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Monarchs basketball happy to keep playing

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TODAY

South Dakota State at Old Dominion, 6:30 p.m., 94.1 FM



By [Ed Miller](#)
The Virginian-Pilot
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NORFOLK

After Old Dominion returned from the Conference USA tournament Friday evening, coach Jeff Jones left his team with this brief message:

"Stick around."

Jones never mentioned postseason possibilities. At 16-17, ODU's chances looked slim. Still, he didn't want the Monarchs straying far, either physically or mentally.

"I didn't want to tease them, but I think they understood the unspoken message," he said.

On Sunday night, the Monarchs received a text message: They'd be playing in the CBI (College Basketball Invitational) tournament, tonight at the Constant Center.

"It was unexpected, but at the same time, it's exciting, knowing we have a chance to keep the season going," guard Ambrose Mosley said.

ODU will host South Dakota State (19-12) of the Summit League in the opening round of the 16-team affair.

The CBI was ODU's lone postseason possibility. The CollegInsider.com Tournament requires teams to have a winning record. ODU's chances of getting a CBI bid were enhanced by the school's willingness to spend \$35,000 to host a first-round game.

Tertiary tourneys such as the CBI and CIT aren't for everyone. Indiana, snubbed by the NIT, turned down a chance to play, as did Middle Tennessee, which knocked off ODU in the C-USA quarterfinals.

But for a young team coming off a five-win season, the CBI is a good fit, Jones said.

"If you get a chance to play, regardless of circumstances, you want to play," Jones said. "This is ideal for a squad like ours, that's trying to find itself and trying to build something back."

Teams have used CBI and CIT successes as springboards the following seasons. VCU won the 2010 CBI and reached the NCAA Final Four in 2011. ODU won the 2009 CIT and advanced to the NCAA tournament round of 32 in 2010.

"This is a good opportunity for us to get better as a team," Mosley said.

Tickets are \$10, with all seats general admission. ODU students will be admitted free.