

SPORTS

Lady Bears Basketball Off to a Strong Start

BY JAID PERRY

The Lady Bear Basketball Team has kicked off their season! In the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference, the preseason poll ranks the Bears in the tenth spot out of the sixteen conference teams. With such a high finish last year, taking first in the South Division regular season, the Bears are hoping to finish higher than their seeded place.

Junior Sidney Wentland will be a key contributor to this goal. She is coming back for a second season with the Bears after transferring from the University of Denver. She contributed in many aspects for the Concordia racking up 7.4 points per game, 72 assists, 20 three-point makes, and adding 124 rebounds on her sophomore season. In addition to Wentland's efforts, sophomore Megan Dubois will equally contribute her offensive and defensive skill set. As a freshman, she scored 75 points, had 23 assists, pulled down 29 rebounds, and added a solid 17 steals. Dubois will step up into a larger role this year for the Bears as they get farther into their season.

Up to this point, the Bears have gotten a few games under their belts. The team started with two exhibition games and fared well, beating both Augsburg and St. Kates. In a close seven-point game against the Auggies, the Bears had a great team effort spreading out the stats among many of the players. Leading in points was junior Riley Wheatcraft with an impressive 17 points. Not far behind was Dubois with 16. The success of the Bears came from the boards. They out-rebounded Augsburg 55-29 throughout the whole game. Snagging the ball down was Danielle Schaub with ten rebounds and Wheatcraft with nine rebounds. Against St. Kates, the Lady Bears played aggressive defense, forcing a total of 20 turnovers for the Wildcats. Jady Hanson, a freshman, made an impressive debut for her career as a Golden Bear. She led the team in points with 10 points and not a single turnover.

As the Bears finished up their exhibition games, they rolled into a few non-conference matchups. First, they took on Missouri Western and came

out on top with a 66-59 win. At the half, the Bears were down 41-25; however, they answered with a spectacular second half. Dubois had a career-high of 19 points, Wentland put up 15 points, and Wheatcraft added 14 points for the Bears. For the first loss of the season, Concordia took on Fort Hays State in Missouri at the Civic Arena, coming up short with a score of 67-54. Even with a stellar performance from Schaub with 17 points, the Bears could not come out on top with the win.

As the season goes on, the Bears hope to play against their NSIC foes with the same high intensity that they have started the season with. Their first conference game will take place on December 6th at home against Sioux Falls. From there on out, the Bears will take on every conference team two times to battle for conference placement. Be sure to get out and support the Lady Bears Basketball Team as they work hard this season!

New-Look Timberwolves Already Seeing Signs of Improvement

BY ANDREW WYLIE

After reaching their first playoff series in over a decade in 2018, everything came crashing down last season for the Timberwolves as Jimmy Butler forced his way out of town. In the 2018-2019 season, the Timberwolves dealt with injuries and the firing of Thibodeau on their way to a 36- win season, good for 11th place in the Western Conference.

The 2019-2020 season has the Timberwolves roster seeing another major change. All the ex-Bulls players have moved on to other teams, and the Timberwolves are deep into a development phase where they hope their young core stars can find success by learning to play together for a few seasons.

The Timberwolves added a few low splash free agents in C Noah Vonleh, P.F. Jake Layman, and PG Shabazz Napier. They let Derrick Rose, Tyus Jones, Taj Gibson, and Dario Saric walk.

Perhaps their biggest acquisition was their new president of basketball operations, Gerson Rosas, who was brought over from Houston. Rosas is predicted to bring a steadier hand than the Timberwolves have had previously. Rosas decided to keep both General Manager Scott Layden as well as last season's interim coach Ryan Saunders.

So far this season, it is obvious that Rosas and Saunders have completely revamped the Timberwolves game plan into something that resembles the new NBA style. This new style largely consists of shooting more threes and limiting the amount of mid-range jumpers players are taking.

This approach has proven to be very beneficial so far to Andrew Wiggins, the talented but underperforming max contract starting small forward. Wiggins has shot a high percentage of threes so far and has also shown a willingness to drive to the basket where he has been very successful. Wiggins has previously relied far too much on his mid-range jumper, which has frustrated fans and coaches alike for years. If Rosas can turn Wiggins into the star that everyone knows he has the talent to become, this could make him one of the best hires in Timberwolves history.

A player with few issues to fix is star center Karl-Anthony Towns. Towns continues to improve every season and looks like he is now a top ten player and a perennial All-Star selection. Towns is elite on the drive, plays great defense, has an incredible low post game, and is the Wolves' best 3-point shooter by far. He is already the Wolves' second-best player in franchise history behind

Kevin Garnett, and the 24-year-old is just getting started.

Joining the Wolves via the draft is S.G. Jarrett Culver, who the Wolves selected during the 6th pick. Culver has shown some skill early in the season but looks like he needs some time before he gets comfortable and learns his role with this team. Culver's development will need to advance quickly during the season if the Wolves will compete for a playoff spot this season. So far, he is averaging just over 7 points a game.

The Wolves are healthy and are playing well so far in 2019 and should improve on last year's let down. They will have a hard time fighting for the playoffs, but they have a shot at competing for the 8th playoff seed if they are not hampered again by the injury bug or distractions like they were last season. Saunders and Rosas seem to have put together a good plan of attack for this roster, and they should only get better as the young players get better playing together.