

Commentary

Stepping down of a leader

It's unfortunate when a coach has to step down in a season where his squad is floundering.

Jim Bolla has headed up the Lady Rebels for 14 years, and will step down from what is undoubtedly the worst season in Lady Rebel history. The Lady Rebs are 3-17 for the year and Bolla has been stuck on win 299 for what seems like an eternity.

Not only have the Lady Rebels had trouble winning a game this season, they seem to have a problem with keeping players on the team. Currently, there are seven girls on the squad, a squad that started with 10 this year.

Elana Adams has missed most of the season with academic troubles and will have to return next season. Nakia Jones, who joined the team late, was suspended by Bolla a few weeks ago for lack of a work ethic, and Summer Peterson has been plagued all season with a case of bronchitis.

Maybe the strangest Lady Rebels departure was by Desiree Weimann, who, for no apparent reason, walked out on the team.

One reason for the latter incident may be dissension in the Lady Rebels ranks. For the better part of the season, the Lady Rebels have lacked an intensity during practice and when game time hits.

Rumors have floated around the Lady Rebel locker room like smoke in a casino, and it's been said that the players are having a hard time playing for Bolla, a problem that has plagued him for the past few seasons.

In 1993 he even sought out therapy to find a way to deal with his players and his divorce to one-time Lady Rebel coach, Sheila Strike.

His coaching methods have been scrutinized by players which also has led to the dissension of his past squads.

But players just aren't producing for Bolla like they did back in the glory days of the 1980's. In their most recent game against Long Beach St., Loreissa Randle and Bolla both acknowledged that the team just quit late in the game. That game saw the Lady Rebels hang close against the Lady 49ers defense,

Off the Bench

MICHAEL MELISSA

Rebels season hangs on battle with Pacific

Playoff hopes may be on the line in UNLV-UOP rematch

BY MICHAEL MELISSA
SPORTS EDITOR

It was back in 1971 when University of Pacific last beat UNLV in Las Vegas.

It happened once again on Jan. 8, with Pacific pulling off the unlikely win at the Thomas & Mack, stunning the Rebels, 88-68.

It was the Rebels' worst lost of the season and none of the players have forgotten it.

Tied 33-33 at the half, the Rebels were silenced in the second frame when Pacific's Adam Jacobsen went on a three-point shot binge, nailing just about every shot he took.

He finished with 28 and hit 8-of-12 from three-point land.

And that is something that UNLV will have to stop if they want to get their first road win of the season. The Pacific Tigers lead the Big West Conference in three-pointers per game with 9.2, and are averaging 13.3 over the last three games.

The Rebels, on the other hand, are shooting three's at a 35 percent clip and will rely primarily on "Sunshine" Smith to hit most of the outside shots.

Smith leads the team in percentage (.449) but trails Clayton Johnson in three pointers made (38 to 35).

Both teams have been running on different paths this season, with UNLV struggling most of the year and Pacific hovering at .500 for

the year.

The Tigers head into Thursday night's game with a 6-6 BWC record (10-10 overall), which is good enough for sixth place in the BWC. They have won their last three games, and four of their last six games.

That is the spot the Rebels are looking to take, however, since only the top six teams go to the conference tournament. UNLV is tied for last place with Cal State Fullerton at 4-8 in the conference (7-13 overall) and have dropped their last six of seven games.

What will make this road game even tougher for the Rebels is the fact that Pacific plays much better in front of their home crowd at the Alex G. Spanos Center. There, the Tigers have lost just twice at home this season, and for the Rebels to go in there 0-8 for the year will only add to UOP's confidence.

One thing that may help the Rebels is head coach Bill Bayno's recent penchant for benching. More or less a disciplinary measure, it seems to have worked for the Runnin' Rebels this season.

Warren Rosegreen missed the first few minutes of the UNR game on Jan. 29, but still managed to get 26 points and 10 rebounds in the home loss. He was benched at the start of the game for being late to a team meeting.

Another recent benching was freshman guard Ben Sanders, who sat out for ditching a class a week before the Long Beach State game. Smith also missed starting a game when he showed up late to a team meeting.

Then there was Johnson's remarks to UC Santa Barbara's Danee Prince, when Prince went hard through a pick Johnson had set up. Johnson said a few words to Prince, which got the Gauchos a technical foul shot while



PHOTO BY MIKE LACY

Runnin' Rebel, Warren Rosegreen and the rest of the squad will have to be in top form against Pacific.

down by seven.

Johnson watched the rest of that game from the bench. A game in which the Rebels self-destructed at about the same time the technical was called on Johnson. Wes Reed was called upon to fill the Rebels' leading scorer's spot and played a season-high 20 minutes. But it was obvious the Rebels needed Johnson's shot in there.

UNLV will have to stop the outside threat that Pacific has in order to stay with them and beat them up in Stockton, Calif.

Although the Rebels are the betting shooting team, hitting

the bucket 45 percent of the time compared to 42 percent by Pacific, the Rebels give that right back in free throw percentage (58 to 64) and turnovers (16.4 to 14.4) per game.

Rebounds will also be a key part in this game. Pacific is pulling down 37.3 per game while the Rebels are hauling down 36.4 a game.

The game will be shown on ESPN Cable 19 and will start at 9 p.m.

The Rebels will be back home at the T&M on Saturday to face Cal State Fullerton, and then host UC Irvine on Monday. Tip-off will be at 8:05 p.m. for both games.



Lady Rebels confused...

PHOTO BY HYUN-HO HAN
The Lady Rebels have been in a state of confusion for most of the season, with a 3-17 record going into this weekend's battles. They play UC Irvine on Friday and Cal State Fullerton in a weekend road trip to Southern California. With the news of head coach Jim Bolla's resignation, the Lady Rebs are looking to get him his 300th win by the end of the season. However, they are currently in the midst of an eight-game losing streak.

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