

Young Kohawks eager for new season

Written by Jim Ecker

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There are plenty of new topics of conversation with the Coe women's basketball team this season.

Randi (Peterson) Henderson, the head coach, is a newlywed with a new last name. There are six new freshmen on the team. And former Marion High School and Wisconsin star Morgan Paige has joined the Kohawks as a new assistant coach.

Henderson, who starred for the University of Iowa women's basketball team, married former UI men's basketball player Denez Henderson in September and changed the name on her office door at Eby Fieldhouse.

The Kohawks graduated six seniors who helped Coe finish 16-11 overall last season and 10-4 in the Iowa Conference, and they've been replaced by a half-dozen talented rookies.

Coe begins the new campaign Saturday night at Wisconsin-Eau Claire and Henderson is anxious to see how her new team will fit together. There are only one senior and two juniors on the club, along with 13 freshmen and sophomores.

"We will definitely be very green," Henderson said Wednesday. "Right now we're spending a lot of time just learning the value of possessions, the pace of college basketball, the physicality of college basketball.

"There's definitely a lot of learning going on."

The Kohawks lost four of their top six scorers with the graduation of Mackenzie Reed (13.0 points), Mary Halvorson (11.9), Hannah Breitbach (9.9) and Lindsey Buckles (3.8), but the cupboard is not bare. Megan Hayes (12.1), Mickey Hansche (10.4) and Allie Wirth (2.5) are

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returning starters
again this year.

and should be in the lineup

After that, Henderson is looking for young players to fill important roles.

"It's been really fun," she said. "They're really new-minded, so they've been really open to new coaching and a lot of new stuff and really hungry to learn."

Aleena Hobbs, a 5-foot-10 freshman from Cedar Rapids Washington, likely will start at power forward for the Kohawks Saturday night.

"Aleena will play some substantial minutes," said Henderson. "I think she'll have a pretty big impact on our program right away. We have a lot of voids to fill and hopefully she's up to that challenge."

Henderson is not sure about her fifth starter or the rotation she'll use in games, but said quite a few players are competing for playing time.

"I'm nervous for the games to start," she said, "but I'm also excited just to see what they have."

The Kohawks have a strong local flavor with five players from Metro high schools with Hobbs (Washington), Ashley Stulken (Xavier), Courteney McCrary (Prairie), Maddie Koolbeck (Jefferson) and Jordan Holmes (Kennedy). Fourteen of the 16 players are from Iowa, with most of them within a two-hour drive of Cedar Rapids.

Henderson, who is from Cedar Falls, likes the geographic composition of her squad.

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"I like an environment that's really family oriented," she remarked. "I like that their parents get to watch their kids play. There's a big supportive environment that way.

"It's really fun for the girls who played against each other in high school to end up on the same team and see what they're capable of doing."

Hansche, a 5-foot-6 guard from Iowa City High, set a Coe record last year as a freshman when she made eight 3-pointers in a single game. She led the Kohawks with 64 triples last year and shot 40.8 percent from behind the arc.

"She's a pretty phenomenal shooter. Gifted," said Henderson. "She's definitely welcome to take any 3's that she gets, uncontested or slightly contested."

Henderson welcomed Paige onto the coaching staff this year following her all-Big Ten career at Wisconsin. Paige comes from a coaching family and her brother, Linn-Mar product Marcus Paige, is a junior at North Carolina this year and a preseason All-American.

"She's definitely a basketball junkie," said Henderson. "She's got great energy. I've enjoyed having her a lot.

"She gets after the kids when they need it. She gives them great coaching. She's still young enough to relate to what it feels like to be in that situation."

ROSTER

Jordan Holmes, 5-4, Frosh, Kennedy
Logan Lynch, 5-7, Soph, Dubuque Wahlert
Allie Wirth, 5-10, Jr, Cedar Falls
Morgan Johnson, 5-10, Frosh, Earlham
Aleena Hobbs, 5-10, Washington

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Jenna Power, 5-5, Jr, Ames

Mickey Hansche, 5-6, Soph, Iowa City High

Courteney McCrary, 5-9, Soph, Prairie

Danielle Hollingshead, 6-1, Frosh, Joplin, Mo.

Jenna Lehman, 5-9, Frosh, Iowa City Regina

Shelby Lehmann, 6-0, Frosh, North Fayette

Maddie Koolbeck, 5-10, Soph, Jefferson

Leah Schellinger, 5-9, Frosh, Avon, Minn.

Alyssa Collins, 6-1, Frosh, Waukon

Megan Hayes, 6-2, Senior, Bettendorf

Ashley Stulken, 6-1, Soph, Xavier

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