

Colby softball team prepares for season

By Kayla Cornett
Colby Free Press
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The Colby High softball team is getting ready for its season, which means finding a way to fill the holes left by departing starters.

The Lady Eagles lost five seniors this year, Skyler Mengel, Caitlyn Wark, Tera Raymond, Brittany Bange and Bailey Koerperich. Coach Jack Elliot said that makes the team very young this season.

"We have one senior returning," he said, "six returning juniors and we have 28 players total, which means the rest are freshmen and

sophomores."

The girls have been practicing for three weeks now, and Elliot said they are still trying to set positions.

"We're doing controlled scrimmages with live pitching this week to help determine the positions," he said, "but we've got some of the people plugged in already."

Despite the team's youth, Elliot said he's feeling confident about the coming season.

"We've been practicing really well," he said, "and I have a feeling we're going to be decent by the time regionals come around."

Last year, the Lady Eagles had a 19-5 record and made it to the

regional finals. They lost to Pratt 2-1 after winning two games in the tournament.

The team begins its season Friday with games in Holcomb. The next two games are also on the road, in Dodge City on Tuesday and Ulysses Thursday, April 5.

Colby's first home game will be Tuesday, April 10, with Ellis, followed by two more home games, against Hugoton on Friday, April 13, and against Goodland on Monday, April 16.

The varsity girls play all of their home games on Field 2 at the Colby ball fields and the junior varsity plays on Field 4.

Track coach qualifies for paralympic trials

For the first time he lost part of his right leg six years ago, James Ortiz ran in a race Saturday at the Alex Francis Classic in Hays.

Ortiz, in his third year as coach of the Colby Community College men's cross country and track teams, ran the 400-meter event to qualify for the U.S. Paralympic Trials this June in Indianapolis.

Ortiz finished with a time of 58.36, which qualifies him for the trials. The time also meets the London "B" Standard, which is the qualifying time for "B" runners for the Olympics, just missing the London "A" Standard of 58.00 seconds.

At the same meet, part of the Colby men's track team competed Friday and Saturday.

"Because it was spring break at the college, we only took a partial squad to the Alex Francis Classic," said Ortiz. "We had athletes compete in seven events - two field events and five on the track. We won three of the five track events and finished second in another."

Friday evening, James Leonard won the 800 me-

ters with a personal best time of 1:54.93, just missing the national standard for the National Junior College Athletic Association championships of 1:54.82.

Jonathan Burgess won the 1,500 meters with a personal best of 3:59.17 and qualified for nationals in this event.

Edward Limo placed second in the 5,000 meters, which qualified him for nationals with a time of 15:12.62.

Saturday, Kristen Mitchell won the 100-meter event with a season-best 10.88 seconds.

"The guys who competed this weekend had a great meet," Ortiz said. "This was a great start to the outdoor season and hopefully a sign of more good things to come."

"I feel like we picked up right where we left off in the indoor season."

The team will leave Wednesday to compete in its next meet, which is a two-day event in Austin, Texas.

K-State coach hired at South Carolina

By Pete Iacobelli
AP Sports Writer

COLUMBIA, S.C. - Prepare for "The Stare" at South Carolina games next season.

The Gamecocks hired fiery Frank Martin from Kansas State to re-energize a program that had dropped to the bottom of the Southeastern Conference.

Martin spoke for nearly an hour in front of several hundred fans, media and South Carolina administrators. Afterwards, he was asked to demonstrate his harsh, laser-like stare, which was a featured attraction at Wildcat games the past five years.

"It's something that happens when it's time to compete," Martin said, laughing.

Martin says the time for the Gamecocks to compete is now.

He told the players Tuesday morning that they weren't far off from SEC success, despite going 10-21 and 2-14 in the league this season.

"I've got to figure out a way, and that's my job, to get them the confidence that they need to win that next game," Martin said.

Not that it will be easy.

The Gamecocks lose their leading scorer in senior Malik Cooke. Their No. 2 scorer, point guard Bruce Ellington, was back at football practice Tuesday after announcing two weeks ago that he would only play basketball next season.

Martin will have two scholarships to use for next year's club and possibly three if Ellington sticks to playing two sports and he is on a football scholarship. The new coach says he's already begun tapping recruiting contacts.

Martin doesn't have to rush. He got a six-year deal worth \$12.3 million. He'll make \$1.9 million this fall, a step up from his salary of about \$1.4 million with the Wildcats.

