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State recruits should spark women's basketball team

By Ward W. Triplett III
 Daily Nebraskan Sports Editor

The bad news from last year was that the Nebraska women's basketball team finished six games behind the conference leader and had the second lowest conference finish among all Husker sports.

The good news from last year was that the team finished four games above .500, placed one player on the all-conference team and notched a couple of road upsets, despite the loss of an all-conference player midway through the season.

The bad news for this season is that the schedule is tougher. The good news is that a recruiting class should fill some glaring holes, and four-fifths of the starting line-up and a good share of the bench is back.

Nebraska coach Kelly Hill, who is now the official head coach after serving on an interim basis last season, will have Debra Powell (18.7 points per game and a first-team all-conference player), and three-year starters Cathy Owen and Terri Parriott to take on a schedule that includes NCAA runner-up Tennessee, National Women's Invitational Tournament champion Clemson and Big Ten powerhouse Minnesota.

But the big story this season could be the recruiting of the first blue-chip women's player

the state has ever produced. Maurtice Ivy, a 5-9 forward-guard from two-time state champion Omaha Central, also was recruited by defending champion USC, Louisiana Tech and Kansas.

In addition to Ivy, Hill's first official recruiting class includes 6-1 Lisa LaGuardia of Colorado, 5-11 Stephanie Bolli from Burwell and 5-6 Pam Fine of Illinois.

Hill saw Bolli and Ivy play for the victorious North side in the coach's all-state game last month.

"They were probably the outstanding two players in the game," Hill said. "It didn't look like we made any mistakes."

Hill said Bolli was "exactly what we thought she would be... a strong rebounder who is not afraid of contact."

It took Ivy a while to "get into the flow" of the all-star game, but once she did, her quickness and athletic ability spoke for itself, Hill said.

Owen, a 5-6 guard, and Parriott, a 5-11 forward, played for Athletics in Action this summer against good competition, Hill said.

"Their maturity and experience going into their senior year will be a positive aspect for us," she said.

Three sophomores, 5-10 center Angie Miller, 5-8 guard Stacy

Imming and 5-9 forward Shelley Block make up the rest of the Husker letter winners. Miller started at center last season and was second in scoring at 14.7 and first in rebounding at 7.1. Imming started after Crystal Coleman, a standout guard, and became an academic casualty at midseason. Imming, a former all-stater from Kearney finished with a 9 point per game average.

Kelli Benson (7.9, 3.1) graduated, and Jacquie Shackelford and 6-3 Heidi Keyes will not return for personal reasons.

Shackelford, who was a starting guard last season, injured her knee in December and didn't play the rest of the year. Keyes saw sparse action as a freshman, but was being counted on to back up Miller this season.

"Without Heidi, we will have to move LaGuardia over to the back up center position," Hill said. "It's not her natural position, but because of the height problem we don't have much of a choice."

Because of the Olympic exposure given to women's basketball and the fact that Cheryl Miller is still eligible at USC, this has been a crucial year for women's basketball as a spectator sport.

"I think we're still at the point where we're searching for exposure all the time," Hill, a 1980 USC graduate, said.

"The Olympics gave us good coverage, and it helped to have charismatic personalities Cheryl and the McGees," Hill said.

Even if women's basketball crowds don't grow, more changes will be made, Hill said. The NCAA will switch to a smaller ball this season that should cut down on turnovers and increase the possibility of dunk shots.

"We've been trying to get as many of the small balls out to our players as possible," Hill said. "At the start, I'm afraid it might cause more turnovers because the players are going to be so surprised at how easy it is to handle."

The new balls, which also will be used in girls' high school competition, have been available for only two months, Hill said.

Besides Tennessee and Clemson, the Husker schedule includes Texas Tech, Oregon and New Mexico and Iowa. The conference powers, Kansas State and Missouri, should be strong again, with Oklahoma and Kansas having a chance at the Top 20, Hill said.

