

Cip: Losing Fort, Cox, Willis hurts

By Jim Hunt

Replacing the scoring of Jerry Fort, the defense of Larry Cox and the all-around play of Steve Willis is the task facing Husker basketball coach Joe Cipriano as the 1976-77 basketball season approaches.

"It's going to be hard to replace three players like that," Cipriano said. "We haven't had three seniors like them (Fort, Cox and Willis) in a long time.

"We (the Husker coaching staff) thought Cox was one of the best defensive centers in the country. Jerry (Fort) broke all the school's scoring records and Steve (Willis) was a good player in all phases of the game."

Even with Fort, Willis and Cox gone, Cipriano still has two returning starters back from last year's 19-8 team. Seniors Bob Siegel and Allen Holder started at forward for the Huskers last season, but Holder has been moved to guard this season.

"Allen is having trouble defensively making the move from forward to guard," Cipriano said. "He's having to guard players that are quicker than him and he can't go to the boards like he used to because he has to get back on defense.

"Offensively he's not that far off. I'm still confident that he can make the adjustment."

Siegel, a Fairbury native, has started the past two seasons for the Huskers. Last season he averaged 10.4 points a game, third best on the team.

Siegel improved

"Bob has improved every year for us," Cipriano said. "He comes back in better shape each year. Bob knows what we expect of him now."

Cipriano said that this year's recruits must combine with Siegel and Holder for the Huskers to be a competitive team in the Big 8 Conference.

"If our recruits, particularly our junior college transfers, can come through and combine with the talents of Siegel and Holder, we will be a competitive basketball team," Cipriano said.

Newcomers this season include James Caldwell, a 6 ft. 3 in. junior college transfer from the College of the Desert, Palm Desert, Calif. Caldwell, a junior, was the leading junior college scorer in the nation last season averaging 36.1 points a game.

Two other junior college transfers are listed on the Husker roster this season.

Stanley "Skeeter" Jackson, a 6 ft. 7 in. junior, averaged 19.1 points and 14 rebounds a game last season at Seminole Junior College.

Jackson, a Las Vegas native, is from the same junior college as Holder.

Herman "Bo" Jackson, a 6 ft. 8 in. sophomore, is the other junior college transfer on the Husker roster. Jackson, a native of Bronx, N.Y., transferred to UNL after one year at Southwestern Junior College in Oklahoma City. He averaged 23 points and 14 rebounds a game last year.

The Huskers also signed two high school recruits in Mark McVicker, a 6 ft. 7 in. forward from Hastings, and Paul McDonald, a 6 ft. 4 in. guard from Chisholm, Minn.

"There is still a lot the newcomers have to learn," Cipriano said. "I don't think they realize how much hard work it takes to be successful."

Banks back

Returning at guard is Brian Banks, who played in all 27 games last year as a freshman. Banks averaged 4.7 points a game last year. However, he has been troubled by a knee injury this year.

Junior Eric Coard also returns at guard. Returning forwards include senior Rickey Harris, junior Terry Novak and sophomore Curt Hadberg and Val Martin.

Sophomore Carl McPipe returns at center. McPipe saw some late action in several games last year. Harris and Hadberg might also see action at Center, Cipriano said.

Cipriano enters his 14th season as head coach at UNL with a record of 227-184. The Huskers were third in the Big 8 last year and completed their third most successful season ever.

The Huskers will open their season against Iowa, Nov. 27, in the new 15,000 seat Sports Complex.



Photo by Ted Kirk

Husker senior forward Bob Siegel, a two-year starter, expected to practice in his best shape ever this year, according to coach Joe Cipriano.



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