

BASKETBALL

Experience gives Ladycats an edge

▶ Unlike last year, 2015-16 Ladycats begin year with loads of experience

By Tony Eierdam
The Community News

Last year at this time, Aledo Ladycats head coach Mike Pinkerton was dealt the cruelest blow any high school coach could absorb when he found out prior to the 2014-15 season that four starters – including a pair of all-state players – were transferring from Aledo High School.

But what was a problem a year ago has turned into a blessing.

This year, those four players would have been gone due to graduation, and Pinkerton would have been faced with a large rebuilding project with players having little or no varsity experience.

But last year many underclassmen got their chance on varsity, and now, a year later, Pinkerton has a roster stocked with varsity experience including transfer Alexis Jones – the daughter of new Aledo Bearcats boys head basketball coach Fred “Deuce” Jones – who played at Class 6A Flower Mound Marcus.

Last year the Ladycats finished 15-18, lost a third-place tie-breaker game and fell in the first round of the Class 5A playoffs.

“We had players we moved up who had to step into those (four) roles last year,” Pinkerton said. “Those girls gained invaluable varsity experience. And everyone getting to play two extra games in intense atmospheres was huge.”

Jones is part of a strong senior class that includes all-district, second-team post Rebekah Hissam – who stands 6-0 - and guards Kara Williams and Emily Unger. Williams and Hissam were starters last year, with Williams earning an all-district honorable mention last season.

Experience

Pinkerton said Jones will bring energy, skill and experience to the guard position.

“She also brings some height at guard,” Pinkerton said. “She is 5-8 and will be a matchup problem for our opponents. She can handle the ball and play the 1



Two returning starters for the Aledo Ladycats this year are senior guard Kara Williams (25) and senior post Rebekah Hissam (42). The pair is shown during last year’s playoff game. | **RIGHT: Aledo junior point guard** Cameron Huddleston, shown last year in the bi-district playoffs, returns as the “quarterback” of the Ladycats. Huddleston was an all-district, first-team selection last year.

(point guard), 2 (shooting guard) or the 3 (small forward).

“She is a very versatile player who can also shoot from outside. Alexis is not afraid to drive the lane, and she brings an aspect that we haven’t seen in a couple of years because she can score and find the open girl. The other girls have to be ready to receive the ball from her when she slashes through the lane.

“She plays outstanding defense which will make us more of a pressing defense this year. She gives us a little more speed and quickness and makes us dangerous offensively.”

Pinkerton said Hissam has taken her game to a higher level in a span of one year.

“Rebekah has gained the ability to make good post moves and score,” he said. “She is getting up and down the floor very well, and she will be our go-to post.”

Williams played a little on varsity her sophomore year but last year started every game at shooting guard.

“Kara is a very good guard and a very good ball handler,” Pinkerton said. “She is also a good shooter. She is getting the knack of how to drive the lane and score among the big posts. She brings varsity experience from the last two years because she was one who would play up every once in a while two years ago.”

Emily Unger brings a year of varsity experience and senior leadership to the Ladycats.

“Emily has good guard skills and is a good shooter,” Pinkerton said. “She is a good ball handler who can

play the 2 or the 3. She will come in in either spot and there will not be any drop off.”

The Ladycats also welcome back first-team, all-district junior guard Cameron Huddleston, the “quarterback” of the team last year at point guard.

“Cameron’s great footwork and quickness folds into what we are trying to do on the basketball court,” Pinkerton said. “She is a great ball handler, and she is getting better every day at shooting the ball.

“She can drive, kick the ball out, and she is a very good passer. Her defense is absolutely relentless. That is huge for us. She also came up two years ago every once in a while to gain varsity experience.

“Cameron is not afraid to put her nose right in the middle of somebody and get after them. It is huge to have a player like Cameron. She takes away the opposition guard’s ability to see the floor. She has the ability to take away an opponent’s entire offensive scheme by the way she puts pressure on the point guard.”

Another returning varsity member, sophomore 6-1 post Sarah Haeussler, will team with Hissam to bring the Ladycats experience and height in the post.

“The experience Sarah got last year will be invaluable for her,” Pinkerton said. “She is a very good athlete who also plays on the varsity volleyball team. Because she is such a good athlete she can move well in the post and get up and down the floor.”



TONY EIERDAM/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

set. She needs to learn the varsity game, and she brings height (5-10) at a guard position. She can also shoot the ball. She can get up and down the floor, and in (varsity) fall league she got after it the second she stepped out on the floor.

“She wasn’t afraid and didn’t back down. She brings really good defense and hustle to the team. You have to have the ability to play defense to play for me, and she definitely has that.”

Looking ahead

Pinkerton said this year’s Ladycats, because of their athletic ability, hustle and desire, will press more on defense compared to last year.

“Teams that used to be able to out-quick us won’t be able to do that anymore,” he said. “We will always play good team defense, and we want to be able to play defense one-on-one and not get beat, knowing that we have help behind us.

“I am really excited about this group. They will be able to get after some people.”

Pinkerton said the key to this season is aggressiveness.

“We have been nice around here too long. It is time to quit being nice. These girls will get after people, kind of like what we saw with Crowley last year.”

Pinkerton said during non-district play the Ladycats will be focused on learning their specific roles. He wants all roles to be established before District 8-5A play begins on Dec. 8 against rival Granbury.

“I want to make sure our defense is fundamentally sound and they each know their roles,” he said. “I want them to get experience against tough opponents. We have some tough pre-district games, including Cedar Hill, and we will see what we are made of early on.

“I want to see us have to deal with adversity and how we react to that. I want us to get all of that stuff out of the way before district hits.”

LADYCATS’ FIRST 5

- Nov. 10 – Cedar Hill (7:30 p.m.)
- Nov. 14 – at Godley (2:30 p.m.)
- Nov. 17 – Stephenville (6:30 p.m.)
- Nov. 19-21 – at Brock Showcase (TBA)
- Nov. 24 – at Nolan Catholic (6:30 p.m.)

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