



Steve Morton, girls' varsity head basketball coach, gives the Illinois Valley Cougars a pep talk during Friday's (Dec. 5) practice. The Lady Cougars hope experience pays off as they host the I.V. Holiday Tournament Friday and Saturday, Dec. 12-13.

Lady Cougars have experience to spare

Team speed is key to a bid for Skyline Conference championship

By STEVE FAIRCHILD
Staff Writer

“Are you experienced?” Jimmy Hendrix’s famous question can easily be answered by Illinois Valley’s girls basketball team with a resounding “Yes.”

With four seniors, three juniors, three sophomores and a freshman sprinkled in for good luck, the Cougars have a recipe for a successful season.

The Cougars were 5-18 overall last year, 4-10 in the Skyline Conference. They finished in sixth place in Skyline, something coach Steven Morton said he can improve on this year.

“We have very little height but we have a lot of speed,” Morton said. “We’re probably the shortest team in the Skyline but we’re also the fastest. We’ll be a little quicker than they think.”

Cougars’ returning senior Kim Hamilton is going to be a conference leader and a powerful player underneath the rim this year.

“Kim Hamilton will probably be our biggest threat because of her size and strength,” Morton said. “Pound for pound she is probably the strongest girl on the team.”

Returning varsity player Kelsi Snook, a 5-foot-9 senior, is also going to be another big threat inside the paint. Sophomore Sarah Houston (5-9) and junior returning varsity player Serena Barry (5-9) also will play down low.

“I just have more depth all around than I have ever had,” Morton said.

Other returning varsity players include Meghan Jackson (5-2, guard),

Lacey Madden (5-9, guard), Erika Riley (5-8, guard), Kirsten Wood (5-5, guard), Emily Dudley (5-2, guard).

Senior Nicole Hendrickson (5-7, guard) will see her first season on the varsity team along with Sheena Cole, (5-7 guard/post), the team’s sole var-

North Valley, Phoenix and Henley will most likely battle for the top three spots in the Skyline Conference, Morton said. The top five teams will compete in conference playoffs at the end of the season.

“Our goal is to finish in the league playoffs. We

Cougars boys and girls host holiday hoops tournament

Illinois Valley High School’s boys and girls varsity basketball teams will host the annual I.V. Holiday Tournament Friday and Saturday, Dec. 12 and 13. There will be four girls teams and four boys teams competing. Game times are as follows:

Friday, Dec. 12

2 p.m. - Glide girls vs. Gold Beach girls
4 p.m. - Glide boys vs. Cascade Christian boys
6 p.m. - Cascade Christian girls vs. IVHS girls
7:30 p.m. - Gold Beach boys vs. IVHS boys

Saturday, Dec. 13

2 p.m. - Loser of game 1 and game 3
4 p.m. - Loser of game 2 and game 4

Championship games

6 p.m. - Winner of game 1 and game 3
7:30 p.m. - Winner of game 2 and game 4

sity freshman.

Look for Coach Morton to play an up-tempo game from the tip-off.

“My philosophy is to push it and try to get early stuff,” Morton said. “If we don’t get points early, we take our time.”

“Our big thing this year is to make sure we execute in the half court. We get the ball up court real well. We just have to make sure we execute.”

On defense, the Cougars have the speed and experience to run a man-to-man defense.

“Good teams run multiple defenses, and we have never done that,” Morton said. “I never feel like we’ve had that ability until this year.”

want to finish fourth,” he said. “Obviously we would love to win Skyline but that’s our realistic goal.”

Andi Eichmann, Morton’s new assistant coach - who played varsity basketball for the Cougars last year -- brings even more experience to the team.

“He (Eichmann) is excited to be here. He is real enthusiastic and is going to add a lot with his knowledge of basketball,” Morton said. “He’s probably the most knowledgeable assistant I’ve had.”

The Cougars played their first home game against St. Mary’s on Tuesday, Dec. 9 and will host the I.V. Holiday Tournament Friday and Saturday, Dec. 12 and 13.

IVHS boys bring fresh faces, strong outside shooting to holiday tourney

By STEVE FAIRCHILD
Staff Writer

Fresh faces, a solid core of guards and the ability to hit outside shots will give Illinois Valley’s boys varsity basketball team a new outlook this year.

“I’m hoping that we’ll be kind of fast,” said second-year head coach Derek Brimhall. “We’re not too big, but we’re athletic. Our outside shooting will help us win a few games.”

Last year the Cougars finished with an overall record of 12-13 and finished fifth in the Skyline Conference. They lost in overtime in the conference playoffs to Hidden Valley.

Two Cougars will bring leadership to the fresh-faced group. Junior Jon Paul (5-foot-10) and senior Jon Riley (5-11) each have varsity game experience.

Mike Bertsch, a 6-foot-4 senior and transfer student from Kelso, Wash., played junior varsity last year and is expected to be a key rebounder who Brimhall hopes will contribute 10-points per game.

Other potential starters include: Matt Gaw (5-9) a junior guard who transferred from Encina; senior Damon Hubbs (5-10, guard) who was battling a cold last week but is expected to do good things; and sophomore Kalen Snook (6-4) will see a lot of time on the floor at center.

Filling out the rest of the crew are junior James Gerhardt (5-7, guard), and sophomores John LeClair (5-8, guard), Dylan Halvorsen (6-2, forward) and Jessea Mucha (6-2, forward).

“Our new guys have to do a lot of simple things and do them right,” said Brimhall. “Hopefully we’ll get them all to contribute and get some wins.”

Don’t expect too many changes in the Cougars’ fundamental style of game play.

“We’ll have most of the same (game plans) as last year with a few gimmicks here and there,” Brimhall said. “We’ll use the same basic philosophy of tough defense, rebounding and a solid fundamental offense.”

Illinois Valley’s goal will be to finish in the top five in the Skyline Conference and to earn a trip to conference playoffs.

The Cougars will have their toughest games against Henley, Mazama and Phoenix.

“We’re not expected to do much in conference,” Brimhall said. “But I would like to end up with a winning record.”

Jesse Tree, Jeff Win-

ters and Brian Paul will fill in the rest of the coaching staff as assistants and coaches of the junior varsity and freshman teams.

Brimhall added that he learned a lot during his rookie coaching year last season.

“I learn stuff everyday,” he said. “I’ll be more mature dealing with referees and players and that will help the attitude of the entire program.”

The Cougars opened the season at the Gold Beach Tournament Dec. 5 and will travel to Eagle Point Wednesday, Dec. 10.

The Cougars will have a chance to defend their title on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 12-13, as they host the Holiday Tournament against Gold Beach, Glide and Cascade Christian.

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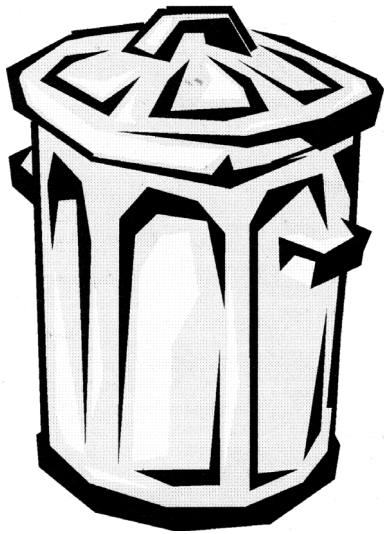
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