds and six assists. Alexa Xenakis had 13 points and three treys, and Kayla Kiriak had 11 points. Point Park made 14 treys in all, which is still a season high to date. Guard Hope Wagner had 14 points and was 4 for 10 from long range for IU Kokomo, and DeJianna Butler had 10. Deja Felder turned it over 14 times.

Scouting IU Kokomo: The Cougars enter Friday’s game with Carlow as losers of four straight conference games as they have lost their grasp on the final KIAC North playoff spot. IU Kokomo has not played since a 93-77 road loss to IU East on Feb. 5. Deja Felder leads the team with 12.8 ppg. Hope Wagner has made a team-high 42 treys and averages 11.0 ppg. Lela Crawford gives the Cougars three players in double figures at 10.3 ppg and 36 treys.

KIAC Women’s Basketball Standings (as of Feb. 11)

KIAC North Division

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<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>KIAC</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Streak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(RV) Rio Grande</td>
<td>10-1</td>
<td>21-6</td>
<td>W12</td>
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<tr>
<td>(RV) Point Park</td>
<td>8-3</td>
<td>21-4</td>
<td>L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU East</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carlow</td>
<td>2-8</td>
<td>11-10</td>
<td>W1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU Kokomo</td>
<td>2-9</td>
<td>7-18</td>
<td>L5</td>
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KIAC South Division

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<th>School</th>
<th>KIAC</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Streak</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asbury (Ky.)</td>
<td>8-4</td>
<td>21-6</td>
<td>W6</td>
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<tr>
<td>IU Southeast</td>
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<td>L1</td>
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<td>Midway (Ky.)</td>
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<td>13-13</td>
<td>W1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brescia (Ky.)</td>
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<td>11-14</td>
<td>W4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alice Lloyd (Ky.)</td>
<td>2-10</td>
<td>6-18</td>
<td>L9</td>
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This Week in KIAC Women’s Basketball

Sun., Feb. 8
Point Park 103, IU East 79

Tue., Feb. 10
Riv Grande 73, Point Park 61
Cincinnati Christian 80, Alice Lloyd (Ky.) 74
Brescia (Ky.) 73, IU Southeast 72
Asbury (Ky.) 82, Midway (Ky.) 58
Carlow 81, PSU-Beaver 74

Fri., Feb. 13
Carlow at IU Kokomo, 5 p.m.

Sat., Feb. 14
Asbury (Ky.) at IU Southeast, 12 p.m.
Brescia (Ky.) at Alice Lloyd (Ky.), 1 p.m.
IU East at Rio Grande, 2 p.m.
Cincinnati Christian at Midway (Ky.), 2 p.m.
Point Park at IU Kokomo, 5 p.m.