The students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High have now been added to the list of 150,000 American students who have experienced a mass shooting since the Columbine High School massacre in 1999.

This year, there have been 18 school incidents that have involved guns. While not all shootings involved injuries, they range from suicides, students firing guns into the air and arguments that led to shots fired. Three incidents in Texas, Kentucky and Florida were considered mass shootings. In all, 20 were killed, 21 wounded and two committed suicide.

On the border, city and state representatives are weighing in on where they stand on gun control and mass shootings in schools.

John Cornyn, U.S. Senator (R-Tx)

Last November after the shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas, it was discovered that the shooter would not have been able to legally purchase the rifle he used if the Air Force had entered a domestic assault conviction into the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). Sen. Cornyn introduced the Fix NICS Act of 2017 as a response to the perceived gaps in the federal background check database.

“Failure to upload this essential, and required, information in the background check system is simply unacceptable,” Cornyn said in a statement two days before the Parkland, Florida shooting.

Cornyn said that he is open to sitting down with Senator Diane Feinstein, D-Calif., who said at a recent Senate Committee hearing that she was open to working on Cornyn’s bill, of which Feinstein is a co-sponsor. She also said that a compromise could be reached on the regulation of bump stocks, which allow firearms to be turned into automatic weapons.

Cornyn’s bipartisan bill has not made it past the Senate Judiciary Committee. On Monday, CNN reported that the military rushed to add 4,000 names to NICS after the Sutherland Springs shooting. The shooter, who killed 26 people, would have been on that list.

President Donald Trump told Cornyn that he would be open to open up to a background check fix.

“While discussions are ongoing and revisions are being considered, the president is supportive of efforts to improve the Federal background check system,” said Press Secretary Sarah Sanders in a statement.

Beto O’Rourke, U.S. Representative (D-Tx)

In June of 2016, O’Rourke took part in the nearly 24-hour sit at House Democrats, in which they tried to force a vote on gun control legislation, following the Orlando massacre.

O’Rourke told the story of his uncle, Raymond O’Rourke, former sheriff’s deputy, who he says taught him how to shoot a gun.

“That man loved his guns and cherished the Second Amendment, but that man understood that you can defend the Second Amendment and still make sensible laws to protect lives and improve public safety,” O’Rourke also said at the sit-in. “The people I represent in El Paso, Texas, understand that, the people in America get that.”

Now challenging one of the nation’s most prominent Republicans (Ted Cruz) for his Senate seat, the entire state is watching what he has to say about gun control.

“My thoughts are with the families, the children, the teachers and staff who are surviving this shooting in Parkland,” O’Rourke said. “What we are doing to protect kids, spare families these tragedies, is not enough.” O’Rourke said in a tweet on Wednesday following the news of the Parkland, Florida shooting.

On his medium page, a blog site, O’Rourke went on to say, “We can’t simply react as though these are natural disasters. In response to a question from the Texas Tribune last year, O’Rourke said he believes in ending the sale of bump stocks.

Ted Cruz, U.S. Senator (R-Tx)

In response to the Florida shooting, Sen. Cruz said that gun control is not the answer during a “Fox and Friends” interview on Thursday.

“I was at the hospital with the victims and the victims’ families (in Sutherland),” Cruz said, “and over and over again what they said to me, they said ‘gun control is not the answer here’; Cruz said, recalling the Sutherland Springs shooting when asked about the banning of automatic rifles as a Democratic response to the Florida shooting.

Cruz went on to say the answer is to focus on violent criminals.

After the Sutherland Springs shooting, Cruz said that the shooting should have been stopped because the Obama administration did not report the shooters’ convictions.

“That is an endemic problem, it’s a problem with the federal government and it’s a problem with the state,” Cruz said in an interview with “Fox and Friends” in November. “Gun control for felons and fugitives yes, for law abiding citizens no.”

Jose Rodriguez, Texas state Senator, District 29

Sen. Rodriguez released a statement in the wake of the shooting saying he is appalled that the NRA and their lobbyists have such a stranglehold on Congress.

“They even pass common sense measures that most of us agree on like banning assault rifles and bump stocks or universal background checks. How many lost lives is too many? How many kids have to die? At what point will those in DC and Austin say ‘enough is enough’ and stand up to the gun industry instead of offering their thoughts and prayers?”

