

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL / Seahawks flying backwards on the court

UNCW's diminishing roster not sign of progress

During the Cold War, Americans used to laugh at the Soviet Union for the ludicrous spin the government-fed media would put on tales of destruction.

"Greetings, comrades. Today, a fire destroyed the Kremlin, making way for a glorious new tractor family in the name of Lenin."

It seems less funny when considering recent events at UNC-Wilmington, in which a basketball team has been destroyed in the name of "progress."

UNCW's women's basketball team wasn't great last season, but it showed signs of progress despite a 5-22 record. They were competitive with all but the best team in the Colonial Athletic Association, and they were capable of playing exciting basketball at times.

With with everyone except departing senior Kim Bush returning from that team, it was possible that the Seahawks could reach double-digit victories this season.

Instead, only four players are returning, and they will be lucky to equal the team's 1991-92 record of 1-26. The harsh truth is they would have a hard time winning intramural tournaments at some schools.

Among the nine departees in the last 12 months:

Beau
DURE



■ Tiffany Johnson, the team's best athlete.

■ Joanna Chandler, who led the team to a win over East Carolina that kept the Seahawks out of the CAA cellar last year.

■ Zandra Harris, the team's most talented player, who has battled to come back from injury.

■ Myra Horton, a solid scorer and strong defender who was a CAA All-Rookie team pick in 1992 and graced the front of the team's media guide only last season.

■ Amber Blank, a flashy point guard who could beat a press and occasionally explode for 25 points. Blank was also an All-Rookie pick in 1993.

■ Jill Longordo, the hometown hero who simply deserved better.

What's going on here? No one seems to know. Coach Susan Yow, brought in last season to "fix" a program whose only crime was a lack of victories, isn't saying. All we can do is sit back and assess the damage.

...
There are two ways to build fan support. One is to win. That might not have happened with everyone returning; it certainly won't happen now.

The other is to have an identity — players who fans are used to seeing.

Yow has stripped away this team's identity, and the team will lose in ways that will make fans grimace. Fans are already raising their voices; the *Morning Star* has received a steady stream of calls, and no one has asked that Yow receive the benefit of the doubt.

Yow inherited a team that was 14-68 in the preceding three years. How often do coaches start rebuilding such teams by eroding the fan base?

...
The warning signs came last season. Walk-on Courtney Whitmer, another local star, quit before playing a game.

Yow made odd personnel moves all season. Denise Marsh, who can shoot but can't handle the ball against pressure, played point guard ahead of the sure-handed Blank. Longordo played very little at first and rarely enough to make the team better. Forget the statistics; those who watched the Seahawks play often knew that the offense sputtered

without Longordo on the court.

One moment stands out: Longordo, who had been trying once again to lead a Seahawk rally, turned her ankle badly. As she hobbled back up the court, trying to keep up with the play and fight back tears, Yow seemed oblivious to the fact that one of her players was hurt.

Yow's past has been rehashed often, but its presence is too big to be ignored. A six-player road trip at Drake, a revolving door of players at Kansas State.

Yow claims that her "juniors haven't won," which makes winning today difficult. So what will she do in two years, when this year's freshmen are 1996's winless juniors?

This year's freshmen are half of the eight-woman team. The other returnees are Marsh, post players Hannah Grady and Tiffany Stacey, and Heather Starck, who walked on to the team in 1992. They're good role players, but unless Sheryl Swoopes is in that recruiting class, this team won't challenge anyone in the CAA.

Athletic Director Paul Miller says nothing is wrong, that his coach simply demands excellence. With these tactics, she might as well be demanding unicorns.

Beau Dure is a copy editor for the Morning Star.