

Take to the hardwood with your Pioneers

Lady Pioneers look to build chemistry Men's squad boasts infusion of youth

By **ROB SPIRES**
Staff Writer

The Lady Pioneers are finishing their preparations for the 2006-07 season, a season in which head coach Johnny Lynn expects the team to find success.

"(The team) has good chemistry and leadership. We expect to get a lot accomplished," he said. "We will have to find our chemistry early (in the season) but by early December we should be playing really good ball, and we should be able to bounce back from the (Christmas) break quickly." Lynn continued.

While the Lady Pioneers received no votes in the NJCAA (National Junior College Athletic Association) Top 25 preseason poll, they will have opportunities to upset several teams that did.

On Nov. 10 the Lady Pioneers will visit Motlow State Community College in Lynchburg, and later in the season they will travel to Morristown to play Walters State Community College.

Finally Motlow State will visit Gallatin for a Lady Pioneer home game on Jan. 20.

If the Lady Pioneers hope to find success in the national polls, these can be highlighted as must-win games.

"Those are dates that we have to get," Lynn said. "If we can win a couple of those, we will be good."

"The girls are grasping what we're doing," Lynn stated. "We have to convert. We can't miss easy shots," he continued.

Lynn, who is entering his first year as head coach, stated that he expects returning players to notice a difference between his coaching style and Bobby Hudson's, the former head coach.

Lynn said that Hudson was probably more patient with the players than he will be, but he was quick to add that they've given him everything that he has asked.

Lynn claimed he hasn't determined his final starting lineup, instead waiting until his team gets some playing time under their belts.

"We're working on finding the group that can work best together," Lynn stated. "We have to have five working as one."

Though the final lineup is in the air, Lynn did list players that will become familiar faces on the court during the season, and he gave a brief description of what can be expected from each of them.



Devin Holscher / Staff Photo

The Lady Pioneers are hoping to improve on last year's 13-14 record.

Kaya Allen- "A good young player and she'll continue to improve as the season goes on."

Falonda Bowers- "A hard working small post player, she will do anything you ask."

Shanice Brown- "An athletic post player, will get stronger as she gets more minutes (of playing time)"

Alison Harmon- "A strong post player who's willing to work really hard."

Jodi Smith- "A hard worker with a nice 3 point shot."

Jessica Steele- "Quick and strong, she's decent shooter and a great defender."

Teesha Whitely- "Point guard that handles the ball well, and is a great shooter."

Both Melvin and Lynn are hoping their teams will be contenders in the TJCAA tournament which will be March 6-11 at Vol State.

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Like the women's team, the Pioneers are also gearing up for the start of the season.

"We played in six scrimmages and won four of them," head coach Rusty Melvin stated. "We've got lots of freshman, and they'll get better with experience."

Melvin pointed to the Oct. 24 scrimmage against the Nashville All Stars at the point where his team really came together.

"It was a nice scrimmage," Melvin stated. "We were able to get all 15 players (in the game)."

With only five returning players, the majority of this year's team will be new faces to the Vol State fans.

"We have lots of freshmen," Melvin claimed. "We'll get better with experience."

"We lost a couple of big men in recruiting. That hurt us." Melvin continued.

He then went on to say that he doesn't expect any of his players to really stand out.

"We don't have any big stars, just a team of solid players," He stated.

Melvin is also in his first year as head coach, and he said he plans on coaching a much more defense oriented team than Hudson did last year.

"He's more easy going than I am," Melvin added. "I'm probably a little stricter."

The Pioneers will play #20 ranked Wabash Valley twice over the season, the second meeting coming Dec. 6 at Vol State.

While those are the only games the team will play against a ranked

opponent, the Dec. 2 game against Walters State will be another important game for the team.

Melvin also stated that the road games against Motlow State and Chattanooga State will be tough games.

Echoing Lynn, Melvin claimed he has also not determined his starting lineup, but he did stress that every player on the bench will see playing time.

"I feel like that if you think enough of them to dress them, then they deserve playing time," he said. "Nobody can be satisfied being on the team and not playing."

Melvin also briefly discussed what he thinks about his players.

Julius Virgo- "He started 17 games last year, and he will be a team leader this year"

Jarrett Curry- "A very quick player that can also play good defense"

Brandon Hopson- "He has great potential, he's a good shooter with a good 3 point shot"

Chris Ivy- "A big freshman, he can contribute inside and on the perimeter"

Andrew Perry- "A smart and unselfish player, the kind you need on the team. He also has a 3.8 GPA"

DeAndre Reeves- "A good scorer, will help the team with his offense"

Carlos Woodard- "He graduated from high school in 2002, so he will have to adjust to the college routine"



Devin Holscher / Staff Photo

Several Pioneers scramble to get in position for a rebound during practice.