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Not just another mass shooting

BY ELENE GONZALEZ

I never thought that I would ever talk about the connection to one of the most shocking mass shootings in history. To me and my family, though, all the worst because one life lost is one life too much.

My cousin, his girlfriend and their three best friends were all victims in the 2012 Aurora, Colorado theater shooting. They were sitting in theater No. 9 when the shooter, who I will not name, opened fire. The bullets bore their faces across. My cousin, who was in the second row near the exit, where the shooter observed them, knew that he could never escape himself, was shot twice while shielding his girlfriend. The group managed to escape out of the club but hisisphere gun momentarily distracted the gunman. I’ll never forget that I was doing while this was happening.

I was sitting in a hotel room during a visit to see the school scene unfold on live TV. I knew that Aurora was the place where part of my family had lived for most of my life, I couldn’t help but wonder if my cousins were at that midnight showing of “The Dark Knight Rises.”

I asked my mom if she thought they could be there, but we both came to the conclusion that they probably wouldn’t be at such a late movie. The next morning, my mom got a call from my aunt informing her that one of my cousins was indeed at the movie, and that he was in surgery while doctors worked to save his life.

I couldn’t believe it. I couldn’t believe that my younger cousin was a victim of this tragedy and that it was a possibility that he could lose his life at only 20 years old.

Every time news breaks of another mass shooting, my heart sinks, but this past Wednesday, when the latest shooting occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, I felt different. My heart sank, but my heart was broken, but I felt angry more than anything. Why does this continue to happen?

There are many reasons, but it all comes down to the fact that lawmakers and the president are not doing enough to make our schools and communities safer. This is an issue that affects all of us, and it’s time to start paying attention to it.

One day I know I’m going to have to tell my children about the Parkland, Florida, shootings. As I sat in my chair at work on Wednesday afternoon drinking my second cup of coffee, I got an alert on my watch for a mass shooting in a school. I thought to myself that there must be fatalities and the shooter was in custody. I was told that the typical shooter was one who had a mental illness or was angry at something.

I have two younger sisters, who are also in high school, and I can’t help but wonder what would happen if anything were to happen to them. My younger sister, who is also in high school, was at her native school, where he might encounter a mass shooter and how they would feel if anything like this happened.

To think about the innocent children murdered, who had so much potential to live a full life, to think about my younger sister, who is also in high school, and what I would think if this was at her school, to think about my mother and grandmother, who always picked my sister and I up from school, and how they would feel if such a thing happened.

I refused to let myself become callous to the worst mass shootings in history. To me, this was truly a joyous occasion, though they acknowledge that they probably wouldn’t have been able to make it out.

My cousin went from victim to survivor. His girlfriend, now wife, and their friends made it out alive, though one of his friends had to amputate part of his leg due to his injuries.

They were married exactly one year after the shooting, what they take back the worst day of their lives. The community of Aurora gathered around the young couple to support them and even helped them pay for most of their wedding expenses, including gifts, food and even the venue. I was there to witness and celebrate their union, and I will tell you that it was truly a joyous occasion, though they even had to warn some of those who did not make it that night.

Their story was heard all over the news locally, and nationally. It made me proud to see that many knew of their love and devotion. They were never anony- mous to those who loved and cared for them. They chose to forgive the gunman and move on with their lives, though they acknowledge that they will never forget the night that truly brought them together. Mass shootings have become all too common in the U.S., leaving 33,000 lives per year from the right of a lawyer, but in another country is school shooting, we come less frequent. That’s my hope and something I have to believe in order to set myself back into a sense of these senseless acts of violence. However, or, I am realistic in knowing that it’s only a matter of time until the next one.

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The Prospector

OPINION

The Prospector

By elenie gonzalez

from the lawmakers and the president. Accepting only “thoughts and prayers” sent to the gun owners that nothing has been done. It sounds me that lawmakers have literally tears were the same, my heart was broken last Wednesday, when the latest shooting, my heart sinks, but this one hit home for me. See the gun owners’ rights—and the school shooter’s ability to buy their weapon of choice, or the AR-15, sat in my bed and felt tears run across my cheeks.

To think about the innocent children murdered, who had so much potential to live a full life, to think about myself, with my head lowered and my shoulders drooping. “Daddy!” I sprung up from my slumber, making a giant bonfire, where one by one, the last of the innocents burned.

