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LBB Prepares For 2011-2012 Campaign

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By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor

If you had told people before the start of the 2010-2011 basketball season that a varsity basketball team, starting at least three freshmen a night and without the aid of veteran leadership, would finish the season at 8 games above .500, win their district, and beat a local basketball powerhouse twice in a 10-day span, many would have called you crazy.

The Lady Bearcats did just that a year ago, with their season ending against a senior-laden Farmington team in the sectional round of the MSHSAA playoffs. The Lady 'Cats return all their key contributors from last season, and are working hard to live up to the high bar that they set for themselves last season.


“Well, pretty much since practices have started, we have all these girls back,” head coach Chad Allen said. “We only lost Razheem Miller last year, but we have all of our experience back. It’s pretty nice in practice - they know all the drills, and we can just get in and practice without me having to reteach a lot of stuff. These girls have been really working hard these first two weeks, and they’re really excited and ready to start playing.”

Despite losing Miller, the Lady 'Cats return every other member of the 2010 team. The 'Cats were able to ‘fly under the radar’ throughout most of the season, with many opponents underestimating their skill due to the extreme youth on the team.

Coach Allen knows that won't be the case this year, and notes the differences that it can bring to both his team and opponents.


“Last year, being extremely young, a lot of teams probably thought that they could beat us, or at least stay with us. These girls improved so much throughout the course of the year last year,” he said. “A lot of teams will prepare for us differently and try to beat us in different ways, but I think these girls are definitely up for anything now - they're up for the challenge.”

”All of them seem like they've improved. A lot of them seem to be more confident now,” Allen said. “Last year, you could tell a lot of them weren't sure of themselves, playing on the varsity level as freshmen, they weren't used to it. Now, all of them are a little bit more confident, and that definitely helps a lot.”

The Lady 'Cats starting five  is always different - despite only having eight players on the team, Allen uses all of them in certain roles. Hannah Noe is an outstanding defender. Alison Jarrell is money from three-point land. Katelynn Frazier is a tenacious player, and gives 110% every play. Paige Patterson and Brittney Harris are bot outstanding rebounders, with Harris being the team's leading scorer last season, averaging 15 points and 10 boards a game.

It's rare for a team to be this short on the bench, but have all members be key contributors to the team, and Allen is ready to use that to the team's advantage.

“I don't think in my coaching career that I've ever had more than eight on the bench on varsity, so I'm used to it. All these girls, they work extremely hard and they're in great condition, so I don't think having eight really hurts us any,” he said. “Maybe it would if we got a couple injured and they couldn't play, but other than that they can definitely take it.”

 “We can run them in and out, because they're definitely all players. That's one good thing about being eight deep is being able to play all eight,” Allen continued. “The starters are going to rotate a bit - it's going to change based on who we're playing. If we're playing someone with a lot of size, it would be a different starting five than if we were playing someone with a lot of speed. It depends on who we're playing and who's playing well at the time.”

The Lady 'Cats will open the season at the Farmington Tournament, played between Nov. 28 and Dec. 3. The Lady 'Cats drew the No. 3 seed, behind Miller Career Academy and Poplar Bluff, and will have their first game on Nov. 28 at 6:00 p.m., against No. 6 Cape Notre Dame.

Allen noted the great competition that his team will face in the tournament, and views it as a 'measuring stick' for the season.

"It's an extremely tough tournament, our toughest of the year except for when we get to the playoffs," he said. "It's a measuring stick to see how good you're going to be throughout the season - if you do really well in it, chances are you'll have a really good season. If you don't do so well, you know you can still have a good year, just not as good as it could have been."

It's definitely a measuring stick for us to see where you're at, especially early on in the year to see how much you need to improve," Allen continued.

"Last year, we were 1-2 up there, and we were eliminated by Cape Notre Dame by 25 points, and then we came back and beat them twice at the end of the year. It shows you where you're at and where you need to be."

After the Farmington tournament, the Lady 'Cats will open the regular season at home on Monday, Dec. 5, when they face off against Senath-Hornersville.

Make sure to follow SMT Sports this season, as we bring you coverage of of Lady Bearcat Basketball!

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