South Carolina also agreed to pay Martin's \$1 million buyout at Kansas State.

South Carolina athletic director Eric Hyman spoke with former coaches, players, the NCAA and administrators in the search for a new coach to replace Darrin Horn.

"Quite frankly, we feel like we've got the right person," he said.

Martin, 46, called it a whirlwind courtship with South Carolina that really took off this weekend while the coach was in New York helping CBS Sports with its coverage of the NCAA tournament. Martin joked that he had basketball studio analysts Charles Barkley, Kenny Smith and Greg Anthony urging him to take the job before he left.

Martin was 117-54 in five years with the Wildcats. They reached the NCAA regional finals in 2010 and lost to Syracuse in the third round this season.

Martin thanked everyone at

Kansas State and discounted any rift with Wildcat athletic director John Currie for the decision to leave. Martin was upset that the school suspended forward Jamar Samuels for the Wildcats' NCAA tournament loss to Syracuse.

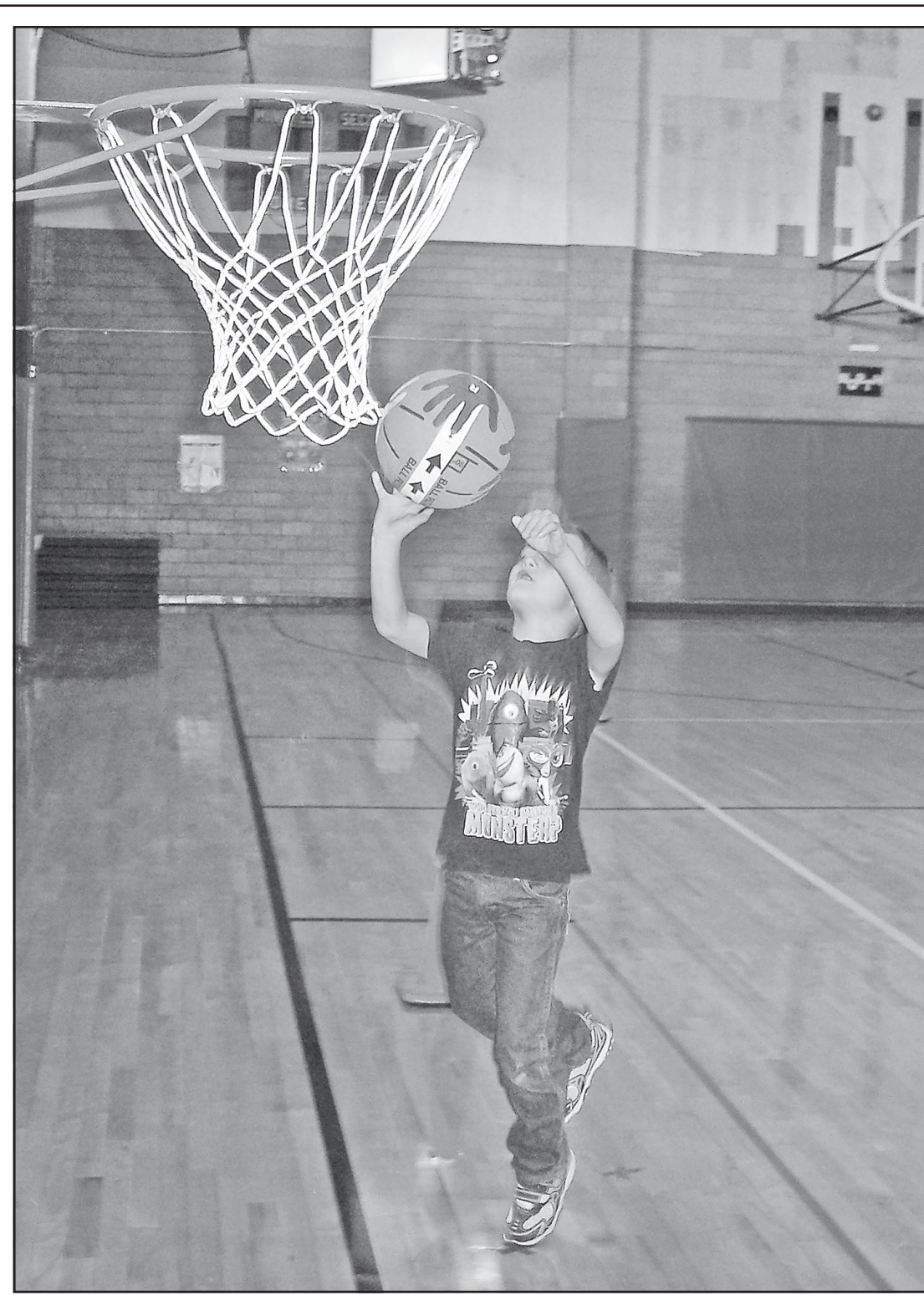
However, "that administration has been phenomenal. I can't be more thankful for how that administration treated us. They gave us what we needed," Martin said.

