

Girls' basketball team adjusts to new coach

After an underwhelming previous season, the Highlanders look to rebuild after making several new improvements



Lexi Sapp/The Bagpiper

SOPHOMORE BELLA BARNEY shoots a free throw during girls' basketball practice on Wednesday, Nov. 28.

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The monotonous sound of a basketball hitting the floor rings in the gym. Fans are on their feet and shouting but senior Grace Hale only hears her new head coach Randy Gianfagna calling out a play.

"It's really great working with the girls," said coach Gianfagna. "I've been working with the senior bunch since they were in seventh grade and I've followed them up because my daughter plays."

Gianfagna was an assistant coach last year, so his face was a familiar one in the gym. Many of the girls have known Gianfagna for years and have played for him before.

"He's been around all four years but him taking the head role has been different but very beneficial," said Hale. "He tells us what we're doing wrong and helps us fix it instead of just punishing us for doing it wrong."

One player has a different relationship with Gianfagna, being that she is his daughter. Of course, the dynamic is a little different, but they are both striving for the same common goal.

"Having my dad as coach sometimes can be rough because I get yelled at a lot more than others do, but we both are doing something we love and I wouldn't want any other coach," said senior Sophia Gianfagna.

The new season has brought on a new coach, which results in new techniques and strategies. With a diverse range of coaching, the girls are learning a lot about the game.

"We have a coach that is more for defense and our other coach has been working more with offense," said junior Lindsey Dorsch. "So now we have two different aspects of the game through both of our coaches and I think it's teaching us more about the game."

Last year, the team struggled in

the conference, but this year they anticipate to have a much better outcome considering the number of improvements and changes made to the program. They have trained all offseason and will continue to do so into the year to be in their prime come sectional time.

"I think we are going to improve a lot and I think we will have a winning season," said sophomore Grace Suer. "This year we actually have more than six people, so we'll have a bench and hopefully we won't be injured."

Many of the players faced injuries last year which deeply complicated the season. They have been training with strength and conditioning coach Donnie Gumble and participating in the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) Play It Safe program, which all of FC athletics have begun to add into their training to prevent specifically knee and lower body injuries.

"We've been working with coach Gumble to get rid of some of the injuries we had last year," said coach Gianfagna. "We are working to just try and keep everybody healthy."

The team is fairly young, consisting of only five upperclassmen as opposed to the seven previous years. Traditionally, the juniors from last year have stepped up to fill the senior positions.

"Out of all four years, this year for sure is when we have been the closest," said Hale. "This year I just want to involve everyone and I want everyone to be able to talk to each other."

The seniors want to help the younger kids and develop their game as a team. It is crucial that they integrate the freshmen to build on their program. Every year, a new wave of freshmen come and they must make the transition from middle school to high school. The upperclassmen have been trying to make the transition as smooth as possible.

"We are trying to lead by helping bring the freshmen into the team

and also by positive criticism when someone messes up or forgets what to do," said Sophia Gianfagna. "I'm hoping we have less injuries and more team bonding throughout this year."

Leading by example is a great way to teach. Younger players look up to the seniors' model behavior to strengthen their own game.

"They (seniors) are really good and very sweet and they just know the game really well, and I think they will be good for us this season," said Dorsch. "My favorite part of the season is just being with the team. All the girls are so close and and we laugh a lot."

Each player must know how the others play and communicate with one another to be successful. The five girls on the court have to work together to become the best team they can be.

"Sometimes growth happens in small increments and you don't see it every day, but hopefully by the end of

the year you'll see it especially because we are a young team," said coach Gianfagna.

Despite the gritty games and intense practices, the girls always manage to enjoy themselves. Sports are good for

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Grace Suer
sophomore

physical health but there is also a social side when people form teams.

"He (coach Gianfagna) makes it really fun and he uses his teaching skills to help us. It's a big team sport and you have to work together," said Suer. "I like our new coach and the team a lot.

It's a positive environment it's great being able to have fun and compete."

The girls have been preparing to be in the best physical condition they can be to bring home more wins. Even if a team has the best technique and perfect form, the team that is in better shape will prevail.

"One of the things we have done is to try and get everyone into the weight room," said coach Gianfagna. "We are trying to get as many girls into advanced PE and then we are lifting two days a week for the girls that are not in APC and we've been trying to get as much as we can during our practices."

The girls' basketball team anticipates a very positive and successful season. The girls are looking forward to seeing how they will improve considering the large number of changes and improvements made in the past year.

"He's really pushed us to be our best," said Dorsch. "In a way, it's given me more determination to push through the tough times and do my best and be my best and encourage the team.

SCORECARD

Editor's Note: All scores and records are as of the morning of Tuesday, Dec. 3.

BOYS' BASKETBALL (6-0)

Last game- Win (69-43) vs. Castle
Next game- Tonight vs. New Albany

GIRLS' BASKETBALL (2-6)

Last game- Loss (35-21) @
Jeffersonville
Next game- Tomorrow vs. North
Harrison

BOYS' SWIMMING & DIVING (1-0)

Last meet- Win @ Franklin Hall of
Fame Meet
Next meet- Tomorrow @ Columbus
North Relays

GIRLS' SWIMMING & DIVING (2-0)

Last meet- Win @ Franklin Hall of
Fame Meet
Next meet- Tomorrow @ Columbus
North Relays

WRESTLING

Last meet- HHC Duals @ Jeffersonville
High School
Next meet- Triacoff Invitational @
Calumet High School tomorrow

BOWLING

Last match- Win vs. Charlestown @
Blackiston Bowl
Next match- Wednesday @ Blackiston
Bowl

Q&A with strength and conditioning coach Donnie Gumble

Bagpiper: How are you training the girls' basketball team this year?

Donnie Gumble: "We have set a foundation of movement doing squat, hinge, upper body, push pulls. They have progressed to more of a power based program utilizing Olympic weightlifting variations."

BP: How are they responding to your coaching?

DG: "They've been one of my favorite groups to work with just because of their work ethic and their respect and attentiveness. They seem to listen and respond to coaching cues and instruction."

BP: What are you expecting from the team this season?

DG: "Aside from wins, I'd like to see the girls look physically more dominating than other schools and compete and keep up with those better teams throughout the state. My expectations are wins, sectional championships, and a deep run in the playoffs."