Iowa State, 0-14 and 4-28 a year ago, will have a new coach, as will Kansas State, which was ranked No. 7 last season despite a first-round NCAA loss. Lynn Hickey, who had directed the Lady Cat program for eight seasons, accepted a similar post at Texas A&M.

'84 fall sports schedule starts

The fall sports schedule will get underway Sept. 1 when the women's volleyball team meets Wichita State at 11 a.m. at the NU Coliseum. Some other opening dates for UNL teams:

Sept. 10-12: Women's golf: The Suzie Maxwell-Berning Invitational, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Sept. 14-15: Softball: Illinois State Invitational, Normal, Ill.

Sept. 15: Cross Country (Men's and Women's) Husker Invitational, Pioneer Park.

Sept. 21: Men's Tennis: Jayhawk Invitational, Lawrence, Kan.

Sept. 21: Women's Tennis: Iowa State, East Campus.

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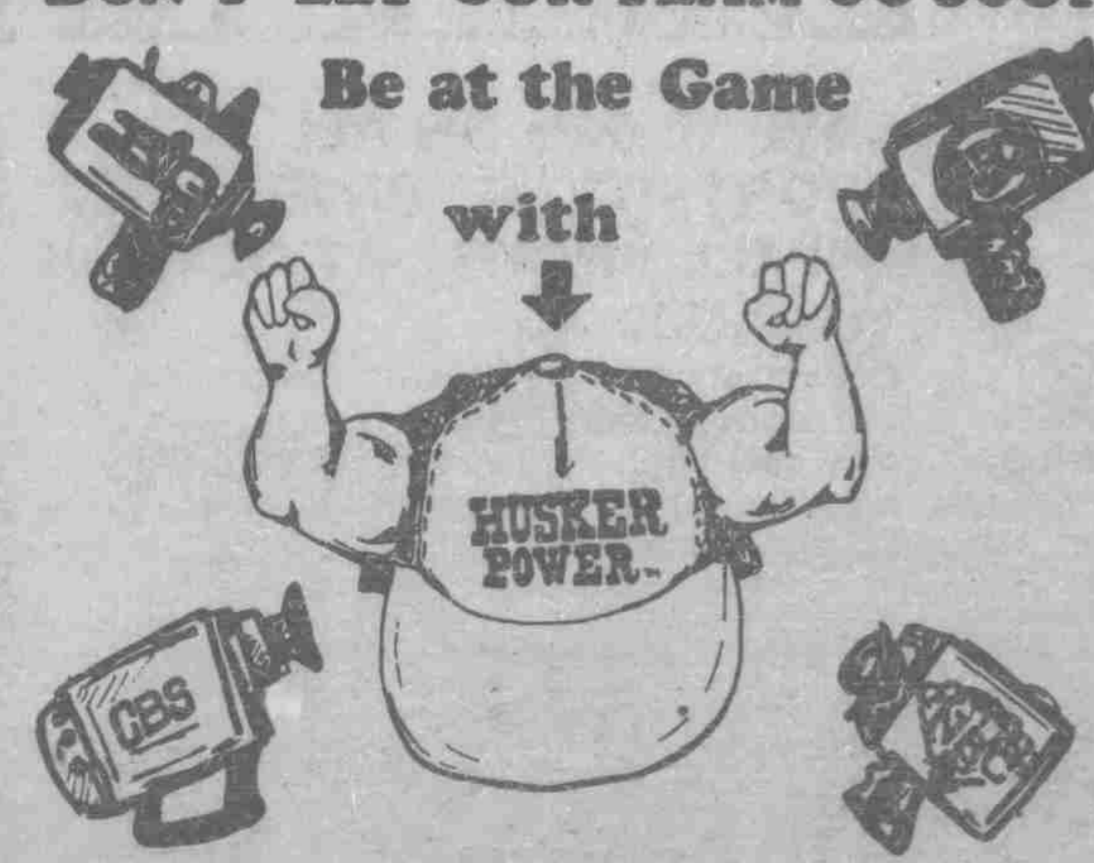
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