

Jays start season with fresh faces

OMAHA (AP) — Creighton basketball coach Dana Altman is keeping it simple as he mixes his new players with what's left of last year's NCAA Tournament team.

Rebound well and play solid defense, Altman says, and good things will happen.

The Bluejays outrebounded opponents in 22 of 31 games, winning 19 while going 22-9 last year. Creighton also held the opposition under 70 points last year 15 times, winning all but one.

"I'm not real smart, but those stats are pretty overwhelming. If we rebound well and we guard people, then we have an opportunity to win," Altman said. "I've told our players a number of times now we've scored 80 points and gotten beat. But very rarely when we outrebound an opponent or do a good job on the defensive end do we get beat."

The Bluejays will have six new players when they open the season Nov. 22 at Mississippi Valley State. Altman said he is counting on his veterans from last year's squad, which won the Missouri Valley Conference Tournament and reached the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

"I think all players realize the significance of the NCAA tournament," Altman said. "Our new guys, they want to be there. ... Our older guys have a little better understanding now of the work ethic that's required if you're going to make a run like that. Hopefully it will be motivational for returning players — to keep those guys going and teach those new guys what it takes to have a chance."

Altman has a lot of work ahead of him, namely in replacing forward Rodney Buford. Creighton's all-time leading scorer and an AP honorable mention All-American last year as a senior averaged 18.6 points and 7.5 rebounds per game.

"You try to replace him by giving the ball to a lot more guys," junior forward Ben Walker said. "This year it won't be like one guy getting 40 points."

The 6-foot-2 Walker, who averaged 18 points in the Jays' five postseason games last year, will have an expanded role, Altman said.

"I don't think that Ben has to take the whole load. I think that Ben has a significant part of it, but I don't want Ben to feel like he's got that whole load," Altman said. "If Ben just does or will do what he did those last seven or eight ball games for us last year, we'll just take that right now, and that will be fine."

Altman's other veterans are forwards Donnie Johnson (6-7) and Nerijus Karlikanovas (6-8) and sophomore guard Ryan Sears, who averaged 8.7 points last season.

Creighton also has six new players, five of them freshmen.

How many of the freshmen see time depends on Creighton's needs and how well the players are adjusting, Altman said.

"Of those six, two or three of them are going to have to play a significant role for us if we're going to continue to press and play nine or 10 guys like we've been doing," Altman said.

Cardinals sign Darryl Kile

■ The right-hander, who had an off season with the Colorado Rockies, has the potential to start for the St. Louis team.

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The St. Louis Cardinals acquired another former dominant right-hander today, getting Darryl Kile in a seven-player deal with the Colorado Rockies.

Kile joins 1996 AL Cy Young winner Pat Hentgen, an 11-game winner last year who was acquired last week from Toronto, to revamp a staff that has been the Cardinals' major weakness the past two seasons.

Kile was 19-7 with a 2.57 ERA with Houston in 1997 but was a major bust in Colorado after signing with the Rockies. He was 8-13 with a 6.61 ERA last year.

Along with a potential No. 1 starter, the Cardinals got a new closer

in the deal. The Rockies also sent Dave Veres, who had 31 saves last year, to St. Louis along with pitching prospect Luther Hackman.

The Cardinals gave up right-handers Jose Jimenez, Manny Aybar and Rick Croushore, plus minor-league infield prospect Brent Butler. Jimenez, 26, had a no-hitter and two-hitter against Arizona's Randy Johnson this year but later spent time in the minors and was 5-14 with a 5.89 ERA.

The sides reached a tentative deal early Monday, contingent on the Cardinals' restructuring the final year of Kile's contract. Kile is scheduled to make \$8 million next season.

The Cardinals were negotiating to reduce the salary to \$6 million and add an option for 2001 with a \$2 million buyout, and the final hangup was negotiating incentive clauses for the option year.

Kile, who turns 31 next month, struggled with his curveball at altitude and those problems ended up

affecting his other pitches. Last year he had a 7.77 ERA at Coors Field, the highest home-field ERA among major league pitchers. He's 21-30 with a 5.84 ERA in two seasons with the Rockies.

Veres, 33, went 4-8 with 31 saves and a 5.14 ERA in 73 appearances in 1999 after going 3-1 with a 2.83 ERA and eight saves in 63 appearances as a setup man in his Rockies debut in 1998.

Aybar, 25, was used mostly in relief and was 4-5 with three saves and a 5.47 ERA in 97 innings. Croushore was 3-7 with a 4.14 ERA, eight saves and 88 strikeouts in 71 2-3 innings.

Butler, 21, was a Cardinals' third-round draft pick in 1996 and hit .269 with 13 homers and 54 RBIs last year at Double-A Arkansas. He played mostly at shortstop but also has experience at second base.

Hackman, a rookie right-handed reliever, was 1-2 with a 10.69 ERA in five games last year.



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