

Concerns cloud Lady Pioneers

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

Perhaps what occurred at the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) preseason meeting was as good an indication of what to expect from Oakland University's women's basketball team as any.

The Pioneers finished fifth in the final coaches poll, even though two coaches thought enough of them to pick them first.

In other words, no one really knows what to anticipate from OU and "first year" coach Sue Kruszewski.

OK, Kruszewski isn't in her first year as OU's coach. It's her third season. But the team on the court this year will be the first one she recruited. And that means the Pioneers will play a brand new basketball.

"Our strength will be in our defense and our running game," said Kruszewski, who guided OU to a 15-11 mark her first season and a 14-14 record last year. "We'll have a fast-break offense. It's my natural style as far as coaching."

NO WONDER her fellow GLIAC coaches are somewhat puzzled. For the two years OU relied on its inside strength and with two good reasons: Brenda McLean, a four-time all-GLIAC center and forward, and Kim Nash, a 6-3 center.

Now Kruszewski has "elected to go with a smaller, quicker lineup. We're not going to have the strength inside which obviously was our forte the last two years."

Kruszewski will need two elements to fuel her running game: rebounding, which means her smaller, unproven front line must produce, and ballhandling, which was a sore spot last season.

True, ballhandling was a problem, but it wasn't because of a lack of ability as much as a lack of experience," she said. Translated, that means Kruszewski has great confidence in sophomore Margaret Boyle, who averaged flashes of brilliance as a freshman but was also inconsistent. "She will definitely be our point guard," said Kruszewski. "She's playing much more under control and she's more intelligent in her passing. She also has a strong outside shot."

AND THOSE aren't even her strongest points, according to her coach. Boyle's greatest assets are "her defense ability to put pressure on the ball and her ability to drive to the basket."

Boyle's development will allow three other players — all seniors who transferred to OU from junior college — to switch to more natural positions after trials at point guard last season.

Julie Wilge, from Livonia Franklin and Henry Ford CC, and Kris Brown, from Macomb CC, are both 5-9 natural shooting guards. Brown was being groomed at the point last season before she was sidelined with a knee injury, prompting Wilge's insertion at that position.

Those two are currently battling 5-8 sophomore Cherry Wilks for the starting shooting guard spot. Wilge averaged 7.5 points per game a year ago, to 5.4 for Wilks and 5.1 for Brown.

PAM HAWKINS will make the most interesting position switch for OU, going from an area of concern to another. Hawkins, a 5-9 senior

OU sports

from Henry Ford CC, was also used at the point last year when troubles persisted. This season she'll attempt to replace the graduated McLean at power forward.

"She doesn't have the size, but she does possess the quickness and ball handling," said Kruszewski of her newest experiment. "She blocks out well and boards well, and she has a good outside shot."

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Pioneers better, so are foes

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

This doesn't sound like Greg Kampe. "I'm excited about this season," said the Oakland University men's basketball coach who three weeks ago at the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) preseason meeting made jokes about his team's talent and intelligence.

"I think we're going to surprise some people," he added confidently.

For starters, his starters — seven of them to be exact, back from last year. All filled starting positions at some point in Kampe's initial season as OU's head coach, and all are improved this season.

THEN THERE'S three promising freshmen whom Kampe wants to bring along slowly. He hopes that by the start of the GLIAC season they should be ready to contribute productive minutes. None will start, according to Kampe's present plans, but they will play.

And finally, there's the exhibition game OU played against the Windsor Basketball Club Nov. 5. The Pioneers posted a 105-92 victory that gave both the coach and the team a shot of confidence.

"We played very well at our exhibition," Kampe said. "I'm pretty pleased with our progress. I'm very pleased."

In fact, the OU coach is having a problem finding areas of concern. He had no such trouble a year ago. When the season opened the team was still working on learning his defensive concepts, with the offense lagging further behind. OU finished 13-15 overall and seventh in the GLIAC with a 5-11 mark.

"I DEFINITELY think we're better today than at any time last year," he said. "We have nine or 10 players we can put on the court that I have confidence in."

Leading the pack of Pioneers is senior Chris Howze, a 6-foot-3 forward and Orchard Lake St. Mary's grad who is being touted as an All-American candidate. Howze averaged 10.3 points, 8.6 rebounds and 3.0 assists a year ago, connecting on 51.8 percent of his floor shots and 75.8 percent of his free throws.

Joining the all-GLIAC performer are returnees Randy Strunk, a 6-5 senior forward (11.1 points, 6.0 rebounds); Walt Dixon, a 6-6 senior center (13.0 points, 8.2 rebounds); Rob Skinner, a 6-2 senior guard (10.0 points, 4.3 rebounds, 3.3 assists); Scott Blittinger, a 6-1 sophomore guard (9.0 points, 2.8 assists); Pete Schill, a 6-5 sophomore forward (7.1 points, 4.8 rebounds); and Craig Tonti, a 6-2 senior guard.

INJURIES PLAGUED OU even before last season got under way. Tonti was expected to be the shooting guard until he sprained a knee ligament in preseason drills. He never did regain full effectiveness but is fully recovered this year.

Dixon followed Tonti to the sidelines with a broken ankle after 11 games, seriously damaging OU's inside game. Kampe was forced to insert Blittinger and Schill into the lineup more than he wanted.

But last year's problems are this season's strengths. With the injured players back and Blittinger and Schill experienced veterans, the Pioneers have a luxury Kampe never had — depth.

