

washington

Edwards-less Huskies big question mark

Departed center left a hole that Harshman hopes to fill

By NICK DAWSON
Of the Emerald

Can a team lose a great player like James Edwards and still be good enough to challenge for the Pac-8 basketball title?

This is the question on the minds of coaches, players and fans alike at the University of Washington, in Seattle.

For three consecutive years, the seven-foot Edwards had been a dominant figure in Husky basketball. He was all-conference in those three years, always being among the league leaders in rebounding, scoring and shooting percentage. As an example, Edwards finished third in scoring with a 20.9 average, hauled down an average of 10.4 rebounds per game, and shot at a .552 percentage last year.

Edwards is now doing his thing for the Los Angeles Lakers of the National Basketball Association. The Husky grad stepped in when Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was injured in the Laker's season opener, and he has responded by leading the team in early-season scoring.

Add to Edwards' loss the graduation of slick playmaking guard Chet Dorsey, and you have an even tougher task of rebuilding a potential league contender.

However, this is a problem that Marv Harshman has dealt with before, and one that he will probably see again before he calls it quits.

Harshman, the Husky head mentor, is one of those venerable old gentlemen that, it seems, has been coaching college basketball ever since the day the game was first invented.

In his hallowed career, Harshman teams have won a phenomenal 504 games, while losing 354. In his first six years at Washington, Harshman has led his squads to a 108-52 record, in-

cluding last year's 17-10 season record.

It's with three starters off of last year's team that Harshman and his assistants Denny Huston and Robert Johnson hope to build a nucleus for another in a long line of successful Husky basketball seasons.

The top returner off of the 1976-77 Washington team is senior Kim Stewart.

Stewart has been a mainstay in the Washington basketball fortunes since he first arrived on the Seattle campus his freshman year. Last year, Stewart was an all-Pac-8 honorable mention choice. He returns with impressive stats, including a season scoring average of 13.4 and 9.3 rebounds per game.

The Washington coaches are counting on a lot of leadership from the 6-7 forward this year. "We'll have to get a great deal of that (leadership) from Stewart, because he's the senior," said Huston, who came to Washington with Harshman when the latter left Washington State seven years ago.

The other two returning starters are junior guard Mike Neill, and sophomore forward Stan Walker.

Neill sported an 8.8 scoring average last year, and will be counted on to fill the shoes of the departed Dorsey, who was always near the league lead in assists the past three seasons.

Walker, a product of Beaverton's Sunset High, is possibly one of the purest shooters in the league. At 6-5, Walker is short for a forward, but this did not stop him from scoring an average of 8.7 points a game over the entire season.

Huston doesn't see Walker fulfilling a leadership role this year. "He's young, and you can't gain that quality without a good deal of

