

Jayhawks prepared this year

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. (AP) — Kansas only has one player in its regular rotation that saw significant playing time in last year's NCAA tournament.

Normally, that would be viewed as a bad thing. Not for the Jayhawks. Last year, senior-laden Kansas was stunned by 14th-seeded Bucknell in the first round. But reserve Jeff Hawkins is the only regular to see more than 10 minutes in the "Bucknell Bummer," as they call it in Kansas.

"I think that's good," freshman guard Mario Chalmers said. "A lot of people on the team now really didn't play on that team, so it's not on our minds right now. We're not even thinking about that game."

As if they needed any reminder, the Jayhawks (25-7), the fourth seed in the Oakland Regional, face another BU in the first round this year — 13th-seeded Bradley (20-10).

At first blush, the two teams couldn't be more different.

Kansas has the storied pedigree, with 17 straight NCAA tournament appearances and 35 trips overall.

Located in Peoria, Ill., Bradley is making its eighth NCAA tourney appearance, but the first since 1996. And the Braves haven't won a tournament game since they beat 10th-seeded UTEP in 1986.

But wipe away all that history, and some glaring similarities emerge. Both teams are young,

started the season off poorly only to put everything together at the most important time of year.

"They've been winning a lot lately and are coming into this real hot, too," said Patrick O'Bryant, Bradley's 7-foot center. "It's pretty much just an us-against-ourselves kind of game."

After their fourth loss in five games, 80-76 to Wichita State on Jan. 11, the Braves were 2-4 in the Missouri Valley Conference and going nowhere.

"I don't know who that team was coming out of the gates at home," said Marcellus Sommerville, the Braves' leading scorer at 15.4 points a game. "After the game we had a team meeting, and that's when we decided we wanted to turn it around."

Coach Jim Les shuffled the starting lineup, inserting juniors J.J. Tauai and Zach Andrews and benching Sommerville. His players got the message.

Sommerville returned as a starter a few games later, and the Braves have won seven of their last eight games to get an at-large bid.

With 10 underclassmen on their team, Kansas was reeling after a 70-67 loss to St. Joseph's dropped them to 5-4.

Ever since Self moved Russell Robinson to point guard and inserted freshman Julian Wright into the starting lineup, the Jayhawks

have been rolling.

Despite starting three freshmen and two sophomores, the Jayhawks have won 15 of their last 16 games, including an easy 80-68 win over Texas in the Big 12 tournament championship.

"We have such a young team," sophomore Sasha Kaun said. "At the beginning, it was just getting everything together. Mario, Brandon (Rush) and Julian's (progression) have absolutely surprised me with how they were playing then to how they're playing now."

How young are the Jayhawks? Rush, the Big 12 freshman of the year this season, is the team's active scoring leader with 435 career points.

Last season's team had three players — Keith Langford, Wayne Simien and Aaron Miles — with at least 1,000 career points.

"If you look at the roster, it says they're awfully young," Les said. "Watching the tapes I've seen, they're not playing young. They have finished strong, like we have."

Maybe having all those freshmen really can be an advantage.

How can they worry about a "Bradley Bummer" if they weren't around for the "Bucknell Bummer?"

"We're very young and some of the guys don't know any better about what's going on," Kaun said. "I think we're going to do great."

Colby wrestlers headed for Abilene

The lineups for the 2006 Senior Classic dual in Abilene have been finalized.

Wrestlers from Colby, Hoxie and Norton will participate in the all-star event at 3 p.m. Sunday at Abilene High School.

Colby High School Eagles Cole Garcia and Taylor Finley will be wrestling at the dual.

The dual will have a "big school"

versus "small school" team format. Small schools are the 4A, 3A, 2A and 1A schools against 6A and 5A schools.

Admission is \$4 adults, \$2 students, children under 5 in free.

The event will also be Web cast at www.kqnk.com

Also recognized will be the 11 new Kansas state record holders.

The following matchups include

wrestlers from northwest Kansas.

