Adams looks to lead young Bath County girls' team

By Brad Laux
Sports Writer

From the top to the bottom of its roster, the Bath County girls' basketball team may be one of the youngest in the 16th Region. The Lady Cats only have one senior and 13 of the players on the team's 20-man roster are freshmen or younger.

In many ways coach Sophia Huff will have a brand new team for her second season. In addition to all of the youth, Bath County will regain the services of Ginny Adams, who missed last year after suffering an injury during soccer season.

The team's lone senior, the 5-foot-8 Adams can, and likely will, play every position on the floor.

"Ginny is coming back from an injury and is looking good. Her shot improved over the summer," Huff said. "She could run the point or play center. She is versatile, speedy, smart and a good rebounder. We will rely on her a lot. She is our only true leader. We want her on the floor all the time."

Bath County will need her. The Lady Cats graduated four players from last season's 7-19 team, which did not win a district game.

Three starters do return, including sophomore point guard Lexy Grimes.

"She has a good head for the game and the potential to make things happen. She is an outstanding shooter," Huff said.

The last time Grimes and Adams paired together (2007-08), the Lady Cats made their first regional tournament appearance in four years.

Sophomore guard Erica Toy returns as the team's primary outside shooting threat.

"Erica is an excellent spot-up shooter, who can get to the free-throw line," Huff said. "She is very consistent and fundamentally sound."

With Adams, Grimes and Toy in the fold, Huff is going to try to speed things up this year.

"We want to pick the pace up," she said. "We are a good shooting team. We will create a transition offense to utilize our shooting (ability)."

The coach also plans on using the dribble-drive offense.

"We want the players to take the ball to the hole," she said. "Lexy and Ginny can both put the ball on the floor and create (opportunities)."

However, Grimes is the team's only pure point guard and Huff has some concerns about the Lady Cats' ability to bring the ball down court against pressure, as well as their overall ball handling skills.

"We need to improve getting the ball up the floor and breaking the press," she said. "We also need to reduce our turnovers."

Three other varsity guards all will likely handle the ball some, including promising seventh-grader Taylor Rogers.

"She will see varsity time at the point guard and two guard," Huff said. "She has a very high basketball IQ, sees the floor well, is smart, quick and transitions well."

Freshman Amber Martin will be in the rotation as a shooting guard.

"She played last year as an eighth-grader," Huff said. "She is tremendously sound and hard working. She is a hustler, who is smart and has a nice outside shot."

Sophomore Hannah Everman will move to the point guard position this year in part because of her speed.

"She is a good athlete with good moves and plays strong defense," Huff said. "She also has a nice shot."

Junior Jessica Hatton will move to the wing this season. She played in the post last year, but at 5-5, she is more suited for the perimeter. Huff likes her versatility, savvy and toughness.

"She is a hustler, a scrappy player who goes after every loose ball. She also is a good rebounder," Huff said. "She knows the game and is a tough kid who can hold her own, very multi-dimensional."

The Lady Cats will likely use a four-guard lineup with juniors Kara Collins and Chelsey McDermott rotating in the post. Collins is the team's tallest player at 5-9 and was last year's starting center.

"Kara is an athlete. She can run and jump and has a nice 10-foot shot," Huff said. "She needs experience and to develop her strength and improve her rebounding.

"Chelsey is also inexperienced, but she knows the game and is a competitor," Huff added. "She is strong underneath, can box out and get rebounds."

For the most part, the Lady Cats are young and inexperienced, but those who played last year under Huff have a year of seasoning under their belts.

"They have learned the system and are making progress. But, they are still learning," Huff said. "They are in better shape physically and have more intensity. There is a lot of heart in this team."

The Lady Cats will need to improve their ball handling and rebounding to be competitive, but Huff likes her group. "These are good kids on and off the floor. Most are honor roll 4.0 students. They are very coachable, have a positive attitude and play hard," she said. "Shooting will be really important. We will work from the outside. We lack size, so rebounding will be important (too). We need to see everyone fill their role and cut down on mental mistakes and unforced turnovers." Huff thinks that if the team can withstand some early struggles, it should be in good shape heading into the post-season.

"If we can weather early confidence woes, we should be OK," she said. "As the year progresses, mentally we will come around. We want to compete in the district and this team has the potential to step up to the challenge."

B Team 1963

Kneeling, L-R- Jack Smoot; Asst. Coach, Brooks Karrick; manager L-R- Mike Bromagen, Bobby Lyman, Eddit Caudill, Kenny Burton, John Everman, Preston Wightman, Earl Rogers, Jimmy Hart, Jimmy Kissick, Mickey Hogge, Ricky Adams.

