



e-Zine
December 2005

by Mel Greenberg

INSIDE SCOOP™ ... College Hoops, Lifestyle Tensions, TV Viewing, Eyes on the Strips and WNBA Off-Season Moves.

Remember when **New Mexico** was an endangered species a few years back as a women's basketball program?

Interesting what happens when cooler heads prevail as the saying goes.

It's even more fascinating when heads who have commitments to progress take charge.

LOBO LESSONS

The Lobos have become a credible program. Now, they've raised their level up a few notches.

Coach **Don Flanagan's** team pulled one of the season's early shockers by beating **Texas**, 76-68 at Texas. That effort enabled New Mexico to pick up where the Lobos debuted last season in the national rankings.

Apparently, the team wants more.

On Wednesday night, No. 21 Lobos shocked No. 10 **Minnesota**, 62-44, after the Gophers had beaten them by 30 points a year ago.

According to the Associated Press report of the game, guard **Katie Montgomery** and her team watched the film of that setback and figured out what they needed to do with an intense, smothering defense, to reverse the outcome.

New Mexico's success story is similar to **Oklahoma**, which also had once been targeted for extinction. The Sooners since went on to become a viable product and after **Sherri Coale** became coach, the team jumped five levels and became the national runners-up in 2002 to the unbeaten **Connecticut** team in a title game that went to the wire.

This time around, Oklahoma is on the upswing again after going through several rebuilding seasons.

The Sooners advanced to the Preseason NIT title game at the University of Connecticut, and on Tuesday night, beat **TCU** in Norman, 77-63.

The story has been 6-foot-4 freshman **Courtney Paris**, who had 22 points and 17 rebounds.

TOUGH TERRAPINS

Surprising to some, but not to us, is the early season success of **Maryland**, which is back in the Top 10 after a near upset of Tennessee.

The Terrapins are loaded with the likes of **Shay Doron**, **Laura Harper**, and **Crystal Langhorne**. Young and deep, Maryland adds to the mix of what should be a wild race in the Atlantic Coast Conference involving **Duke** and **North Carolina**. **Virginia** might be heard from, also, before the competition concludes.

In Philadelphia, **Temple** has continued its success of last season with an early triumph of **Oregon's** tournament made possible by a win over the host Ducks in what has been considered a hostile arena over the years in the Northwest.

Coach **Dawn Staley's** squad begins to get more tested, Saturday, when **Florida** visits. The Owls lost to coach **Carolyn Peck's** team a year ago and since have won 30 straight regular season games around a 1-1 performance in the NCAA tournament.

Later this month, **Georgia** visits along with **Tennessee** besides the local Big Five battle with **Villanova**, which has also raised some eyebrows with a win over **Mississippi** in **Rhode Island's** tournament.

But the bigger story in the City of Brotherly Love is the resurgence of **St. Joseph's**, which is 4-0 after suffering through a 7-23 misery a year ago due to graduations and injuries. A promising freshman class and a healthy Hawks squad has helped the turnaround.

"I don't even look at last year's films," St. Joseph's coach **Cindy Griffin** said of her team preparation for opponents. "We're so different now and everything I would see would only be negative."

Meanwhile, before teams slip into final exams, some high powered clashes are just ahead.

Thursday night, **Texas** visits **Tennessee** and the game will air on ESPN2. In a game between conference heavyweights, **George Washington** will be at **Villanova**.

RECOMMENDED TV VIEWING

On Sunday, the Deuce continues with an intriguing match-up of **Texas Tech** at **Penn State**, only in that both programs have dropped from the high levels of the national elite.

There is also the backdrop, sure to be touched by the network, that WNBA All-Star **Sheryl Swoopes**, who recently announced she is gay, once played for the Red Raiders, and Penn State **Rene Portland** has become involved in controversy by being accused by a former player of being kicked-off the team because of being perceived as a lesbian.

On Monday night, another ESPN2 telecast has **North Carolina** visiting **Connecticut** in the Jimmy V Women's Basketball Classic.

LSU visits **Ohio State**, also on ESPN2, on Dec. 15

We'll make a special appearance later this month as soon as we get the overall TV schedule including other network games that ESPN and the NCAA compiles.

EYES ON THE STRIPES

In a move to improve officiating in the women's collegiate game, a facet that has consistently been considered a detriment to progress, **Mary Struckhoff** has been named NCAA National Coordinator of Women's Basketball Officiating.

Struckhoff, according to the NCAA release, has served as assistant director of the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) since 1999, after three years as an assistant executive at the Illinois High School Association (IHSA).

As assistant director of the NFHS, Struckhoff serves as editor and national rules interpreter for basketball and softball; staff liaison for the NFHS Officials Association; coordinator of the NFHS Officials Education Program and workshop organization for the NFHS summer meeting and National Athletic Administrators' Conference.

"Mary is a knowledgeable and committed educator who has balanced experience in education, officiating and administration," said **Sue Donohoe**, vice-president for Division I Women's Basketball.

"Her core values align with the NCAA's strategic plan and the vision for women's basketball officiating. She is sure to bring women's basketball officiating to a new level."

Struckhoff replaces **Marcy Weston**, who is retiring from the position.

WNBA NEWS

Well, it's down time, but the pro world continues to ripple.

On Monday, the board of governors will meet to vote some proposed changes in the look of WNBA competition next season. One item up for a vote is a switch from 20-minute halves to quarters (Remember the ABL?). Another is reducing the shot clock from 30 seconds to 24.

The new **Chicago Sky** pulled a rabbit out of the hat with the news that **Stacey Dales Schuman** has come out of retirement, although

she'll continue with her ESPN broadcasting duties.

Other additions in the expansion draft by the Sky include former Rutgers star **Chelsea Newton**, one of the top rookies, who helped the Sacramento Monarchs to their first title.

Guards **Keisha Brown** (Houston) and **Elaine Powell** (Detroit) were also picked off rosters, and power forward **Brooke Wyckoff** was a post player choice off the runner-up Connecticut Sun among the 13 selections.

That's it for now, but we'll return sooner as the news warrants.

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