140 lbs.: Cole Garcia, Colby (4A) vs. Brett Hoshaw, Manhattan (6A),

145 lbs.: Taylor Finley, Colby (4A) vs. Ryan McKoon, Paola (5A)

119 lbs.: Clay Madden, Norton (321A), 4x champion vs. Kenneth Livengood, Blue Valley N. (6A)

152 lbs.: Luke Pfannenstiel, Norton (321A) vs. David Loos, Bishop Carroll (5A)

160 lbs.: Lance Roe, Norton (321A) vs. Frank Jonas, Kapaun (5A)

215 lbs.: Tim Erwin, Hoxie (321A) vs. Justin Naccarato, Valley Center (5A), t

Tyler Baker of Hoxie will be recognized for breaking three state record:

CAREER-TEAM POINTS
Tyler Baker, Hoxie, 1006.5
SEASON-BEST RECORD
Tyler Baker, Hoxie, 45-0
SEASON-TEAM POINTS
Tyler Baker, Hoxie, 295

Wichita Shockers win first round tourney game

GREENSBORO, N.C. (AP) — Sean Ogirri threw down a slam in transition, then ran by the Wichita State fans with his arms extended as if to announce, "Here I am."

He might as well have been talking for the Missouri Valley Conference.

Ogirri had 23 points and hit six 3-pointers to lead Wichita State past Seton Hall from the vaunted Big East 86-66 Thursday in the first round of the Washington Regional, giving the mid-major conference an impressive debut after hearing plenty of criticism about its haul of four NCAA tournament bids.

"We're really proud of what we've done, and we weren't going to let a bunch of people around the country who haven't seen us make us feel any different," Wichita State coach Mark Turgeon said of the conference. "We know what we have and it's pretty special."

Paul Miller scored 15 points for the seventh-seeded Shockers (25-8), who advanced to face Tennessee in Saturday's second round. It was Wichita State's first NCAA win since reaching a regional final in 1981, and its first tournament game since an 83-62 first-round loss to DePaul in 1988.

The win also provided the MVC a quick bit of vindication after the league raised eyebrows with four bids, the same as the Atlantic Coast, Big 12 and Pac-10 conferences. The criticism included CBS analyst

Billy Packer grilling selection committee chairman Craig Littlepage over the selections, which clearly bothered Turgeon.

The coach insisted his team — which won the regular-season title but lost in the league tournament — belonged in the NCAA tournament. He said the Shockers were eager to play a Big East school.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Colby Community College head womens basketball coach Tom Stephens, right, talked with Lady Trojan Rita Kollo during a recent home game.

Stephens named coach of the year

Matt Dickson

Colby Community College

Colby Community College women's basketball coach Tom Stephens was selected by his peers as the Jayhawk Conference Western Division Coach of the Year.

Stephens, in his ninth season as head coach at CCC, finished the season with a 31-3 record and a Region VI championship Tuesday at the tournament in Wichita. The victory sends Colby to the 16-team NJCAA Women's Championship that starts Tuesday at the Bicentennial Center in Salina.

Stephens' teams have emerged as one of the powerhouse teams in the Jayhawk West Conference. The Lady Trojans have posted three seasons in a row with at least 25 wins.

Stephens is very familiar with western Kansas. He was born in Colby and grew up on a family farm near New Almaena. Stephens attended college at Fort Hays State University.

He graduated with bachelor of science degrees in business administration and physical education and a master's degree in athletic administration.

Stephens began his basketball

coaching career in 1984 at Gorham, moved to Brewster, then to Copeland, Ulysses and Maize. He took over the women's basketball program at CCC in 1997.

"Tom has worked very hard to achieve this goal," said athletic director Carl Adams. "He's done a great job of recruiting quality athletes who are successful on the court as well as in the classroom. His team consistently ranks in the top 15 in the nation in terms of overall grade point averages. His teams are a class act when they are competing and are good citizens in the community."

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