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OSU optimistic despite losses

By Jeff Korbellek

Surprise, surprise. It's the same old story where one expects a team to have a great year or expects them to challenge for their conference title. Well, Oklahoma State's basketball team was hearing these same stories last year and is hearing them again this year. Last season they wrote their own version.

The Cowboys finished with a 24-7 record, a school best in 29 seasons, before losing in the first round of the NCAA tournament.

Their final game marked the first time since 1965 that the Cowboys have appeared in NCAA post-season play.

Coach Paul Hansen said that there is no doubt that his offense has been weakened by the loss of his top three scorers, all of whom averaged in double figures. But Hansen said he is optimistic about his

team and their chances in the Big Eight this year. "Last year we were picked low and we won 24 games," Hansen said. "Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas all look good, and Iowa State and Colorado have the best frontline and back court returning."

"Whoever wins the close ones is what counts, and it's hard to do against experience," he added.

Starters gone are center Leroy Combs, who led the team in scoring last year with 17.3 points per game, and guards Lorenza Andrews and Matt Clark who combined for over 30 points per game. Combs also led the team in rebounding, and all three players were drafted by the NBA.

Raymond Crenshaw, the team's fourth leading scorer is back after starting all 31 games last year, and forward Charles Williams returns after starting 19 games last season.

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Stivrins finds home at CU

By Kevin Warneke

Following three years of wandering, Colorado forward Alex Stivrins said he finally has found a home.

After two seasons with Creighton University in Omaha, Stivrins followed former Creighton basketball coach Tom Apake to Colorado, where he is tabbed as a potential starter after sitting out a season.

"I have no regrets about leaving Creighton," Stivrins said. "I'm happy here. I think that I have maybe found a home."

Coming out of Lincoln East High School, Stivrins was sought out by major college coaches, including Nebraska's Moe Iba.

Stivrins decided to take his basketball talents to Creighton, where he averaged 7.0 points and 4.1 rebounds per game as a freshman.

But Apake departed for Colorado and Stivrins found himself playing for former National Basketball Association star Willis Reed.

Stivrins tallied 7.9 points per game his sophomore season and pulled down 7.5 rebounds which was tops for the Bluejays.

"I think he had an excellent season as a freshman," Iba said. "But then they changed coaches and he decided to leave. He should have two more excellent seasons."

Stivrins said the year he had to sit out because of NCAA transfer regulations has been a big benefit.

"The year has helped me physically gain strength," he said. "It also has given me time to mentally decide what I want to do."

Apake agreed with Stivrins. He said the year layoff will help Stivrins improve his game.

"I think the year off benefitted him," Apake said. "It gave him a year to practice with us and learn our

system. I had the time to work on certain facets of his game and improve them.

But now, Stivrins said, he is ready to play.

"I'm anxious to get on the court and mix it up," he said.

Apake said that Stivrins' talents will be put to good use for the Buffaloes.

"I think Alex will give the team a lot," he said. "Both Alex and Vince Kelley are exceptional at filling the lane on the fast break."

"He's one of the best passers for a 6-7, 6-8 player that you'll ever see," Apake said.

Stivrins said he hopes to help prove preseason polls wrong that have selected Colorado near or at the bottom of the big Eight Conference race.

"We'll try to win all of our Big Eight games," he said.

"I don't think that is too unrealistic. Our overall strength is team speed and we have a lot of players returning from last year's squad."

But whatever the season brings, Stivrins said he will always have next year.

"We'll just have to do our best," he said. "Hopefully I'll have a good year. But I'm also building for next year and I want to get as much accomplished as I can."

When Colorado invades Nebraska on Feb. 25, Stivrins said his homecoming will just be another game.

"It won't even enter my mind," he said. "Playing Nebraska should turn out to be just another game."

Although he said he is happy in Colorado, Stivrins said he does get homesick.

"I do miss my family," he said. "They're all still living in Nebraska."



Photo courtesy of Colorado Sports Information

Alex Stivrins

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