

Commentary

Familiarity Breeds Success

Flashback a few weeks to the winter break.

The UNLV women's basketball team was mired in an eight-game losing streak, getting beat up on by the likes of nationally-ranked teams such as George Washington and Western Kentucky.

Gone was that winning attitude that propelled the

Lady Rebels to the Big West Tournament's title the season before.

These Lady Rebels were getting beaten up, both physically and mentally.

The picture was bleak. Now fast forward to the present. The Lady Rebels are currently riding the crest of a three-game winning streak and showed renewed life in beating both San Jose State and perennial power Hawaii last weekend in the South Gym.

What gives? "We've been spending a lot of time just watching films and evaluating films and we've gone through our little review sessions where the players actually have sheets where they check off things they're doing right and things they're not doing," Lady Rebel coach Jim Bolla said. "We're just executing and I think we're getting more comfortable knowing where we are on the floor and things like that. It's just paying off."

Sophomore guard Angie White agreed, with the familiarity part.

"I think it was just a matter of time the whole year that we would start playing a lot better," she said. "We're finally starting to play as a team. We finally have our starting five (solidified) and we all know our roles. With time, we've been playing together and getting used to each other."

Bolla said the performance of his team's defense has also been a factor.

"Our defense is really complicated," he said. "It either works or it doesn't work. And lately, it's been working."

Against the Rainbow Wahine, the Lady Rebels were all over the place - White diving for loose balls, senior guard Gwynn Hobbs driving the lane fearlessly and senior center Tracy Titus battling in the post before leveling her

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In This Corner



PAUL GUTIERREZ



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LACY

Defense has played a major part in UNLV winning three straight.



Tracy Titus

Balanced Attack Gives Lady Rebels Sweep

Basketball: UNLV dumps SJSU, Hawaii

BY KEVIN C. LEWIS
STAFF WRITER

The UNLV women's basketball team has scrapped the black hole theory from its game plan.

Passes that once traveled one-way from the guards to the interior players are now being kicked back out to the perimeter to the open shooter.

The Lady Rebels' return to fundamental basketball allowed them to roll past San Jose State 75-69 Friday and to defeat Hawaii 72-61 Sunday at the South

Gym.

The victories extended UNLV's winning streak to three games.

Using a balanced scoring attack against SJSU, UNLV finished with four starters in double figures. Senior center Tracy Titus and sophomore guard Angie White each scored 18 while junior forward LeAnn Kazmer had 16 points. Senior guard Gwynn Hobbs finished with 10 points and 10 assists.

UNLV (5-9 overall, 4-3 in conference) led the Spartans virtually the entire game and denied the visitors, and key player sophomore Kari Steele, any uncontested shots.

"Our defense has really turned it on," Lady Rebel coach Jim Bolla said. "We were rotating well on

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UNLV Looking at Big West Championship

Tennis: Lady Rebels have sights set on conference title after sweeping UCR.

BY MICHAEL MELISSA
STAFF WRITER

The Lady Rebel tennis team looks good.

Simply put, there's nothing more to say. The story is done. But maybe there should be some supporting information to back up this claim. But where to start?

We could start with the coaching. Ola Malmqvist has grasped the reins of a once dismal women's tennis program and turned it into a team that finished second in the the Big West last season, behind UC Santa Barbara. Currently the Lady Rebels are ranked 39th in the nation, something the coach is very proud of.

Prior to Malmqvist's arrival, the tennis team had consecutive fifth place Big West finishes.

"We're on track with a good foundation," third-year coach

Malmqvist said. "If we keep going the way we're going we will be a good team."

But the team that is king, or more appropriately, queen of the heap, is not UNLV, but UCSB, Malmqvist said.

"There are probably a couple of other teams that are also really good in the division," Malmqvist said.

Another factor which makes this squad so good is the amount of talent they put on the court. It starts with sophomore Marianne Vallin. Ranked 24th in the nation, with a ITA national Rookie of the Year trophy taking up space in her cabinet, Vallin has become the anchor of the team.

Another player who needs to take charge is senior Shiera Stuart, Malmqvist said. With both Stuart and Vallin filling the roles as team leaders, this team should fit together good.

The Lady Rebels lost four seniors from last season's Big West runner-up squad - Suzi Agassi, Janelle Barr, Rachel Clark and Rebecca Markosian - which has created a minor gap in the experience level of the team.

But Malmqvist said: "I think we have more talent now, though."

With Stuart being UNLV's lone



Marianne Vallin

senior, there is also a strong supporting cast to follow. Malmqvist also said that juniors Jeannette Fylypaa and Ljiljana Kordic should help out.

Three new recruits will also bolster this talented staff. Imported from Sweden were two freshman, Marie Linusson and Lisa Annebro. Both of whom are praised by Malmqvist.

Astrid Copano, a junior college transfer, and freshman walk-on Cori Vargas will also

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Grgurich Returns to the Rebels

BY SEAN DEFRANK
STAFF WRITER

UNLV men's basketball coach Tim Grgurich returned to the team Wednesday, although his status for tonight's game against Pacific is questionable.

Grgurich, 52, downplayed his return, and instead tried to put the focus on the team.

"I'm not the most important thing right now," Grgurich said. "The team's the most important thing. The players are the most important thing."

While Grgurich will direct practices, he isn't sure how long he will remain at the helm, or in how big a capacity.

"(The doctors are) asking me to come back on a day-to-day basis and try it," Grgurich said. "They've told me not to participate in the games—just go day-to-day and see how I feel."

Senior forward Patrick Savoy said it was important to the team for Grgurich to return to the sideline.

"I think it's important for him to be on the bench," Savoy said. "He's the reason everybody's here."

Grgurich left the team on Jan. 6 for symptoms related to exhaustion.

"This has been very tough," Grgurich said. "This is something that's never happened to me before. It scared me."

Grgurich said he was tired about having to talk about himself.

"Everytime I come back, it's kind of embarrassing," Grgurich said. "I told the players that yesterday. I'm the one who broke down and I'm the one who has to face the consequences for whatever happened."

"I don't want to make this a circus. This is not a circus. This is a very sincere thing to me."

Grgurich has missed five of the Rebels' 12 games. Assistant Howie Landa has directed the team in Grgurich's absence.

UNLV is 3-2 without Gerg, 2-5 with him, although all games will count on Grgurich's record.

Grgurich said the players have handled the situation well.

"They came here to play," Grgurich said. "That's what the season's all about—players and teams. And it's not about individuals. And I'm not an individual. I've always been a team-type player."

With Grgurich's propensity for involving himself on the court during practices, senior Reggie Manuel said the team will tell him to take it easy.

"If I feel like he's going too hard, I'm going to question him," Manuel said.

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