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Metcalf has high hopes this season

By Joe Tindel, Jr.

Battalion Staff

Even with five new faces on the traveling squad and a 45-second shot clock to deal with, Texas A&M basketball coach Shelby Metcalf says this year's team will look similar to Aggie legends of the past.

Southwest Conference teams this year will have 45 seconds to launch the ball toward the hoop, thanks to a new rule, but Metcalf said the time limit won't affect the Aggies' style of play.

And now that 6-11 center Rudy Woods has departed, that position will likely be occupied by freshmen. Roger Bock, a 6-10 center from Oxnard, Calif., who averaged 17 points, 10.4 rebounds a game and led his high school team to two state championships, will split time with Huntsville freshman Jimmie Gilbert, 6-9, was one of the most highly recruited players in Texas last year, averaging 17 points and 15 rebounds a game.

Metcalf said he's depending on some of the newcomers for depth this season, but he's still blessed with the return of four talented starters from last year's 20-11 team.

All eyes will be on senior forward Claude Riley, who made the SWC squad last year and could be among the nation's best rebounders. Riley averaged 16.3 points and 10.2 rebounds a game last year.

The Aggies will also benefit from the return of 6-7 forward Roy Jones, who missed much of last season with an injury. Veteran guards Tyren Naulls and Reggie Roberts will also be back to add strength out front.

Metcalf expressed concern about a lack of depth at the forward position, but he said junior transfer Lowell McHenry, 6-6, could help solve that problem.

"He's (McHenry) a good enough jumper that he can back up Claude (Riley) and he's quick enough to play the small forward," Metcalf said.

"He potentially has the physical ability to really help us."

Metcalf said he'll go with the experience at the guard positions, using Roberts, Naulls and sophomore Gary Lewis. But he said freshmen Kenny Brown and Doug Lee could see some action and will definitely help in the depth category.

Brown, a 6-4 guard from Memphis, Tenn., averaged 18 points a game in high school, and is described by Metcalf as a good outside shooter. Lee, a 6-4 freshman from Washington, Ill., who averaged an impressive 27 points a game during his high school senior season, is another good outside shooter, Metcalf said.

Metcalf said he expects this season's Aggies to be an improved team over last year, with extra height at the outside positions that will enable him to use a three-guard offense occasionally for depth purposes.

The Aggies used the three-guard offense last year after Jones left the starting lineup against Houston. But Metcalf said that even with Jones back, the extra guard will help take up the slack for the lack of depth at forward.

The Aggies' non-conference schedule includes perennial powers Marquette and Louisiana State on the road as well as some stiff competition in the Great Alaska Shootout, which begins Nov. 26 with the Aggies taking on Clemson.

The coach also said the SWC will be a tougher neighborhood to play in, with Houston starting the season in the top 10 and TCU, Texas Tech, SMU and Baylor all having a good recruiting year. "It's a neighborhood brawl when you get in the conference," Metcalf said.

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