

# HUSKERS FEEL TIME IS NOW FOR THIS TEAM

## OUR TEAM

It is a sentiment felt by Nebraska student-athletes and fans across all sports. Husker players and coaches have special relationships with Nebraska fans, helping build a special sense of community.

This season at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, the Nebraska women's basketball team is hoping to take that mutual sense of ownership in the program to a higher level than ever before.

Since Nebraska Coach Connie Yori took the reins in 2002-03, the Huskers have been building a consistent contender in the Big 12 Conference while improving the program at every level.

On the court, the Huskers have earned a school-record six consecutive postseason bids, including back-to-back NCAA Tournament appearances in 2007 and 2008.

In the classroom, Nebraska boasts a 100 percent graduation rate and a standard of academic achievement that continues to rise.

In the community, the Huskers have twice captured Nebraska's prestigious Life Skills Award of Excellence, presented to the NU team across all sports that has demonstrated the highest commitment to Nebraska's award-winning Life Skills program.

"We are consistently focused on doing the right things on a daily basis in all areas of our program," Yori said. "That focus and support has allowed our players to grow and mature not only on the court, but also as women who are ready to make meaningful contributions to society."

In 2009-10, a six-player senior class - the largest in Husker history - will take the court together one more time for what could be a special season. They will be joined by a four-player junior class that features three more players with extensive starting experience. In all, Nebraska's 10 juniors and seniors have combined for 720 games with 301 total starts as Huskers.

## OUR TIME

The six seniors - Kelsey Griffin, Cory Montgomery, Yvonne Turner, Nicole Neals, Kala Kuhlmann and Nikki Bober - have come from five states across America to provide major contributions to Nebraska's success over the past four seasons. They have combined for 511 games of experience at Nebraska.

The group embodies the total-person concept that has permeated the Husker program. Griffin, a two-time first-team All-Big 12 forward from Eagle River, Alaska, led the Huskers to a first-round NCAA Tournament win in 2008, despite playing the entire year with a broken rib. Last season, Griffin sat out the entire year with a foot injury that required a pair of surgeries. Without her production (15.3 ppg, 7.2 rpg in 2007-08) and senior leadership, the Huskers fought their way to a second-round WNIT bid and a tie for seventh in the powerful Big 12 in 2009.

This year, Griffin returns to full health and the two-time first-team academic All-Big 12 selection will be an All-America candidate on and off the court, while also contending for the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award, honoring student-athlete achievement on the court, in the classroom and in the community.

"Kelsey is one of the best players in the Big 12," Yori said. "In some ways, I think our players found out how much Kelsey meant to our team last year when she was hurt. That experience helped everybody grow in certain respects, including Kelsey. Obviously her health will be a major factor in how far our team can go this season."

"Kelsey is one of the toughest, hard-nosed competitors I have ever coached. She is a warrior for us on the court and you get her best every night. Not only that, but she is a solid student and an outstanding person."

## THREE SENIORS SHOOT FOR 1,000

Griffin enters her fifth year at Nebraska with 1,348 points and 665 career rebounds, and could be joined in NU's 1,000-point club early in the season by Montgomery.

In Montgomery's first season as a starter in 2008-09, the 6-2 forward from Cannon Falls, Minn., was expected to replace 2008 senior Danielle Page, who went on to the WNBA following graduation.

However, with Griffin's injury, Montgomery was forced to shoulder much of the scoring and rebounding load for Nebraska throughout the season. Montgomery played big minutes, averaging nearly 32 minutes per game while leading NU in scoring and rebounding with 15.2 points and 7.8 rebounds per contest. She also earned honorable-mention All-Big 12 honors after averaging 16.2 points per game in league play.

Montgomery enters her final year at Nebraska with 947 points and 457 rebounds in 96 career games. A strong performer in the classroom, Montgomery may also earn her bachelor's degree in accounting in just 3 1/2 years from Nebraska. She could pick up her diploma on Dec. 19 at the Devaney Center, the day before the Huskers take on the LSU Tigers in Lincoln.

