

Lady Jackets look to reclaim district title

By Josh Shephard
Of The Carlisle Mercury Staff

When the Nicholas County Lady Jacket were upset by the Bourbon County Lady Colonels in the first round of the District tournament last season, it cut short a team expected to be a very real contender for the regional tournament championship.

This season, the Nicholas County Lady Jackets return with their team almost completely intact.

Thus far, the current Lady Jackets team has shattered any record set forth by any previous Nicholas County girls' basketball team.

Heading into what should be another high voltage season for the Lady Jackets, Head Coach Barbara Kenney said the team is as aggressive on offense as it always has been but with the growing maturity of the players, their attack should be more mobile and varied.

"Our inside shooting and quickness on the court have always been strong points on the team, but I feel we have not been as strong on the wide outside shots as we could be," Kenney said.

Though not an advocate of a three point shot offense, Kenney said she feels that the outside shot should remain an option open to the Jackets should the inside be too tied up to make the needed shot.

"Our asset has been our ability to move in close and take the easy lay up and perhaps use Kim Denkins to assist or even make the score if she is clear enough. But despite the attention Denkins has received in the last several years, we have an excellent team moving around out there which are just as much of a threat as Denkins is under the goal," Kenney said.

The Lady Jackets can well be termed one of the most well-balanced teams in Kentucky girls' basketball.

Three seniors, Jennifer Johnson, Kristi Barton, and Tacy Earlywine, whose high school career scoring totals passed the 1,000 mark in her Junior year, all look to exceed the mark they set two years ago when the squad was knocked out of the regional championship and a state playoff berth by an advanced Clark County squad.

Also looking for an advanced spot come playoff time are Junior starters Christie Hatton, Nikki Smoot, and Elizabeth Schanding who have carved out their irreplaceable niche in the success of the Lady-Jackets team.

This may be the year they do it. Ranked number one in class A schools, four of the Lady Jacket's five starters averaged double figures in scoring.

But the question is, can their defense meet the same expectations the Lady Jackets offense currently enjoys?

Unlike the year preceding, most of the team has not been working in basketball all year round. In summer basketball, only seven members of the team were busy compiling court experience.

In scrimmage play, Kenney said, the team showed too much of a reliance on Denkins' ability to block out the inside and it opened up a number of opportunities for the Connor team.

"We need to have more of the girls inside working the boards and coming up with rebounds, forcing the turnover and playing our opponent tight," Kenney said. "If we work as hard on one end of the court as we do another, then our chances for the season im-

prove a great deal."

Added to the perennial Lady Jacket starting team is a bunch of capable players, each willing and able to fill in a needed spot and play with just as much intensity and aggressiveness as the starting team.

Facing the Lady Jackets this season will be a host of some of the top high school teams, a schedule upgraded to give the Jacket's experience playing traditionally high caliber teams. But for this year, many of these teams are in the Lady-Jackets own district and region.

"I don't expect we'll win every game or that our record will come close to the successes of the last two years. But I think the team is in much better condition this year than we've ever been in the past and I hope we'll surprise a few teams along the way," Kenney said.

Heading up the district challenges will be Bourbon County, Kenney said.

"Most people didn't count Bourbon as a threat last season, but if you look at the statistics of

the regular season games when we beat them, it wasn't by much. On their home court come district time, Bourbon will be very hard to beat," Kenney said.

Along with Bourbon, there are also perennial challengers Bracken, Fleming, Bath, and Clark Counties which pose serious challenges to the expectations many have for the Lady Jackets ball club.

But if Kenney's plan to develop the Lady-Jackets team succeeds, they will be threat from nearly every spot on the court.



Barbara Kenney

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Pictured above is the Nicholas County High School Girls Basketball team for the 1991-92 season. On the bottom row, from left to right are Jennifer Gilvin; Trainer, Tina Fryman, Elizabeth Schanding, Nikki Smoot, Kristi Barton, Alicia Sibert, Tara George, Kathy Schanding; Trainer. On the back row from left to right are head Coach Barbara Kenney, Jennifer Wiltoughby, Tawnya Livingood, Tacy Earlywine, Renee Linville, Kim Denkins, Christie Hatton, Michella Hopkins, Jennifer Johnson, Melaine Jones, Assistant Coach Penny Bretz, and Assistant Coach Mike Kenney.

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