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Question of The Week: What is your stance on gun control?

OSCAR SANCHEZ
Junior electrical engineering major

"Some people say that people shouldn’t be able to own assault rifles. I think that’s wrong. I think you should own pretty much every gun you want. However, I do believe that we should keep it up when it comes to background checks.

ANA ZEPEDA
Senior computer science major

"There should be background checks and they should be more strictly enforced. We should just enforce the laws we have because every time that a government has sought out to control people, the first thing it does is disarm its people."

EMMANUEL MENIER
Sophomore computer science major

"I feel that the Second Amendment is a little outdated. That was back when they had muskets and compared to what we have now, I’m sure that if people back then saw the guns we have now they wouldn’t give second thoughts about that amendment."

YASMIN HERNANDEZ
Sophomore nursing major

"If that guns should be allowed, but there should be stricter regulations on how you can get them. There should be a mental health check in general and there should also be a long process to get it."

NOE ALVARADO
Junior kinesiology major

"I think we should be more strict on guns. I’m against people owning guns at such a young age, but I’m against the Second Amendment. There should be more rules and regulations for someone to own a rifle or shotgun."

JACOB BLASCH
Senior civil engineering major

"I think that we’re fine where we’re at right now. I don’t think we need to enforce the laws that are already in place."

LUIS PROCTOR
Junior engineering major

"I think that gun control shouldn’t be regulated the way the Democrats want it to be. The way to obtain weapons completely should be a little harder, so there should definitely be a better setting, but no harder way of obtaining them."

SOLUTIONS from page 2

in basic training how the bullet—a 5.56 round—rips apart the body of my enemy.

WEAPONS from page 2

"Like, trust me. I know what it feels like, who has been there, let those weapons of war zones. I know what it feels of a 5-year-old human body."

"When the weapon of an angry neighbor was meant for killing, or to require extensive background checks and include a personality test for those who want to buy a weapon. Have licensed gun carriers renew their license every so often to ensure their mental stability. This would ensure that those who have guns are consistently smart with their firearms. Controlling gun regulations are far more different than completely outlawing guns."

If policymakers wanted to go the mental health route, offer more counseling programs in grade schools to help those who struggle with mental problems. Or, require misbehaved students a second-chance program for those, like Cruz, to go to after getting in trouble at school.

At the end of the day, all can agree that an unstable 18-year-old, who had behavioral problems on his record, should not be allowed to own a gun legally. The same way that a gang-member should not be able to get a gun in a tough project neighborhood. The same way that we should be able to walk into a sporting goods store, run a simple background check and leave with a deadly assault rifle and a hundred rounds of ammunition.

As for today, we will remember Nicholas Dworet, 17, who was recruit. As for today, we will remember Nicholas Dworet, 17, who was recruit. As for today, we will remember Nicholas Dworet, 17, who was recruit. As for today, we will remember Nicholas Dworet, 17, who was recruit. As for today, we will remember Nicholas Dworet, 17, who was recruit. As for today, we will remember Nicholas Dworet, 17, who was recruit.
Professor receives award for her work in LGBT health

By Rene Delgadillo

Earlier this month, Oralia Loza, an associate professor in public health sciences, received one of the three 2018 Pillars of Public Health from the city of El Paso for her work and contributions to the LGBT community.

“I was really honored and flattered that they selected the work that we put together to help out the LGBT community,” Loza said. Before arriving at UTEP in 2010, Loza was working on her joint doctorate in epidemiology and border health with a concentration in HIV, substance use and abuse from the University of California in HIV, substance use and abuse.

Loza said both of the borders she has been able to work at are understudied and undeserved populations. “We're building it—we have to do the work that each one of us does here,” Loza said.

Loza said that the inspiration behind her research comes from a need to bring awareness on how to work with them and who didn’t have the training or, in other cases, the willingness to work with them,” Loza said. “A lot of it has to do with the stigma that people have against these groups of people.

Loza teamed up with two graduate students in the Master of Public Health sciences program to create the Purple Pages of El Paso, a referral list of LGBT-friendly healthcare and social work service providers in El Paso.

“It went from being a PDF to becoming a website and we launched the website in 2015,” she said.

Loza said that as result of the stigma against the LGBT community, no local data has been collected to understand the health background and obstacles that this group has to go through.