"Cory carried the load for us last year inside and it wasn't easy," Yori said. "She battled through her own injuries, but she came to play every night. We could not

have asked much more from her last year. Hopefully this year, with Cory and Kelsey healthy, we expect to have two of the best forwards in the Big 12.

While Griffin and Montgomery have provided big numbers in their first three seasons on the front line, Turner has been Nebraska's most dynamic player in the backcourt.

The 5-8 guard out of Omaha is a two-time Big 12 All-Defensive Team selection and is poised to crack Nebraska's top-10 list in career steals. She is also one of the most accomplished three-point shooters in school history and has ranked among the top three-point shooters in Big 12 play in each of the last two years.

Last season, Turner ranked second on the team in scoring with 11.7 points per game, while ranking among the top five players in the Big 12 with 67 steals. She also led the Huskers with 57 three-pointers on the year.

Turner's increased production came despite a recurring shoulder injury that drastically limited her effectiveness at times. The injury forced Turner to have surgery immediately following last season.

"Vonnie continued to show flashes of great play last year, and she showed she can take over a game," Yori said. "The challenge for her this year will be to stay healthy and provide more consistent play at the offensive end while turning up our defensive pressure as high as it can go."



Two-time first-team All-Big 12 selection Kelsey Griffin will contend for All-America honors as a senior. The 6-2 forward has helped lead Nebraska to back-to-back NCAA Tournament appearances in 2007 and 2008.



# SIX SENIORS, FOUR JUNIORS FOCUSED ON SEASON



**Cory Montgomery will join Kelsey Griffin to give the Huskers the most experienced forward combination in the Big 12. Montgomery was an honorable-mention All-Big 12 pick after averaging 16.2 points and 7.8 rebounds in league play.**

Turner, who has scored 706 points in her first three seasons at Nebraska, could also join Griffin and Montgomery in NU's 1,000-point club this season.

## SUPPORTING ROLES

In addition to the production at the top of Nebraska's senior class, Neals, Kuhlmann and Bober have been major contributors on and off the court in their Husker careers.

Neals is expecting to earn her bachelor's degree in management on Dec. 19. The 5-6 guard from Chandler, Ariz., has appeared in 88 games for the Huskers. She enjoyed her best season a year ago when she averaged 3.2 points and 1.1 assists per game while hitting 38.5 percent (25-65) of her three-pointers.

Kuhlmann, a 5-8 guard from Charter Oak, Iowa, has also played in 88 games in her first three seasons in Lincoln. The two-time first-team academic All-Big 12 selection has averaged nearly three points and two rebounds per game off the bench over the last two years.

Bober, a 6-4 center from Murdoch, Neb., has appeared in 54 games with one start at NU. Last year she played a major role in Nebraska's win over No. 24 Arizona State with two points, five rebounds and a career-best four blocked shots on Dec. 28. Two days later, she suffered a torn ACL that abruptly ended her junior season.

"Kala, Nikki and Nicole are all solid and experienced Big 12 players," Yori said. "They know the league and they know their roles on our team. They are huge parts of the chemistry on our team every year."

## JUNIOR STARTERS

A four-player junior class that features three returning starters will push to provide a memorable campaign.

Dominique Kelley, a 5-7 junior guard from Lincoln, has made 64 consecutive starts to open her career, compiling 511 points, 198 rebounds and 142 assists in her first two seasons. Last season, Kelley averaged 9.7 points, 3.3 rebounds and 2.5 assists per game, while shooting 39.3 percent (22-56) from three-point range.

"Dominique has natural leadership qualities that will

continue to grow with time in our program," Yori said. "She is a true competitor and last year was hard on her because she was not able to contribute more to help our team be more successful. I think that was a good learning experience for her, and it is driving her to improve."

Catheryn Redmon, a 6-3 center from Grand Prairie, Texas, had a breakout year on the defensive end last year, ranking third in the Big 12 with 2.5 blocks per game. Her 67 blocks ranked among the best totals in school history, despite averaging just eight minutes per game through the first seven games of the season.

Redmon's production increased throughout the season, and she averaged 5.8 points, 6.1 rebounds and 2.8 blocks per game in Big 12 action.

