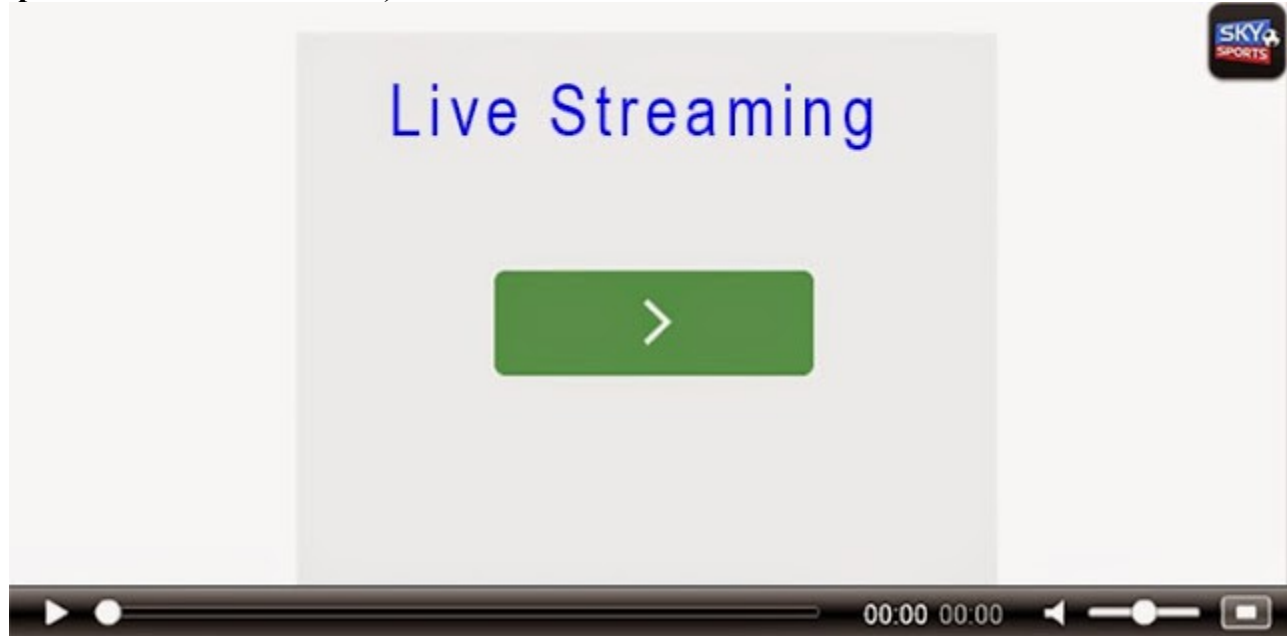


***streaming-live!* - Illinois vs North Carolina A&T Live Free 25th November 2020**

(Update 25th November 2020)



CHAMPAIGN — While Dee and Deron were dancing their way through March in 2005, [Brad Underwood was in his first season as the head coach at Daytona Beach \(Fla.\) Community College](#) after a nine-year stint at Western Illinois University.

The story of Dee and Deron's Illini is well told. A nearly perfect regular season that extended all the way through the NCAA Tournament before a loss in the National Championship game to North Carolina. Meanwhile, in Florida, Underwood was still 10 years from his first head coaching gig at the Division I level.

From Kansas State to South Carolina to Stephen F. Austin to Oklahoma State to Illinois, Underwood is a tried and true believer in the process. Processes aren't accidental and are, at times, painstaking. Without each of his stops in the college coaching ranks, perhaps he's not where he is now — as the head coach of the No. 8 team in the country ahead of Wednesday's 1 p.m. season-opener against North Carolina A&T as a part of a four-team multi-team event at the State Farm Center with [expectations as high as they have been since that 2005 team](#).

... wanted to do it and who I wanted to be and how I wanted to go about things," Underwood said. "To be at a program like this, I'm fortunate. This is a place that has done it before and there's a lot to that. I'm just excited we got our program back to a place it rightfully belongs. ... I'm very blessed to be the basketball coach at Illinois. I'm proud of what we've done but yet it's far from finished."

Illinois' own process isn't dissimilar. There was a road to this point. [There was the 12-win season two years ago when Ayo Dosunmu](#), the rockstar of this team and the college basketball world at large, was a highly regarded freshman who decided to stay home and play for his home school. There was last

season's resurgence that ended in the most unceremonious fashion because of COVID-19, right in the middle of a stretch of five wins in six games.

There were the days, weeks and months of hammering in a culture of hard work and defense into the program because Underwood knew it would always pay off. It's to the point now that Underwood can recall a practice when Adam Miller — a dynamic freshman in his own right who also chose to stay home — didn't dive for a loose ball and Dosunmu called him out. Right there. On the floor. In front of everybody.