“We're building it—we have partnerships with Texas Tech, who are doing amazing work in training their future physicians on LGBT issues,” Loza said. “I think that I've been involved in starting a foundation to allow that kind of research to even happen here. It's going to take a lot of work and it won't be easy.”

Loza said that the inspiration behind her research comes from a need to bring awareness on how to work with these groups who are doing amazing work in training their future physicians on LGBT issues, “We need to study every group of people to understand the health needs of everyone.”

Follow Rene Delgadillo on twitter @rdelgadillonews

UPCOMING EVENTS

EARLY VOTING CONTINUES THIS WEEK

El Paso early voting for the March 2018 Primary election has commenced and will run until Friday, March 2. Students interested in voting may vote at the El Paso County Courthouse from Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or at any local voting booth. A student may use either their parent’s address or their college address for voter registration. They may not use student IDs for voting. To check if you are registered to vote, log on to epcountysvotes.com. Election day will be March 6.

PROJECT MOVE 2018

About 1,200 students, faculty and staff are expected to participate in the ninth annual Project MOVE. UTEP's day of community service, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 24, at 50 sites across El Paso County. The volunteers will clean, build, paint, plant, patch and landscape, among other things. Many of them also will learn about different parts of the community, the nonprofit organizations they are helping and the people that each agency serves. The day will start with a pep rally at Kidd Field at 9 a.m.

POLITICS ON TAP

Women’s March El Paso and Voto Latino are hosting a political trivia and candidate meet and greet on Saturday, Feb. 24 at 3 p.m. at Hope and Anchor. This event is an opportunity to come together to eat, drink and discuss important issues. Unlike forums, candidates will focus on face-to-face conversations with attendees throughout the evening.

Visit theprospectordaily.com/events for more.
Metropolitan Opera soprano to perform at UTEP

**BY ELLENIA GONZALEZ**

It’s not every day that an international Metropolitan Opera singer visits UTEP. Soprano Daniela Talamañes will make her debut in the Sun City on Tuesday, Feb. 20, at the Fox Fine Arts Recital Hall, as part of a presentation by El Paso Pro-Musica.

Talamañes will be on stage by renowned pianist and composer Henry O’Doherty, and together they will perform selections from their albums, “Heaven and Earth: A Duke Ellington Songbook” and gorgeous Spanish songs featured in their MSB Classics album “Canciones españolas.”

Talamañes has been touring the nation, captivating audiences as they bring the lush music and power of Spain to life.

She has performed on stages all over the world and has seen her career take off after selling out Carnegie Hall in a solo recital in 2007. Talamañes has also worked for several institutions including the National Symphony Orchestra, Nashville Symphony Choralis, Seoul Philharmonic, Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, Teatro Sinfónico de Perú, Fox Fine Arts Orchestra of Peru and The United States Army Chorus.

Although Talamañes has seen success, the pinnacle of her career came after becoming part of the Metropolitan Opera roster in 2011. The Arlington, Virginia, native was participating in a singing competition in New York and little did she know that the competition would launch her career forward and change her life.

An artistic director with the Metropolitan Opera happened to be watching as a judge. Although Talamañes didn’t win the award, she still walked away with an even better prize, an invitation to audition.

“At the end of the day, it’s not about winning, it’s not about money, it’s about singing for as many people as you possibly can when you’re in that in-between stage of academic training and trying to make it as a professional,” Talamañes said.

The opera singer has been part of the roster of Met performers since 2011 after several years of performing worldwide, but did not make her stage debut until 2015 in the production of “Carmen.”

This season, Talamañes performed the role of Zerlu in “Nabucco” and reprised her stage debut role of Fraîscu in “Carmen.” She just found out that she has been invited back to the Met for next season.

“Though it wasn’t on her do-to list, Talamañes is grateful for opportunity to be a part of something so big. She understands that being able to be a part of the Met is beyond special, and did not want to feel that if she never made it to the Met, that she had failed in her career.

“It’s a dream. It’s an absolute dream come true,” Talamañes said. “When I was invited to join the roster, I was beyond thrilled. It’s just an incredible place to work, and I’ve been there enough now that it truly does feel like family.”

Talamañes recalls the first time she realized what she had accomplishing her dream with the Met was off-stage and she never quite felt the pressure because of how low-key her performances had been.