"Catheryn got a taste of the intensity and commitment it takes to battle the best players in the country night in and night out in the Big 12," Yori said. "Hopefully she will continue to improve while working in a little different role with more post depth and experience this year."

Jessica Periago, a 6-4 center, gives Nebraska even more options inside. The native of Toulon, France, proved that she could contribute against the Big 12's best last season, scoring 11 points on 4-of-4 shooting at No. 16 Texas, before adding 11 points again on 4-of-4 shooting to go along with five rebounds in a late-season win over Colorado. She pitched in seven points and three boards against No. 8 Baylor, while playing 157 of her 228 minutes on the year in the season's final 11 games. A first-team academic All-Big 12 performer as a biochemistry major, Periago is also a contributor for the Huskers off the court.

"Jess got a taste of the competition last year and she continued to improve throughout the season," Yori said. "She can provide us with some options to make us more difficult to defend."

Kaitlyn Burke, a first-team academic All-Big 12 guard a year ago, returns after playing every game the last two seasons. The 5-7 guard from North Vancouver, British Columbia, struggled to overcome a broken and dislocated finger on her shooting hand early last season.

Burke's up-tempo style was hindered by Nebraska's

injuries inside last year, while her own injury affected her touch from outside.

"Kaitlyn had a frustrating year last season, and I think maybe more than anybody she was affected by Kelsey not being on the court. She is a smart player and a hard worker, and we know she can be a good player for us."

Fellow British Columbian Harleen Sidhu will battle for playing time as Nebraska's lone sophomore. The 6-1 forward from Surrey scored 20 points and grabbed 41 rebounds in 25 games last season as a true freshman.

Redshirt freshman Layne Reeves missed all of last season after undergoing knee surgery. Reeves, a 5-11 shooting guard from Lubbock, Texas, suffered an ACL tear her senior season of high school. After sitting out her first season in Lincoln, Reeves is ready to make an impact with her long range shooting stroke.

Nebraska's talented and deep inside presence could open things up for Reeves and the rest of the Husker shooters on the perimeter.

While Nebraska's 12 returning players give the Huskers a wealth of experience, NU's three newcomers provide hope for the future.

## MOORE ON THE FLOOR

Lindsey Moore, a 5-9 point guard from Kentwood High School in Washington, could make a major impact despite the experience surrounding her.

A third-team Parade Magazine High School All-American, Moore was the Gatorade Player of the Year in Washington.

"Lindsey is a true point guard like Nebraska has not seen in some time," Yori said. "She was invited to U.S. Under-19 National Team tryouts this summer and held her own against the best young players in the country. We are certainly excited about her future at Nebraska."

Forwards Meghan Williams and Katya Leick will provide even more depth to Nebraska's inside game. Williams, a 6-1 forward from California, possesses excellent skills along with some impressive leadership qualities off the court. Williams was a standout academically at Summit High School and was also her Senior Class President.

Leick, who comes to Nebraska from Grey Cloud Township, Minn., was asked to do it all for her Park High School team as a senior, which could make her a candidate to play a variety of roles in the Husker system.

"The challenge for all of our younger players will be to catch up to the expectation level of our upperclassmen," Yori said. "At the same time, our older players have to keep pushing themselves to improve."

## BIG 12 BATTLES

Nebraska's 15-player roster will be tested by a rigorous schedule that will feature 15 games against 2009 postseason qualifiers, including 10 games against NCAA Tournament teams. The non-conference season will be highlighted by seven home games, including a Dec. 20 date with five-time NCAA Women's Final Four participant LSU and a Dec. 9 showdown with in-state rival Creighton. The road schedule features trips to Las Vegas, San Francisco and Miami, along with a New Year's trip to Vermont to face a Catamount club that lost to national champion Connecticut in the 2009 NCAA first round.

Nebraska opens Big 12 Conference play on the road at 2009 NCAA Elite Eight qualifier Iowa State on Jan. 9, the first of four straight games against 2009 NCAA participants to open league play.

"The Big 12 has been the best conference in the nation for the past two years, and it will test us every night again this season. Winning in the Big 12 is about desire, execution, and toughness. We believe we have the right mix of players to be successful this season."

