

College hoops' dream team guns for a national title

Former coach and broadcaster Al McGuire once said the best thing about freshmen is that they become sophomores. If that's true, U. of Michigan's basketball team has a lot to look forward to this season.

After all, with five rookies in the starting lineup a year ago, the Wolverines fell only one game short of an NCAA title. And with the addition of a full season's experience, the "Fab Five" — the quintet of Jalen Rose, Juwan Howard, Ray Jackson, Jimmy King and Chris Webber — have great expectations.

"Our goal is to not lose any games and win any championship that comes through our door," Howard said during a preseason workout.

If they could win on confidence alone, that wouldn't be a problem. Since the Fab Five, heralded as the greatest recruiting class ever, stepped on campus in Ann Arbor a year ago, they have made it clear that nothing less than a national title is acceptable.

"If I didn't think we could win a national championship, I wouldn't play," Webber says.

The players, after all, have backed up their lofty claims with results. No group of freshmen ever went as far as the Wolverines' starting five progressed last season in the NCAA tournament, turning many skeptics into believers in the process. They've had their share of difficulties with the attention a Final Four team attracts, though, including a question of NCAA violations last summer.

Five Michigan players received \$300 each for participating in a charity event during the summer. The amount of compensation was called excessive, and two Fab Five players were suspended. But after an investigation found no wrongdoing, all five Wolverines involved were reinstated. No one missed any games, but the stigma of the investigation has affected the team.

"It bothers me," says Michigan head coach Steve Fisher. "What happened didn't need to be made the national story that it was."

But the incident certainly did not have any impact on preseason rankings. The Wolverines earned the preseason No. 1 ranking from the Associated Press and the CNN/USA Today coaches' poll. Many say if Michigan does not make a repeat



The Michigan quintet has its sights and skills set for a national championship.

FAB FIVE

By Ryan Herrington, Michigan Daily, U. of Michigan

appearance in the Final Four, something only Duke U. and U. of Nevada, Las Vegas have done in the past seven years, the season will have been a disappointment.

A bigger disappointment, though, would be losing some of the players to the pros before their eligibility is up. Despite persistent rumors to the contrary, Webber and Rose have denied any intentions of going to the NBA early.

Many pro scouts say Webber is good enough to be the No. 1 pick in the NBA draft if he decided to leave Michigan after this season.

But after playing against the "Dream Team" prior to the Olympics last August

as a member of the eight-man U.S. Olympic Developmental Squad, Webber has some doubts.

"I learned a lot about myself and my game," the 6-foot-9-inch, 240-pound forward says. "I also learned I have a long way to go."

Rumors about a possible professional career also have surrounded Rose, with suggestions that he could leave Michigan this year. But Rose says he still has work to do for the team.

"My future is right here as a Michigan Wolverine," he says. "I plan on being a Wolverine for four years, even if we win the national championship." □

Sports Shorts



She shoots... she scores.

UMass women go to the mat to win back their sports

When administrators took away their U. of Massachusetts jerseys, the women's lacrosse, volleyball and tennis players threatened to take their university to court.

And now, three years after UMass dumped the three varsity teams, the women are wearing their jerseys again.

"We challenged the system and it worked — and we won," says Pam Levine, junior co-captain of the reinstated tennis team. "We totally shook up the system and UMass felt the heat. It's amazing."

Members of the three women's sports teams charged UMass athletic administrators with discrimination under Title IX, a federal mandate which calls for equal opportunity between men's and women's sports.

With the help of Patricia Flannery, a Boston lawyer who specializes in sex discrimination cases, the athletes reached a settlement with the university last fall.

"It's almost like a miracle," says Stacy Scheckner, a junior tennis player. "We deserve to have it back."

The university committed to a five-year plan to bring the school's funding of women's sports into compliance with Title IX. Under the agreement, the school must restore the team schedules and budgets without taking money from other women's sports, reimburse the students for legal costs and attorney's fees and resurface the tennis courts.

"You can't balance the budget by discriminating against the women," Flannery says. "The fact that they cut these teams as the athletic department increased money to the basketball and football teams made it so clear that this was discrimination."

Though players say administrators discouraged them from trying to reinstate the teams, Al Rufe, associate athletic director, says he's happy the women's teams are back. "I'm delighted," Rufe says. "We want to provide good programs, and everyone's pleased."

Levine says the women's teams simply got what they deserved.

"We're being treated like a varsity team and not a burden to the athletic department." ■ Michelle Bayliss, Massachusetts Daily Collegian, U. of Massachusetts