"There's no question we're going to substitute a lot more," he said. His plan is to use eight players for the first five games, then rotate 11 into the lineup for games six through 12. "After that, we'll evaluate what we have and make any necessary adjustments," he said.

THREE THREE newcomers Kampe wants to bring along slowly are freshmen Johnny Johnson, a 6-9 guard from Detroit Southwestern; Dave Hintz, a 6-4 forward from Fenton; and John Henderson, a 6-5 forward from Warren (Michigan Lutheran Seminary).

Of the trio, Johnson has been most impressive. He hit nine of 13 floor shots and scored 23 points in 24 minutes against Windsor. His performance earned him a starting role in Saturday's opener at University of Detroit.

OU will be without Skinner for the game. A one-game suspension was imposed against both him and Tonti after they played together in a basketball tournament this summer, a violation of NCAA law. The NCAA ruled they could either sit out the season's first game or the first game against a Division II opponent.

Skinner will miss the U-D game and Tonti will sit out the Northern Michigan University contest Wednesday. Kampe plans on starting Howze, Blittinger, Dixon and Strunk with Johnson against U-D, with Tonti and Schill the top substitutes.

KAMPE KNOWS U-D, which is aiming for an NCAA Division I ranking, will be a difficult challenge. But even after the Titans, the schedule isn't easy.

"It might be a little too much," he said of his first four games against U-D, Western Michigan University, NIU (ranked fourth in the NCAA's Division II) and Ball State (picked to finish second in the Mid-American Conference). "But I'm not too concerned with what our record will be."

"Anyway, there's two ways to look at it. When we start playing in our league it'll seem like we're up against mere mortals."

He won't have long to wait. After his brutal opening week — three games in five days — and the day after the BSU contest, OU will host Hillsdale College in its GLIAC opener.

"The first four games will be tough," said Kampe. "But I definitely think that this could be the best team in Oakland history."

Since the Pioneers have never experienced a winning season in GLIAC play, that's not saying much. But Kampe figures to post at least a 9-7 conference mark — and it could be much better.

Lady Ocelot team well 'guarded'

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

The pressure's on for Schoolcraft College's women's basketball team.

The Lady Ocelots mean to break their opponents this season — not with superior size and strength, but with speed and agility.

There are no towers to dominate underneath. What coach Ed Kavanagh has is a team top-heavy with guards but lacking a dominant figure to fill the pivot.

"No, we don't have a lot of size," admitted Kavanagh. "We're fast, though."

Which means Kavanagh will be somewhat limited in the strategies he employs. To take advantage of a bench deep in guards — seven of the 11 roster players — he will utilize a full-court pressure defense and a fast-break offense.

"We're not going to be able to set up half-court and play with most teams," he said. "We're going to do a lot of pressing. We're going to have to get full court with them. Hopefully we're going to get some points off our defense."

THREE PLAYERS return from last year's

squad, including two starters. Kim Chandler, a 5-foot-8 all-state shooting guard, is the top veteran.

She averaged 18 points per game and was strong enough around the boards to prompt Kavanagh to move her to small forward this season.

Also back are Anne Type, a 5-5 starting point guard, and Rhonda Lancaster, a 5-4 back-up guard from Farmington.

Both will get plenty of competition from backcourt newcomers Becky Possywak, 5-5 from Livonia; Ladywood; Lori Abbas, 5-6 from Dearborn; Fordson; Colleen McKay, 5-6, from Romulus; and Sheri Wolfe, 5-7 from Livonia Bentley.

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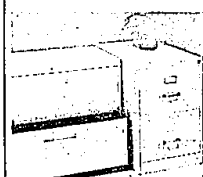
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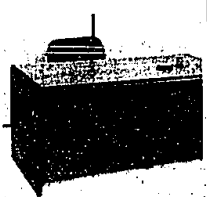
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OU gets early start on 1986 recruiting

It looks like Greg Kampe can go on vacation early next spring.

The Oakland University men's basketball coach won't have to race off to the high school recruiting wars once the Pioneer season is concluded because his recruiting efforts for the 1986-87 campaign are over. OU signed four players to national letters of intent in the one week early signing period.

Leading the group is 6-foot-6 forward Marcus Kennedy from Troy. Kennedy played at Troy Zion Christian as a junior and led the Cougars to the Class D regional final, where they lost to eventual state champ Allen Park Inter-City Baptist.

Kennedy, who will play at Troy this season, averaged 22 points and 13 rebounds for 23-2 Zion Christian.

TWO LANSING EVERETT products will join Kennedy as part of Kampe's recruiting class: 6-1 guard Brandon Davis, an honorable mention Class A

all-star who averaged 14.5 points, and 6-4 forward Kevin Kelly, a 12-point-per-game scorer with a 43-inch vertical leap. Everett was 15-7 last year.

Brandon Davis, a 6-3 point guard from Saginaw who dished out 7.5 assists a game and scored seven points, is Kampe's fourth addition.

OU will lose six seniors after this season. The freshmen will fill four of those spots and junior college transfer Mike McCann takes a fifth.

McCann, a 6-4 forward, is being redshirted this season. He played at Indian Hills Junior College in Centerville, Iowa, where he was the third in the nation in rebounding. McCann was honorable mention all-state in 1981 at Jackson High.

OU's women's basketball coach Sue Kruszewski has also been busy. With two shooting guards graduating in the spring, she signed Andrea Craig of Flint Northern during the early week of recruiting.