Basketball A team

1963 Bath County High School A Team

Kneeling, L-R: Jack Smoot; Asst. coach, Donnie Fulton; Manager, Tom Evans; Coach. Standing: Buddy Stone, Nickie Crouch, Mike Ratliff, Jimmy Reynolds, George Machino, Denny Shelly, Ronnie Crouch, Bobby Richards, Byrd Perry, Butch Buttry, Robbie Reeve and Hoy Miller.

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Experienced coach brings new attitude, system to Fleming County

By Brad Laux
Sports Writer

This season in Flemingsburg, there will be something old and something new for Fleming County boys' basketball.

There also may also be something borrowed, but judging by the Panther Gym, do not expect to see anything blue (except the occasional UK jacket). After all this is basketball, not a wedding.

In many ways it is a marriage of sorts for the Panther faithful. Brian Kelly, son of late Fleming County Coach Lake Kelly, has returned to the area he calls home to help lead the Panthers back to become a dominant force. The jury is out if it will be wedded bliss.

On paper the Panthers seem to have all the tools for success. They have an experienced squad with athleticism, depth and offensive ability. What Kelly brings new to the team this season is his system of "Eighty-four feet of pressure, man-to-man defense," the coach says.

"It will be a big change for them. It is a totally different system," he adds. "But, they seemed to have adjusted quickly (to the new style) and are excited about it."

Kelly plans to employ the dribble-drive offense, which coincidently is the same style of play that new coach John Calipari has installed at UK.

"We will use a pick-and-roll offense and a five-man motion that will give everyone the freedom to get to the basket," Kelly said. "We also want to run a lot of fast breaks, which will come out of our defense."

That system worked for him at Centennial High School, where he spent the last 13 seasons and became the winningest coach in Cougar history.

The biggest difference between what he was able to do at Centennial and what he has to work with at Fleming County will be the Panthers' ability to shoot the ball.

"We have several good shooters," Kelly said. "I haven't ever had shooters of this quality in the past."

Kelly's style will be predicated on athleticism, which he will have in abundance, especially in the backcourt where no fewer than five guards figure into the rotation.

The Panthers will return three starters from last year's squad, which stumbled to a 9-18 record. Back are the starting backcourt of seniors Preston Dugan and Josh Gray. Well-suited for Kelly's system, both are among the most athletic players in the 16th Region and are great shooters. Dugan is a slasher and a shooter. Gray was the team's top scorer last season and among the leaders in the region. Offensively, he can basically do it all.

Another athletic backcourt member is junior point guard Troy Gibbs, who will miss the early part of the season and is not expected back into the lineup until late December, but Kelly expects him to eventually be one of the top players in the area. Sophomore combo guard Travis Taylor is right in line with the others. He is quick, athletic and is learning to be able to dribble equally well with both hands.

Junior Chip Clark is another athletic guard, but the Panther football quarterback broke his collarbone in the fall and will gradually work his way back into playing shape.

The Panthers will lack size in the paint, but do return starting 6-foot-4 senior center Matt Jolly. The team also regains the services of 6-3 forward Devin Dugan, an athletic player who missed all of last season due to an injury. Both players can score around the basket.

Six-foot-two junior Ian Kinder and 6-0 senior Ryan Jackson are both bangers, who can clear out space in the paint and grab rebounds.

Kelly also will have options on the wing with a pair of 6-3 inside-outside players in senior Bradley Gooding and junior Dillon Hicks. The coach likes the improvements the two have made.

A trio of sophomores, guards Cole Clark and Darrin Brooks, and forward Danny Rigdon, also may see time.

With Kelly's up-tempo system, he expects rotating in 10 to 12 players a night.

"We are going to have a revolving door (of substitutions)," Kelly said. "The kids will wear out quick. We will need to play a lot of players."

The fast-paced style should more than just wear down the Panthers.

"Want to attack (our opponents') guards and wear them down throughout the game," Kelly said. "We want to force the action. We want to make them do what we want them to do."

Kelly thinks the Fleming County players have the tools to make the system work. Among other facets, he listed their versatility, understanding of the game and eagerness to buy into the system.

"The kids have the offensive skills: passing, using angles, shooting, chemistry, basketball IQ and faith in their teammates. They run and catch well on the break, and want to give the ball up so that everyone can succeed," Kelly said. "They are hard workers. We have set the bar high. I really enjoy coaching them."

It will not just be a cakewalk for the Panthers. There are some things that still need to be ironed out.

"This team gets easily frustrated and down. If we can learn to handle failure, we'll be fine," Kelly said. "We can take care of our emotional state of mind."

Kelly has some indicators to see how well the system is working.

"Our goals are holding opponents to single-digit quarters, and getting some 5-second and 10-second counts," he said. "When it is clicking, it will be a sight to see."

Expectations for the Panthers are lofty.

"Our goals are to win 20 games, win the district and compete for the region title," Kelly said.

Coach Brian Kelly

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