

# BC3 freshman Craig ranks 1, 3, 3 in nation

Forward's star rising among basketball players on 867 squads

Jan. 10, 2018



Mackenzie Craig, right, a freshman forward on the Butler County Community College women's basketball team, drives to the net while being guarded by Allegany College of Maryland's Daujiah Dayton on Nov. 7 at BC3's Field House.

(Butler, PA) Freshman Mackenzie Craig, a forward on the Butler County Community College women's basketball team, is first in the National Junior College Athletic Association in rebounding average, third in points from the foul line and third in scoring average, among women – and men – on 867 squads in all three divisions coast to coast.

"I knew when she said she was coming here that she was a good player," BC3 coach Dick Hartung said Monday. "I did not realize how good."

How good?

Craig has scored at least 31 points in eight of her 15 games – including 41 in her BC3 debut.

How good?

Craig has grabbed at least 20 rebounds in 11 games.

Julia Baxter good?

“They are both very good players,” Hartung said of Craig and of Baxter, a Butler Area Senior High graduate who last spring became the all-time leading scorer, rebounder and first All-American in BC3’s women’s basketball program.

“Craig,” he said, “is a better fundamental player.”

Her 22.1 rebounds per game average is a testament, Craig said, to “never stopping and going for everything. Or just trying to rip the ball out of opponents’ hands.”

She is also ripping the cords.



Mackenzie Craig, a freshman forward on the Butler County Community College women’s basketball team, is leading the National Junior College Athletic Association with 22.1 rebounds per game.

## Craig “deadly” accurate from free-throw line

Craig’s scoring average through Sunday led players on all 420 women’s squads and on 445 of the 447 men’s teams across the NJCAA’s three divisions.

Only Collin Turner, a sophomore guard on the Montgomery College, Rockville, Md., men’s team, and Deven Palmer, a freshman forward for the Quincy College, Quincy, Mass., men’s squad, had higher scoring averages than Craig’s 30.7 points, with Turner at 33.3 through 14 games and Palmer, 31.8 through 12.

Craig’s 141 points from the free-throw line, in 174 attempts, are third among the NJCAA’s men’s and women’s squads across all three divisions, trailing only the 144 points, in 162 attempts, of Myron Gordon, a sophomore guard for men’s Division I Harcum College, Bryn Mawr, Pa.; and the 142 points, in 201 attempts, of Lori Wardynski, a sophomore guard for women’s Division II Gogebic Community College, Ironwood, Mich.

“She,” Hartung said of Craig, “is deadly from the line.”

## Penn State DuBois coach: Craig “phenomenal”

Added Penn State DuBois coach Pat Lewis, who watched Craig sink 14 of 14 foul shots against the Nittany Lions on Nov. 20: “Craig is a really phenomenal ballplayer. That also tells you that she attacks the hoop. To go to the foul line 14 times, that means you are trying to force the issue.”

Craig has – since her first game with the Pioneers.

One of only two Karns City High girls basketball players to win four consecutive District 9 championships, Craig scored 22 points in the first half of what would be a 41-point night and a 74-69 BC3 victory over Penn State-Greater Allegheny on Nov. 3.

“At halftime,” Hartung said, “I thought to myself, ‘holy mackerel.’”

In addition to scoring 41 points, Craig grabbed 27 rebounds – single-game totals that Baxter would not reach in her freshman season of 2015-16.

Nor would Baxter reach those single-game totals in her second season, when she would finish her BC3 career with 1,070 points and 680 rebounds.

Through her first 15 games, Craig has 460 points and 331 rebounds and 10 regular-season games left in 2017-18.

Through her first 15 games, Baxter had 370 points and 213 rebounds, and ended her freshman season with 488 points and 291 rebounds in 21 games.

## Perimeter shooting separates Craig, Baxter

“Julia was pretty dominant last year for BC3,” said Westmoreland County Community College coach Gene Brisbane. “Mackenzie has been pretty dominant for them this year. They both know their way around the basket very well. I think Mackenzie Craig can step out and shoot perimeter shots as well. That is something Baxter didn’t do very much.”

Through Sunday, Craig was 15 of 44 from 3-point range. Baxter was 0 of 2 in her freshman season and did not attempt a 3-pointer in her second.

“I think Craig would be harder to defend because she can shoot from the outside,” BC3 sophomore guard Lydia Roth said. “And she can make her free throws.”

How good?

Not good enough, Craig said of her 44.8 shooting percent from the field, 34.1 percent from 3-point range and her 81.0 percent from the foul line.

“I definitely want to get better at shooting from the outside,” she said. “Most of the points I have are off rebounds or post moves. So I would like to improve my 3-point shooting. I need to get my foul shots better.”

Craig and her Division III BC3 teammates are coming off an 84-64 win over Penn State-Fayette on Friday, the second straight game in which three BC3 players have scored in double digits.

Craig and freshman forward Carly Burdett, a Knoch High graduate, had 21 points and Roth 14 in an 87-60 setback to Penn State-DuBois on Dec. 19.

Craig scored 34, Roth 22 and Burdett 21 in Friday’s victory against Penn State-Fayette, a game in which Roth also had 13 rebounds and 10 assists in recording her first triple-double at BC3.

BC3 seeks its first 2017-18 victory in the Field House and seventh in a row overall against Westmoreland County Community College when it hosts the Wolfpack at noon Saturday in the Pioneers’ Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference opener.

“Try to keep her away from the basket”

Westmoreland County, a winner of four straight, is 11-3 overall, 2-1 in the WPCC.

BC3, which has lost five games by seven points or fewer, is 2-12 overall.

“I think winning this past game motivated us,” Craig said. “We know we can do it. We are starting to believe in ourselves, and we are realizing that we are getting better.”

Roth agrees.

“I think we all lacked confidence at the beginning of the season,” Roth said. “We had the talent and we thought we could do it, but I think these past couple of games we have kind of clicked. We have gotten a lot better playing together and knowing what each other is going to do and where they are going to be.”

Brisbane, Westmoreland County’s coach, knows where Craig will be.

Atop the NJCAA for Saturday’s game.

That good.

“Try to keep her away from the basket,” he said. “She is aggressive and she is going to go get the rebound. She definitely wants to try to get every one. She does pose a definite problem.”