When it came to make her on-stage debut of “Carmen,” she didn’t have the time to rehearse for a show of that magnitude. After eight days of harried preparation, the final dress rehearsal ended up being her very first performance onstage in front of a large audience.

She said she remembers thinking, “Oh my gosh, this is the first time I’m actually on-stage and it’s the final dress rehearsal. This is crazy.”

Singing has always been a part of her life. Her mother was a church organist and she has been involved in church choirs and school choirs since she could remember.

Though she had been singing for most of her life, it wasn’t until she was getting ready to go college that Talamañes realized she wanted to pursue singing as her career.

She graduated from Virginia Tech, where she double majored in vocal performance and music education. Talamañes continued to better her voice and career as she went on to obtain her master’s degree in vocal performance and vocal pedagogy from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey.

Education is something that has always been important to Talamañes, who is why she decided that she would go to college and train in an academic setting.

Being able to visit universities during her recent tour is something Talamañes says is wonderful because she is able to connect with students, experience the culture of the town, and network all while being able to perform.

Talamañes will be in town for a few days following her recital and will master class students at UTEP.

“I’m really looking forward to the food,” Talamañes said, while slightly joking, and is also looking forward to meeting the people at UTEP and El Paso.

Felipe Solís, executive director of El Paso Pro-Musica, is excited to have Talamañes visit the campus. She raves about the way in which Talamañes performs, calling her a “Metropolitan Opera extraordinaire.”

“It’s extremely exciting and she is a whole different realm. The manner in which her performance is presented, is really, truly chamber music,” Solís said. “She’s truly, truly a remarkable talent.”

Tickets for the recital begin at $5 for students, $20 for seniors and $25 for adults. The show begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Fox Fine Arts Recital Hall.

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**Former UTEP art students offer illustration workshop**

**By Paulette Villa**

Former UTEP art students and partners Raúl Gonzalez (known as Raúl the Third) and Elaine Bay will offer a workshop on campus regarding the collaborative process on books.

The couple shares a studio at home and gains inspiration from historical and current events to simply “everything surrounding her.”

“Talamañes received her master’s degree of fine arts from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The last time the couple visited UTEP was two years ago to visit their former professors. Besides the food and the people, both are looking forward seeing those who helped them become the artists they are today and helping to continue El Paso and UTEP this week to just really share our experiences with some of the younger artists,” Gonzalez said. “I’m pretty sure are wanting to go out into the world and make the best possible

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Black Panther album showcases the human stories behind the superhero thriller

BY MICHAELA ROMÁN

The highly anticipated black superhero Marvel film “Black Panther,” has been paired with a compilation album, “Black Panther: The Album (Music From And Inspired By)”. Mastered by Kendrick Lamar, the album is a time capsule of some incredible international voices.

The soundtrack then transitions to its lead single, “All the Stars” by Lamar and Rihanna, featuring 21 Savage, The Weeknd, Jay-Z, SZA, Kendrick Lamar, ScHoolboy Q, 2 Chainz and YG. This is the perfect song to enter the third act. “Seasons,” by Mozzy, Sjava and Reason, says, “We go to war for this African blood” in the Zulu language. The solemn track is a moving, yet festive anthem that showcases the struggles and inequalities of coming from Africa.

In the film, Wakanda proves to be a rich African nation protected by King T’Challa rather than a stereotypical third-world country. Travis Scott has his turn on the second-to-last track of the album with “Big Shot.” The track highlights hip-hop flute, beats and vocal overdubs, in the streets to last track of the album with “Big Shot.” The track highlights hip-hop flute, beats and vocal overdubs, in the streets.

The unlikely trio of Ab-Soul, Anderson .Paak and James Blake come collective SOB x RBE connect with Lamar for this aggressive banger. The track makes the track one of the strongest on the album. Zacari’s “Redemption” is broken up with “The Ways,” featuring Swae Lee. The song also talks about moving forward despite barriers.

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In the film, Wakanda proves to be a rich African nation protected by King T’Challa rather than a stereotypical third-world country. Travis Scott has his turn on the second-to-last track of the album with “Big Shot.” The track highlights hip-hop flute, beats and vocal overdubs, in the streets.

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Saruni sets records in second season with UTEP track

Michael Saruni set the world-record in the 600-meter at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Invitational on Jan. 19 with a time of 1:14.79.