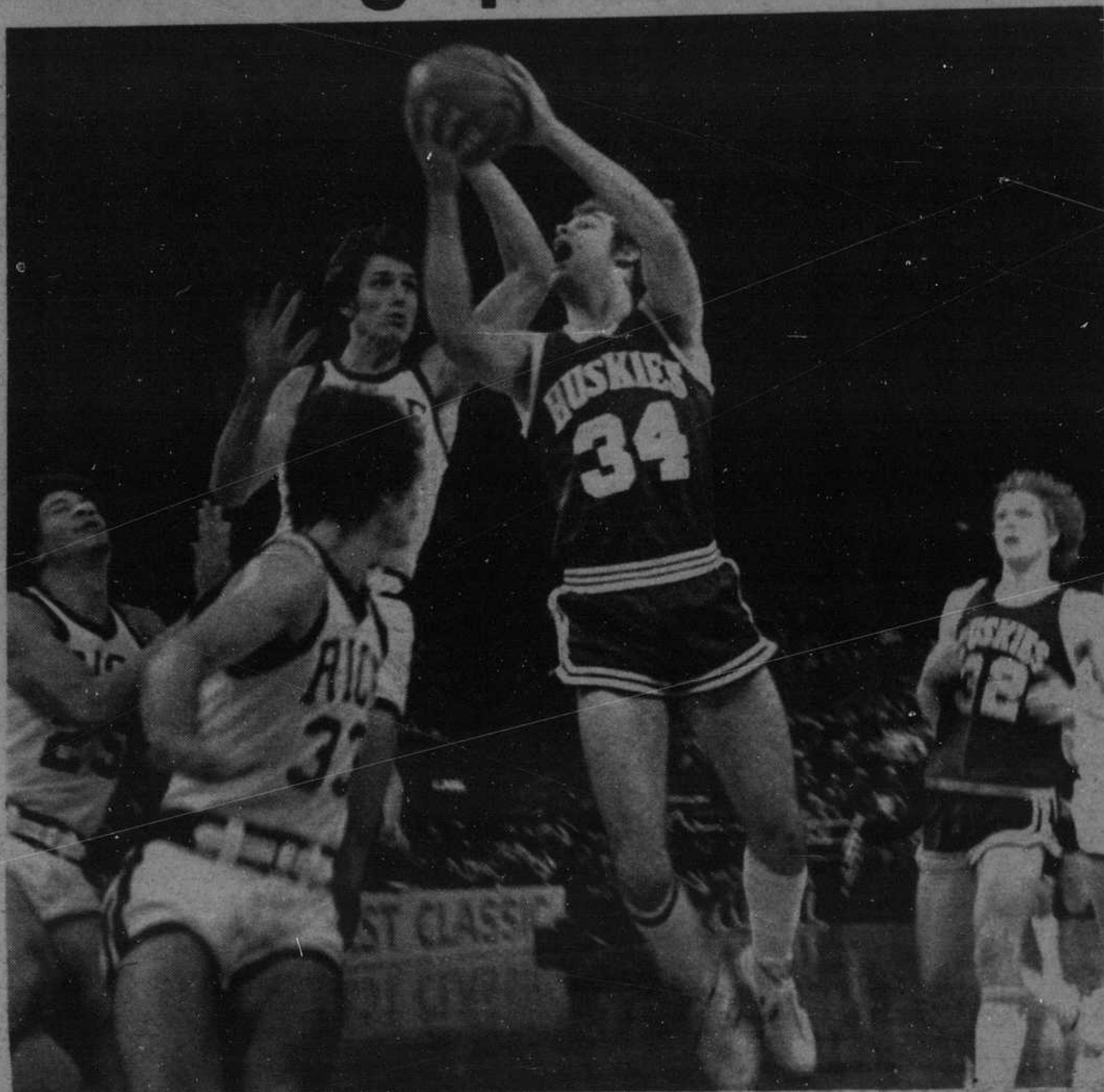


Photo by Neil Gruenfelder

Bob Fronk, another Sunset High (Portland) grad landed by Washington, drove for good success in the early season, and with teammate Stan Walker (32) should lead the young Huskies this year.

experience. He averaged around 11 (points) a game in league last year and that's pretty good for a freshman."

But of course, the key problem for Washington is finding someone that can at least partially fill the void left by the graduation of Edwards.

The Washington basketball staff believes they have found that

man in 6-8 sophomore James Woods. Huston said that Woods will be counted on primarily for his rebounding skills. "With the people we have surrounding him, he need not score," stated Huston.

Washington also dipped into the high school ranks for two very big centers. The more impressive of the two is probably 7-2 Petur Gudmundsson. He is a native of

Iceland who played his prep ball in the state of Washington for two years as an exchange student.

The other big man is 7-0 Ulrich Sledz. A West German native, Sledz was recruited to Washington by a coach of a small four year school in the Evergreen state.

"They have a ways to go," said Huston of the two new big men. He added that they were recruited primarily for their development potential.

Three other recruits should help Washington before the year is out. Two guards, Bob Fronk (another Sunset High product) and Don Vaughn, join Andra Griffin, a 6-7 forward who averaged 33.0 points a game in high school, in a strong freshman class.

The Huskies will be hoping to improve on their 8-6 Pac-8 record of last year, one that was good enough to net them a third place tie with Washington State and Oregon State.

Marv Harshman and the rest of the gang from Seattle have always managed to create quite a stir in the league. This year should prove no exception.

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