

Stony Brook Women's Basketball Wins First Ever Regular Season Title

By **Kenneth Fermin** - February 20, 2020



Anastasia Warren during a 2019 game. Warren led the game with 22 points and helped Stony Brook clinch its first-ever regular season title on Wednesday, Feb. 19.

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Stony Brook Women's Basketball was 2:33 away from suffering its first defeat since November 2019, trailing 66-65 to the **Vermont Catamounts** on Wednesday, Feb. 19. The Seawolves battled back from a nine-point third quarter disadvantage, but needed one more big shot that would push the team to the top gear. Stony Brook turned to sophomore guard **Anastasia Warren**— who cut outside past her defender for a split-second 3-pointer— for the go-ahead bucket. The shot swished through the net, giving the Seawolves the lead, for good.

Stony Brook (24-1; 13-0) earned its first-ever **America East** regular season championship by defeating Vermont (12-15; 6-8) 72-68, in Burlington, VT. The

Seawolves secured home-court advantage throughout the postseason and improved to 13-0 in conference action.

"This was a hard-fought game on both ends," head coach **Caroline McCombs** said in a press release. "I thought Vermont did a great job of really attacking us early. They made us work for everything that we got. I'm really proud of our team. We had a lot of different players who stepped up in key moments."

The Seawolves set the program record in single-season victories by earning their 25th, Wednesday night. At 25-1, the team topped its overall record from last season (24-9) and broke the original 24-5 record set in 1986-87, while the team was still Division-III. Stony Brook Hall of Fame Class of 2001 member **Dec McCullen** led that team and was named **Converse Division Coach of the Year** in 1987.

It was the third straight contest involving Stony Brook that has come down to the final two minutes of action. The team showcased incredible resilience facing the **New Hampshire Wildcats, Binghamton Bearcats** and Vermont. But, that resiliency helped push the Seawolves to victories in each contest and a nation-leading 22 game winning streak.

The go-ahead push was especially sweet for Warren after battling for the starting spot over the off-season. The sophomore is the youngest player in the starting five and earned the main shooting guard role over two upperclasswomen.

"Annie has really grown as a consistent player," Coach McCombs said in an interview from January. "She has grown so much as a player to understand the system on offense and defense. She can create a little more at times than she does because she is a team player and has grown so much in a year with us."

Warren delivered as the game's leading scorer and dropped 22 points off 7-10 shooting. The sophomore connected on four makes from behind the arc, with the last one putting the dagger through the Catamounts. It was also the second-straight game she cracked double-digits.

Vermont had a chance at pulling off the upset after gaining the ball off a Stony Brook turnover, down 70-68 with 12 seconds remaining. The team was still alive with three ticks remaining, after burning two timeouts and grabbing its own miss. But, Catamounts senior forward **Hanna Crymble** was called for the travel out of the inbound, giving the Seawolves possession and the game.

It looked like the Catamounts would run away with the game early after starting on a 9-0 run and forcing a Seawolves' timeout, four minutes into the game. But, Warren opened the Stony Brook scoring with her first 3-pointer of the night, as the team trailed 20-18 after one quarter.

Vermont excelled at creating space for its starters to knock down shots around the perimeter. Four of the five — Crymble, **Josie Larkins**, **Delaney Richason** and **Emma Utterback**— scored in the double-digits. Utterback sank a pull-up jumper before the buzzer and put the Catamounts ahead 35-32 at halftime.

Larkins scored and knocked down the free throw that gave Vermont the 50-41 lead with 3:56 remaining in the third, but Stony Brook ate away at the deficit. Graduate guard **Kaela Hilaire** and junior forward **India Pagan** teamed up and cut the disadvantage to one point.

Hilaire and Warren provided most of the offensive production for Stony Brook. Hilaire scored 17 points, dished five assists and sank her three free throw opportunities— the last two icing the game for the Seawolves for the third straight game. Pagan led the team with six rebounds, four offensively, and finished the game with 11 points.

Stony Brook still has three contests remaining despite clinching the regular season title— and the next contest will be just as challenging. The Seawolves will battle the reigning America East champion **Maine Black Bears** in the midst of a three-game road trip. Maine shook off a cold non-conference season to sit behind Stony Brook at 9-5 in America East play, riding a five game winning streak.

Coach McCombs stressed the importance of remaining focused even after breaking history, once again.

"Our team has worked really hard," McCombs said. "They know that it's another step in the process. They deserve it, but we're not done. We just want to finish what we started."

Stony Brook will battle the Maine Black Bears in Orono, ME on Sunday, Feb. 23. Tip-off is set for 1 p.m.

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Kenneth is a junior Journalism major at Stony Brook University in Long Island, NY. Kenneth is currently a broadcast commentator for Stony Brook Athletics and WUSB 90.1 FM, covering the Football, Basketball, Baseball, Volleyball, Soccer, Swimming and Diving, Track and Field and nationally-ranked Lacrosse programs. Kenneth also has experience working behind the camera, as an audio engineer, and over three years of newspaper reporting. Kenneth loves covering breaking news and writing captivating articles with his compelling storytelling.

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