By DANIEL HENDREZ

The Prospector

As a sophomore, UTEP distance runner Michael Saruni has broken school records and is now looking to be in a league of his own.

Saruni is from Ravine, Kenya, and currently holds the school record in the 800-meter race. He broke the record earlier this year at the Commodore Invitational on Jan. 13 in Nashville, with a time of 1:45.92.

"Everything has been going as planned, I’m just pushing for more," Saruni said.

Paul Ereng, associate head coach for track and field, works with Saruni personally and gets to see what kind of a person he is on a daily basis.

"From someone who struggled his freshman year getting accustomed to the sport to becoming a record-breaking track athlete as a sophomore, Ereng has seen the transition to a talented athlete in Saruni. "I remember last year he fell and got DQ (disqualified)," Ereng said.

"But towards the end of the season, he was reaching his best, which means the race was kind of a learning experience for him," Ereng said.

Head coach Mike Laaksoson has noticed a difference in his high-profile athlete this season.

"I think he’s definitely more focused this year," Laaksoson said. "Freshman year, he didn’t really try it all together-he had a rough freshman year. This year he has been on a mission and is very driven.

Saruni has a one-track mind when it comes to this season, from training

Softball opens home slate after hitting stride in Vegas

BY ADRIAN BROADUS

After an early season rut, the Miners’ softball team (4-6) was able to bounce back midway through the Marucci Desert Classic, being hosted in Las Vegas to win their last three games.

The winning spark for the team came just in time as they will host Battle of I-10 rival New Mexico State (3-3) on Tuesday, Feb. 20, and the UTEP Tournament from Friday through Sunday against Portland State (1-3) and Idaho State (0-5) at Helen of Troy Softball Complex.

Last Friday, Feb. 16, at the Desert Classic, the Miners had a huge slate with games against Nevada and Boise State, and then with a quick turnaround against New Mexico, UNLV and South Dakota on Saturday and Sunday.

Nevada went up big with a 6-0 lead in the first four innings, led by Kayni Guin, who finished with a two-run home run and five RBIs. The Miners attempted to cut the lead back, but couldn’t. In the sixth and seventh innings, they were held scoreless, ending the game with a 6-0 loss.

On Saturday, Feb. 17, the Miners scored just one run in the 7-5 win. Following that game, they took on Portland State at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday and then take on Portland State at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday.

"It told the (team) to keep fighting," Echo-Hawk said. "We’re a good team and if you keep fighting, things are going to happen and they did. We just made mistakes."

"I told (the team) to keep fighting," Echo-Hawk said. "We’re a good team and if you keep fighting, things are going to happen and they did. We put pressure on them and when you put pressure on other teams, it forces them to make mistakes."

"It was a crazy game, but it’s the kind of games you love," Echo-Hawk said. "It’s a battle and I think our kid did a nice job. We went ahead and (UNLV) came back and (UTEP) did a nice job of coming through in the end and gaining the victory."

The UTEP softball team will open their home schedule against NM State on Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Follow @adrian_broaddus on Twitter for more on UTEP Softball.

PAGE 7
FEBRUARY 20, 2018
Sports
Jeremy Carranco, 747-7446
February 20, 2018

The Prospector

By Mike Flores

Since the new year began, UTEP has had hopes of turning their season around and clawing their way back to a top-four seed in Conference USA. The team hoped for a repeat of last year, where the Miners received a first-round bye in the conference tournament after a miraculous mid-season turnaround. Since 2018 started, UTEP has played in 12 games and has only come out victorious in two of those contests. For context, UTEP's only win in two months of play came against Florida international on Jan. 13 and their 3-12 record in their last 15 games.

In their last game this past Saturday, the Miners were torched 82-33 by Old Dominion on the road. The loss was the second-largest losing margin (49) in school history with the 13 offensive points being the lowest score by any UTEP team since the shot clock era began in 1985-86.

Now, UTEP (8-18, 3-11 C-USA) will tangle with La Tech on Thursday, Feb. 22, at 7 p.m. and then they will welcome in Southern Miss on Feb. 24 also at 7 p.m in hopes of trying to get something positive going.

