

Eagle girls not new to each other

By John Van Nostrand
Colby Free Press

Chemistry class should not be the only place where the Colby High girl's basketball team has chemistry.

Six players return from last year's varsity team that was just seconds away from a substate championship game. Five of those six had started at various times during the 2005-2006 season.

"There is chemistry with this team," said second-year head coach Derek Bissitt. "And we have others too. We have pretty good seniors and some depth on the bench."

That mix of experience and strength begins 6:30 p.m. Friday at Scott City.

Five of those players who started are junior Lissa Mazanec, Ashley Barnes, Rishonna Martin, Tasha Wagoner and Paige Stephens. April Weaver is another who has been with the program.

Bissitt said practices have gone well, largely in part because those girls know each other on the court.

"Most of them played together last year," he said. "And it feels more comfortable."

Bissitt said that just adds to the girls' diversity of height, speed and athleticism.

"Anytime you work with a group of this kind, the comfort level goes



COLBY FREE PRESS FILE PHOTO

Colby's Tasha Wagoner pushes the ball down court during a game last season. Wagoner, a junior, is one of a core group of players who has been with the program multiple years said head coach Derek Bissitt. Bissitt said the cohesiveness among players this year should be a strength.

up and the expectations go up to."

Colby finished last year with a 16-6 record.

"If the girls are the best they can be, the wins and losses will take care of themselves," Bissitt said.

The Eagle girls have a challenge right from the start. Not unusual for the early stages of a Colby girls' basketball schedule, but the Eagles' first home game is not until Dec. 19 against Hays.

After Scott City, Colby is at the Goodland Tournament Dec. 7-9, then at Oakley Dec. 15. Bissitt said Oakley improving.

And it's not just those road games that will be a challenge. The Northwest Kansas League schedule in-

cludes playing 2A state tournament team Hoxie and Goodland, which made it to the 4A state tournament.

Of the three games Colby and Goodland played last season, Goodland won two of them, including the substate semifinal game that ended the Eagles' season.

Two points was the most that separated the teams in last year's games.

The girls teams for Colby's annual Orange and Black Classic Jan. 18-20 include Goodland, Scott City, McCook, Neb., Montebello, a 4A school in Denver, Colo., and Kansas City, Kan., Christian. Kansas City Christian finished third in 3A last year.

High school games barely covered

By John Van Nostrand
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Northwest Kansas League Commissioner Jim Keenan said the last thing he wants for the basketball season this year is a postponed game because of weather — because he is down to his last referees.

"We are covered for this year," Kennan said from his office at Oakley High School. "When I say we are covered this year, that means the bare minimum."

He expects days to reschedule games will be hard to find based on the availability of referees and other games they are contracted to do.

"They are going to have to play those games on Mondays, Thursdays or Saturdays," Keenan said. "I can't imagine playing a game on Wednesdays in northwest Kansas, but it might come to that."

The last few years, Keenan no-

ticed the declining number of basketball referees. Referees have quit for a variety of reasons from job transfers, age, health or tired of the rude criticism from fans.

Keenan said if an official quits during the season, it will disrupt the scheduling.

Anyone interested in becoming a referee can contact Keenan at Oakley High School. Keenan and other league school officials are trying to recruit new referees. He said it will take time to find the referees, get them experience and have a list of backup referees.

"This is probably going to be a five-year turnaround," he said.

California upends KSU

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — Ayinde Ubaka had 14 points and eight assists, DeVon Hardin added 12 points and 12 rebounds, and California beat cold-shooting Kansas State for the first time in six overall meetings with a 78-48 victory Wednesday night.

Ryan Anderson had 15 points and seven rebounds in Cal's fifth straight win. The Golden Bears (6-1) looked strong on both ends of the floor coming off their championship in the Great Alaska Shootout last weekend.

Cartier Martin scored 16 points and Lance Harris 14 for the Wildcats (4-2), who made their first trip to California since 1998 and first to Berkeley since 1958, only to be handed the program's worst defeat in nearly three years.

In that 1958 game, No. 3 KSU handed Cal its first loss on Dec. 12 and the Bears went on to win the '59 NCAA title at the end of that season under Hall of Fame coach Pete Newell. Wednesday's game marked the sixth meeting ever between the schools and first since 1995.

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