Kansas coach Bill Self, Martin's Big 12 Conference rival, said the coach would be missed.

"Our league will miss him. I'm sure people in Manhattan (Kan.) will, too," Self said. "He was nothing but good things for our basketball league."

Now, the SEC has another oversized personality to matchup with league heavyweights like Kentucky's John Calipari and Florida's Billy Donovan. Martin said he got a text from his friend, Alabama coach Anthony Grant, that read, "Frank, our league just got better."

Martin is the son of Cuban immigrants who coached high school basketball in Miami for 15 years and was an assistant at Northeastern for four seasons before Bob Huggins brought him on to his staff at Cincinnati. Martin credits Huggins with jump starting his career, saying the current coach at West Virginia helped him get into college coaching.



KIM WESSEL/Golden Plains Schools

First grader Dylan Bice worked on his shooting skills during physical education class at Golden Plains Elementary School. Students in grades one to five will demonstrate their skills at the Rexford gym on Friday.

Bulldog elementary students to demonstrate basketball skills

By Judy Rogers
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Golden Plains Elementary students will be demonstrating basketball skills they have been working on in physical education classes Friday at the high school gym in Rexford.

Students in grades one through five have been working on dribbling, passing and shooting skills for the past several weeks under the direction of physical education teacher Laura Rush and student teacher Kim Wessel.

"They have been working very hard and are ex-

tremely excited to show off their skills in an actual game," Rush said.

There will be a \$1 admission fee for the games, which will go to the Lions Club Eye Glass fund. The Rexford Lions Club will put on a hamburger, hot dog and sandwich feed in the commons area of the gym. They will also hold a raffle drawing for prizes including a red-and-black blanket, a digital camera, a Colby Community College autographed basketball and other prizes.

Proceeds will be used to support school and community activities. Tickets can be purchased that night or in advance from any Lions Club member.

Denver Nuggets beat Bulls 108-91 in Chicago

By Rick Gano
AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO - Ty Lawson got the message. Denver coach George Karl told him to push it and that's what he did Monday night. Right at the Chicago Bulls.

Lawson and the Nuggets were able to speed up the pace, move and share the ball, get to the rim and shoot 50 percent in beating the Bulls 108-91.

The Nuggets also outrebounded the Bulls - the NBA's best team on the boards entering the game - by 45-32, forced them into 16 turnovers and outscored Chicago 54-24 in the paint.

Denver, tied with Oklahoma City as the league's highest scor-

ing team entering play Monday, got the final six points of the second quarter and then started the third on a 10-0 run to take a 64-52 lead, one it would eventually build to 16 later in the quarter.

Behind Lawson's nine points, the Nuggets outscored the Bulls 27-16 in the period to go up 81-68.

The Bulls went nearly five minutes before hitting their first second-half field goal and were just 5 of 16 in the pivotal third quarter.

Lawson matched his season with 27 points, Arron Afflalo had 22 and Al Harrington 17 for the Nuggets, scrapping for a playoff spot in the West.

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Colby Trap Club 2012 Summer League

Summer trap league begins Tuesday evening April 3rd then the first Tuesday each month following through October 2nd.

Put together a 5 person team or show up Tuesday evening, there are teams that are in need of a shooter and are still looking for additional teammates.

League Fees are \$50 per 5 person team due the first shoot. Shooting Fees are \$15 per shooter each monthly shoot.

If you are wanting to learn how to shoot and have fun with friends while learning, this is your chance. We have several members that are certified range masters and are always willing to give helpful pointers.

•• We welcome all ••

You can also join the trap club for a \$50 annual fee which will give you a punch card for 8 nonleague 25 round trap or skeet shoot

The trap range will be open at 5 p.m. on April 3rd

If you have questions call Paul 785-460-2839

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