



MSU Eagles look to return to top of Ohio Valley Conf. Gaither takes head coaching spot

By Chip Miller
OF THE CARLISLE MERCURY
MOBHEAD - The Morehead State University Eagles men's basketball program will be getting a new look for its 1987-88 season.

One of the changes to the men's program is first year head coach Tommy Gaither.

Gaither was Baptist College's winningest coach with 70-46 in four years and had two back to back 21-9 seasons.

He brings to the Eagle program a entirely new staff and four coaches, three of whom are junior college coaches.

"You don't just go out and find someone to fill the shoes of a player like Bob McCann," Gaither said of Morehead's former 6'9" center and Ohio Valley Conference's Player of the Year.

"But, we have signed some fine recruits that we feel fit into our style of play and will compliment a good nucleus of players returning," he added.

The Eagles have six lettermen and three starters returning.

Bo Rivers, a 6'4" guard with 11.4 points per game last season and a 76 percent in field goal shooting last season.

Also returning is the 1986 87 All-OVC freshman team selection, Tony Curry, a 6'3" Louisville native averaged 10.1 points per game and 80 assists in 26 games last season.

MSU's other returning starter is Derrick Davis, a 6'4" senior from Decatur, Ala., who averaged 9.5 points and 4.8 rebounds.

"There's no doubt a fine group of competitors return this year," Gaither said. "We want to run with the ball this year and play pressure defense. We feel this group returning."

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MSU Eagles

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 and/or new recruits will enable us to play this style."

Pushing for starting jobs this season will be Kevin Simpson (a 6'7" junior) and Michael Mason (a 6'2" senior). Simpson averaged 6.2 points and had a career high 26-point performance against Tennessee Tech last year. Mason averaged 7.3 points and 3.2 rebounds and has an exceptional leaping ability.

"Right now we're going to have to just grow and learn as we go," Gaither said of the practice sessions.

He said the Eagles have to be "over achievers in order to win many games" this upcoming season.

"We've got to play hard and together if we expect to have a ball game. Many of the times we're going to be the underdog in a lot of the games," he said.

Gaither said he wants the Eagle players to be in shape to play a "tough-paced game every game."

Gaither added every position is up for grabs now and that anyone returning from last season wasn't guaranteed his old position back.

"They have to earn it," Gaither said.

The new signees are guards Roddy Peters (6'6" junior) and Tony Turner (6'1" junior); forwards Ira Mitchell (6'6" junior) and Ronnie Matthews (6'7" freshman); and center Bryant Carrington (6'8" junior).

Peters is a transfer from Allegany Community College where he averaged 18.2 points and 5.8 rebounds. Turner averaged 7.1 points and 7.2 assists at Independence Junior College in Independence, Kansas.

Mitchell transferred from Corners State Junior College in Oklahoma after averaging 15 points and 10 rebounds. Matthews played high school ball at Northside in Memphis, Tenn., averaging 17.5 points and 12 rebounds last season. He is Gaither's only freshman recruit.

Carrington transferred from Allegany Community College where he averaged 10.3 points and 6.2 rebounds.

Gaither said Peters will be out of action until after Christmas because of an injury.

Of the season, Gaither said, "We've got a very demanding schedule for such a new team."



Tommy Gaither



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