

Mount Mercy women looking to move up

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 02 November 2018 05:40 -



The Mount Mercy women's basketball team had a rough season last year with only seven victories in 31 games, but Coach Micah Mims played lots of people and gave them valuable experience for the future.

She hopes the future is now.

Eleven players are back from last year's club and they've been joined by some promising newcomers for the 2018-19 campaign.

Mims, starting her third year as head coach, hopes all that depth and experience will translate into a successful season.

"That's the game plan," she said. "Last year we had a lot of newbies, so we had a lot of newcomers that hindered us a little bit, but it's a stepping-stone for this year to bring us up to where we want to be.

"We have a little more experience this year within our system, the way I kind of want things in our offense," she said. "It's nice knowing we have a lot of players who have seen action and I can trust to put on the floor."

Mount Mercy opens the season this weekend at the Culver-Stockton tournament in Canton, Mo., facing Saint Ambrose on Friday and Hannibal-LaGrange on Saturday.

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The Mustangs do not want to finish 7-24 again and Mims is impressed with the way her players have worked to improve.

"We showed up in great shape, which was exciting for the preseason," she said. "You never really know what they do over the summer on their own, but they showed up in great shape.

"You can tell they've been in the gym all summer. There's just a different mentality. I think they have a little chip on their shoulders. That's exciting, too."

Sharice Kawakami, a 5-foot-5 senior from Hawaii, is the top returning scorer at 9.7 points per game. Aurianna Hampton, a 5-10 senior from Illinois, is next on the list at 7.5 points.

Sara Blowers, Audrey Mulumba, Paris Sheck, Sarah Moffett, Chelsey Lampe, Abbi Kinnaird, Lakin Goodman, Samantha Kitterman and Madysen Wahls are also back from last year and looking to help the team.

Brianna Thomas, a 5-foot-5 transfer from Paris Junior College, and Aaliyah Brown, a 6-foot transfer from Park University and DMACC, have joined the ballclub and are being counted on for production. Anna LeGrand, a 5-9 freshman from North Linn High School, and Halle Person, a 5-10 freshman from Cedar Rapids Prairie, also figure into the picture.

Mims normally used 10 or 11 players in games last season, but she'd like to trim the rotation to 8 or 9 this year. That's led to some spirited competition in practice.

"They know there's a fight for positions and that's made for awesome practices," she said. "They're going after it."

Mims has been leaning toward Sheck, Thomas, Kawakami, Kinnaird and Moffett as her starters with the opener fast approaching.

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Mount Mercy averaged 62.4 points last season and shot 39.1 percent from the floor, but Mims expects those numbers to rise.

"I'd like to be closer to 75," she said. "I'd like to play faster. I want to take more shots, I want to take quicker shots, I want to get transition points.

"Point-blank, we have to score the basketball. We got enough stops last year, but we just couldn't put the ball in the basket."

Mount Mercy is a member of the Heart of America Conference, which sent five teams to the NAIA national tournament last year. The Mustangs struggled in the league, finishing with a 4-15 mark.

"The top echelon of the conference is cut-throat," said Mims, a Cedar Rapids Washington grad who starred at Mount Mercy during her college career.

There are 13 teams in the Heart of America Conference this season and the Mustangs tied for 11th in the preseason poll.

Mims begins her third year with the Mustangs with a 20-42 record. Ashley Dolan (13 ppg), Nyawal Dak (7.6) and Ashley Sally (5.0) graduated from last year's club.

MOUNT MERCY ROSTER

Seniors (6)

Sara Blowers, 5-7, Iowa City; Lakin Goodman, 5-7, Morrison, Ill.; Aurianna Hampton, 5-10, Zion, Ill.; Sharice Kawakami, 5-5, Honolulu; Chelsey Lampe, 5-8, Riverside; Taseandra Parker, 5-7, Aurora, Ill.

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Juniors (4)

Aaliyah Brown, 6-0, Crawfordsville; Samantha Kitterman, 5-6, Cedar Rapids; Audrey Mulumba, 5-11, Vantaa, Finland; Brianna Thomas, 5-5, Mesquite, Texas.

Sophomores (6)

Chailey Cabalis, 5-5, Keaau, Hawaii; Karlee Carey, 5-7, Columbus Junction; Abbi Kinnaird, 5-10, Tiffin; Sarah Moffett, 5-11, Mount Pleasant; Paris Sheck, 5-6, Gold Coast Queensland, Australia; Madysen Wahls, 5-4, New London.

Freshmen (4)

Zia Collett, 5-9, Waterloo; Anna LeGrand, 5-9, Coggon; Kimani McMillian, 5-10, Sauk Village, Ill.; Halle Person, 5-10, Cedar Rapids.