

Pfund, Lakers looking forward

BY CHRIS JONES
STAFF WRITER

What a difference a year makes.

At this time last year, Randy Pfund was a rookie head coach whose players included former NBA champions Magic Johnson, Byron Scott, A.C. Green and James Worthy. Pfund, an assistant coach with the Los Angeles Lakers under both Pat Riley and Mike Dunleavy, was expected to have the benefit of coaching seasoned veterans in his first season as head coach of the Lakers.

All of that went out the window in a hurry. Before the first game, Johnson re-retired. Sam Perkins was traded to Seattle halfway through the season, Worthy lost his starting spot and Scott struggled to find his shot. The Lakers barely made the playoffs and many doubted if Pfund would see another October as head coach in L.A.

Pfund, whose Lakers were at the Thomas & Mack Tuesday practicing for their exhibition game against the Clippers, remembers last year clearly.

"It wasn't ideal," Pfund said. "You just have to learn to flow with it. We were expected to do everything from contend for the Western Conference title to finish in sixth place. We came in fifth but developed some young players and made a scare in the playoffs."

The Lakers extended the eventual conference champion Phoenix Suns to five games in the first round.

This year's Laker squad is an entirely new model. Gone are the aging veterans with championship experience. In their place are young, talented players with something to prove.

If the Lakers hope to make their annual playoff appearance again next May, some new faces must carry the burden.

Pfund expects big things from three players in particular. Center Vlade Divac, forward Elden Campbell and second-year guard Anthony Peeler must produce if the Lakers hope to win this season.

"Vlade must really step it up," Pfund said. "He improved his numbers in every category except shooting percentage last season. We need that kind of play from him."

"He, along with Peeler and Elden, must really score for us," Pfund said.

Pfund is also excited about second-year guard Doug Christie.

"Doug is a guy who could be slam dunk champion in this league," Pfund said. "He's really an exciting player."

While the new faces may play larger roles, Pfund still wants some quality minutes from the lone remaining player from the Lakers' 1988 World Championship team.

"James Worthy will be a leader for us. He'll play a 'statesman' role this season," Pfund said.

Pfund's new-look Lakers open their season at home against Phoenix November 5.

THE REBEL YELL

In My Opinion...

World Series a boring display

BY SCOTT GULBRANSEN
STAFF WRITER

Spare the argument on how good the Toronto Blue Jays are. Sure, they arguably have the best talent in the major leagues, but they have no personality. Any team that has the demure Paul Molitor or Joe Carter as its spokesman is in a heap of publicity trouble. Never mind His Rickeyness. He's a circus without a tent.

But the Blue Jays are indeed talented. They boast one of the best offensive lineups in base-

ball. Their pitching is also solid even though Dave Stewart is enjoying his last hurrah and Jack Morris is just an expensive spectator. The Blue Jays are making a fatal mistake that caught up to another talented organization - the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The Dodgers also rented high-price free agents and look where it got them. Their organization has lost a lot of the luster once associated with it. "Dodger Blue" has a new meaning these days in Los Angeles despite possessing the past two rookies of the year in Eric Karros and Mike Piazza.

Next we have the other participant in the 1993 Boring Series, the Philadelphia Phillies. These guys pride themselves on how many times they can grab their collective crotches and spit in a single nine-inning game. The tough-guy image was funny for the first half of the season, but get real. There is only so many times one can stand to hear the story about John Kruk trading his number to Mitch Williams for two cases

of beer and a carton of cigarettes.

How about hearing over and over again about how Darren Daulton and Lenny Dykstra almost killed themselves crashing an \$80,000 dollar Mercedes because they were drunk? Or we might talk about Dykstra and his Jordan-like gambling problem. But no, the East-coast biased media would never do that.

Both acts have gotten old. The Blue Jays need to develop more of their own talent and the Phillies need a shave and bath. Please let this be the last year we have to deal with the likes of these two embarrassing teams.

To the Blue Jays, farm your own talent. To the Phillies, "phind" a new gimmick.



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