

EXCITING BASKETBALL COMING UP NEW COACH, NEW TEAM

by John Cairns
UPEI's basketball Panthers have their third coach in as many seasons. This time the new face at the top of the bench is that of Kevin Feighrey. With a new season about to open, the SUN sent a reporter to talk to him. What follows is an account of the resulting interview.



J.C. - Coach, quite a few new faces have come into the university since your playing days here. Perhaps first you'd tell us a little about your basketball background.

K.F. - That is an awfully long story. It starts in New York, comes up to Boston, then to the Island, next to Kingston, and finally back up here. Those are the places I've been, and it would take too long to go through each one here.

J.C. - For those of us who do remember your playing days here, what have you been doing since?

K.F. - I was doing my Masters in Kingston and I started off playing with the team there, but it was a little too much to do both, so I ended up just assisting, helping out the team at Queens.

J.C. - How does it feel coaching in the same place where you were recently so successful as a player?

K.F. - You mean, "Welcome Back, Kotter", huh? It makes it easy because I'm here. I know most of the people, and I know how things work. The adjustment time is a lot less, especially since it was so recently I was playing here, myself.

J.C. - Many people must be curious about the answer to this next question. I know I am. From what you've tasted so far, is coaching as much fun as playing?

K.F. - No, nothing compares with playing. I could say I don't know yet until the games come, but I'll know when they do come. Coaching is as close as you can come to playing, but it is just not the same thing. There are certain game situations where you can do things, make player substitutions and stuff like that, but once the game comes the big part of your job is really over. Your job is during the week in the gym, teaching. With a player it is just the opposite. He really works toward the games. That is where his peak is.

J.C. - There are a lot of new players on the team this year. Would you tell us about some of them?

K.F. - We had the clean sweep, twelve for twelve. Everybody is gone from last year and we have twelve new players. I just read in "Coaching Review" that if when you talk to the press you can't emphasize the general excellence of your team then you should talk about two or three players. That is what I've been doing with most everyone I've talked to.

Our big two are Larry McGee and John Gilford, our August acquisitions from this summer. They are two excellent players both from East Texas State which helps. They both played together before for a couple of years. I think they are the best two players we've had at the university ever. They are the ones most of our hope is riding on. Like the Yankees, we are going to be strong up the middle. Larry is the point guard and John

is the centre. It is going to be a different experience for them because they are not used to carrying a whole team, and they are going to have to do it this year. They'll play forty minutes a game hopefully, if they can last and not get in foul trouble.

The other guy we have is Jude Kelly from Hamilton, Ontario. He is a really good Canadian player. I think in a couple of years he will be on the national team for sure.

The fourth definite starter is our co-captain, Bill Fanning. He played with us two years ago when we went to the nationals. He has improved a lot. His shot is a lot better and he controls his quickness now. He used to have uncontrollable speed, but now he has sort of harnessed that. He used to be like a fire engine going down a city street. Now he has turned into an ambulance. He is a little more cautious, but he still has a loud siren when he comes down the court.

Those are the only definite starters right now. The fifth spot we're not too sure about. We will probably be doing a lot of shifting in and out.

J.C. - How are your squad's prospects for the coming year?

K.F. - The hard question! If this was any other year I'd say we would definitely be in the playoffs. I still think we are going to make them, but it is going to be a bit of a fight. That is mainly because most schools are into recruiting now. For instance, Mount A. and Dal have Americans playing for them this

year. In the past they usually didn't have. I just feel right now as if the immediate goal is to make the playoffs. Anyone has a chance once we get there. I know it is a cliché, but that is the way it is.

J.C. - Do you feel the guys are prepared for action?

K.F. - I think they are innocent. They will think they are prepared until they get in there. Right now the team is optimistic and working hard, but once they go against guys five inches taller and thirty or forty pounds heavier, the thing is that they don't get discouraged and that they hang in there.

It is a long season. I think the best thing about our team is that we have twelve decent guys who get along with each other. That is a big thing to say in this league. Most other schools bring in guys who have a chip on their shoulders and think they are better than what they are playing against. Teams end up having a lot of disagreement. I think we are going to have twelve steady guys who have fun together.

J.C. - What other teams will be at the Acadia Tip-Off Tournament, and how do our chances look?

K.F. - It will be ourselves, Acadia, Concordia, and Mount A. I don't really know what our chances are because I don't know who we're playing yet. They don't usually tell you until a few days before.

J.C. - Once the regular season gets underway, who do you expect to be your toughest competition?

K.F. - St. F.X., Acadia and St. Mary's will be the toughest. They just have an abundance of talent, so much that if a guy gets hurt or has a slump they don't be patient with him. They don't have to wait. They just put someone else in. That is how well off they are so they will be the best teams.

J.C. - With a new coach and a host of new players the Panthers certainly do have a changed look this season. All in all, though it should be a good year and definitely an exciting one. Local basketball fans have plenty to look forward to in the coming months.

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