Here are five things you need to know about UTEP and what to watch out for in their final homestand of the season: 1. UTEP is barely holding on to the 12th and final playoff spot in C-USA, USA, of the 14 schools qualify for the conference tournament, and UTEP holds the tiebreaker with Rice for the last seed. Charlotte, with a 1-13 record, sits in the 14th spot and is the Miners only win in their last eight contests. Receiving a conference tournament bid allows teams all around the nation to fight for the biggest goal in college basketball—a shot to make it to the NCAA tournament in March.

The Miners are in a seven-year drought when it comes to making the NCAA tournament. One loss from here on out could possibly eliminate UTEP from reaching the C-USA Tournament in Frisco, Texas, beginning March 7.

While UTEP has to deal with two quality C-USA teams in La Tech (16-12) and Southern Miss (13-15) this week, the Rice Owls have two very winnable games against Florida Atlantic (11-15) and Florida International (11-16).

UTEP’s upcoming opponents, La Tech and Southern Miss, have a combined record of 29-27, compared to the Florida schools’ combined record of 22-31. The part that makes things even more interesting is that UTEP and Rice are set to meet up in Houston on March 1. As of now, both schools are within one game for the last spot in the C-USA tournament, but that could either stay the same or change depending on this week’s games.

2. UTEP has not had a losing record at home since the 2002-03 season. UTEP is known for successfully defending their home court, the Don Haskins Center, no matter how bright or dull a season looks. But this year, the Miners have struggled more than usual in El Paso.

In the final home stand of the season, the Miners will have a lot more to prove in their final home game. Coming into the final home match-ups of the season, UTEP is 7-8 at home and are riding a three-game skid at the Don Haskins Center. If you miss the Golden Eagles, UTEP suffered a double-digit loss against the Old Dominions Center. And their final two home games of the 2017-18 year are no gimme games.

In fact, both La Tech and Southern Miss have already beaten UTEP this season. Against the Golden Eagles, UTEP suffered a double-digit loss, 85-75, on Jan. 4, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Then, on Jan. 6, defensively the Miners gave up a season-high 97 points against the Bulldogs in a loss.

3. The Miners need to improve on ball movement. Out of the 351 basketball schools in the nation, UTEP ranks 338 in assists per game. The Miners’ 10.7 assists per game has also brought them to dead last in C-USA in that category.

The trend for any successful basketball team is good ball movement and hitting the open shooters. The five worst teams record-wise in C-USA—Charlotte, Rice, UTEP, FIU and FAU—also hold the bottom-five spots in assists per game, while some of the conference’s best—UBA, Old Dominion and Marshall—are three of the top four spots in the passing category.

Since losing Dominic Artis, a seasoned guard who graduated last year, Miners have had trouble replacing what he brought to the program. Last season, Artis averaged a team high in assists and was second in scoring. This season, no one on the Miners is averaging two assists per game. Every team in C-USA has had a player who averages two or more assists, except UTEP.

UTEP has leaned on two freshmen, Mager and Evan Gilley, to control their offense and ball handling, and so far it has been apparent all season that ball movement is a much-needed improvement for them along with the rest of the squad.

4. The second-half woes for the Miners need to come to an end. When UTEP is defending near their bench in the first half of games, they play solid defense. But when it’s time to switch sides and they have to defend away from interim head coach Phil Johnson and the rest of his crew, the Miners fall apart defensively.

This season, UTEP has given up more than 144 points from the first half compared to the second half of play. In the first half, UTEP’s defense has given up 862 total points, but has given up 806 points in the final half. UTEP has gained first-half leads over teams like Western Kentucky, UTSA, FIU and North Texas this season, but then they got destroyed in the second half.

Another second-half problem to night Johnson said after a routine second-half meltdown against WKU on Feb. 1. “At halftime, I thought we were going to win, but we went back to being reckless.”

5. UTEP needs consistency on the scoring end. One could argue that UTEP’s biggest problem this year is on the offensive side of the ball. While on the defensive end, they are allowing 71.8 points per game. However on offense, UTEP is only averaging more points than Rice this season. Putting up 67 points per game is only part of the bigger problem for the Miners.

Last year, Harris was putting up over 17 points per game and his reliable scoring landed him a spot on C-USA’s All second team. But this year, Harris’ shooting hasn’t found the rhythm he had last season. Harris and Keith Frazier are still leading UTEP averaging 11 points per game, but that’s not cutting it. In C-USA, Harris and Frazier are not even in the top 30 in scoring averages per contest.