

Cole from 1B

was ready for it.”

Cole was a point guard, and an aggressive one at that.

“Too aggressive, probably,” she laughed. “I fouled out a lot. I just wanted the ball. I got a lot of fouls because I would drive hard. Actually, I got my defenders to get a lot more fouls than I ended up getting. They called it a block when it was a charge, when it probably should have been a charge. But that was alright.”

Cole was playing during the last of the Lady Vik's winning years between 2011 and 2013. In her first year, they made the playoffs.

“We played Hidden Valley at home, and it was probably the best game I'd ever been involved with,” she recalled. “We were down by 2 with 10 seconds left. So, we ended up barely getting the layup in and went into overtime. And then we ended up pulling off a win, and it was at home. It was insane. Our student section was just so lively, it was literally one of the best games I've ever been in.”

The next game, against Madris, was a blowout against Siuslaw. But that in no way spoiled her love of the game.

“Second year, we came in, we had almost the

same amount of girls. We still had a tall post. They got us into the playoffs that second year. I don't remember who we played, but we were able to make the playoffs two years in a

when you were brought up three years with different philosophies, and then having everything change up — that was rough for me. That was the year things started going downhill for

There was more potential for the girls to be better than what they were playing. It was hard for me to watch it because there was so much that could have been done to get the

“Rebuilding is ground zero, and I wouldn't say we're there.”

—Ashlee Cole, new SHS girls basketball coach

row. It was awesome.”

For Cole, the success of the first two years had a lot to do with coach Aaron McNeil.

“He is still someone I look up to as a coach,” she said. “A lot of his philosophies intermingle with my philosophies. Growing up with a good coach does a lot for a player. He just really cared for the girls in general. Even if it wasn't in practice. Even now, I can go to him and say, ‘Can you help me with this?’ Whatever it is, he'll drop what he's doing and help me. Same thing with Sean O'Mara.”

In Cole's senior year, McNeil retired and the mood on the team shifted.

“It was rough for me because I had the same coach for three years,” Cole recalled. “I was expecting to have McNeil for four years. But then having someone else come in with different philosophies,

Siuslaw basketball, just wins and losses. That was a hard year because, even though we had more wins than losses overall, it was still hard keeping their winning mindset. Even trying to keep *my* winning mindset was hard.”

By the end of the year, the team only pulled off three wins in league play. But Cole viewed her time as successful.

“The last year was still fun,” she said. “It was always fun. But senior night, knowing that was going to be the last time I was going to step on that court as a player — that was hard.”

She would come back to watch a few games but found that experience to be even harder.

“I would stand on the side of the bleachers and I would pace the whole time,” she said. “I couldn't stand to watch it anymore. I saw more potential in the girls than what was going on.

potential out of those girls. But it didn't happen.”

She wasn't a backbench coach, opting to keep her opinions to herself.

“But the potential was out there. You have to get it out of the girls as a coach,” said Cole.

So, when the position opened, she applied, the vowing to get build on the potential that she knows the team has.

Despite the losses, Cole doesn't view the upcoming season as a rebuilding year.

“Rebuilding is ground zero, and I wouldn't say we're there,” she explained. “With rebuilding, the girls have

no mindset of how to play basketball and may not really want to play. Basically, the sport's ruined for them.”

But as Cole wraps up her first week of practices, she said that's far from where the team is at.

“All the girls were hyped up, excited and cheering,” she said. “They all want to be there. They all still want to play. They have a drive to play.”

As for what the team worked on in the first week, it was back to the basics.

“Yesterday, they worked on passing, just straight chest passing,” said Cole. “Today, it's dribbling. Tomorrow, layups. Everybody right now is on ground level so we can start fresh. Until I get to the point where I need to make a JV and varsity, I'll start putting together some plays and seeing what will work best. I'm going to wait and see what plays will work best with the girls I have.”

And she's also working on coaxing out the aggressiveness that she had when she played.

“They are aggressive,” she said with a smile. “A few of them have had some foul trouble, they need to get a little better at that. But just seeing them aggressive with scrimmaging in practice is really great to see.”

But the team isn't aggressive with each other on a personal level, which really gives Cole hope.

“The upperclassmen are really pushing the freshmen, getting them involved,” she said. “They're not isolating themselves with the girls

they know and leaving the freshmen behind.

“They're actually involving the freshmen with the drills.”

And at the same time, Cole is building a relationship with the team.

“I want to build better relationships than what my coach my senior year did,” she said. “He came in the first day of practice and said ‘This is how it is, this is what I'm going to do.’ I want to make it fun, still. That's my main goal this year.”

She stresses this because she believes having fun is what leads to winning games. Not that Cole is promising a spot in the playoffs.

“That's not my philosophy,” she said. “Winning is important, but right now the girls need to have fun in the game. We're still going to focus on winning, but having fun is the main mindset.”

And Cole doesn't think that will be a difficult goal to accomplish.

“I care about the girls. And with these girls, it's hard not to. We got girls dancing in practice. They make it fun. To start that way on the first practice is a good sign.

“They're making it fun for themselves, and I'm going to build on that.”

Siuslaw will kick off the season Dec. 4, when it hosts Newport in a non-league opener beginning at 5:45 p.m.

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