



## Numbers may be low, but coach says work ethic, communication is high

**By Jan Schultz**

***The Imperial Republican***

One of the lowest numbers for the high school girls' basketball program at Chase County Schools will take to the floor for their season opener today (Thursday).

While only 13 names are on this year's roster, Coach Marc Mroczek is seeing some good things from the team so far, including a strong work ethic and good communication.

The Lady Longhorns open their 2009-10 season Thursday on the home court when they host Class B McCook.

The game schedule is a little different for the opening game, as the order for the girls' JV and varsity games are flip-flopped.

The varsity girls will be first to play Thursday night at 5 p.m. in the Longhorn gym, and will be followed there by the boys' varsity game.

The JV boys will start action in the Shorthorn gym at 5 p.m., followed by the JV girls game. Due to the McCook game schedule, only two quarters of JV girls' basketball will be played Thursday, Mroczek said.

Mroczek said the Lady Bison have a new coach this season, "so we need to prepare for anything."

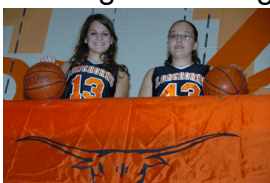
However, they may be down on talent this year a bit, as they lost a lot of seniors who were top scorers from the 2008-09 season.

Then on Friday, the teams travel to Goodland, Kan., for both JV and varsity contests. Action there starts at 5:30 p.m.

The schedule for those games is the same as the McCook schedule, with the varsity girls playing first at 5:30 p.m., followed by varsity boys. The JV boys play at 5:30 p.m. in the other gym, followed by JV girls.

Goodland also has a new girls' coach, Mroczek said, and their top two scorers against Chase County last year are back. They also have a six-foot player inside. They'll be a talented group, he said.

"Both games will give us a good measure where we're at," Mroczek said.



### **Young team, lots of playing time**

Coach Mroczek said it will be a bit different this year for his team, with two fewer players than last year's roster of 15.

With the tallest player listed at 5'8", it will also be the first time in several years the Lady Longhorns will be without some height.

To compensate, Mroczek said this team will have to push the ball in their transition game against taller teams. Against teams of similar size, the Lady Longhorns may slow down the game tempo and work for the open shot.

With two seniors (one a first-year player), five juniors, three sophomores and three freshmen, the team is young, but that has been a positive challenge for the team.

"Their work ethic has been very good, and it's been very competitive at practice," Mroczek said. Though there aren't as many players to compete with, they know they are working for playing time.

"A lot of the young girls will have the opportunity to play," he said.

Eleven of the players took part in this summer's shooting clinic at CCS, where "chutes" were used to force the correct technique. The school purchased some of the "chutes" and they are used at the start of each practice.

Mroczek said he's noticed a lot of improvement on their shots and form.

The Lady Longhorns have five returning letterwinners, who are likely to be the varsity starters Thursday night, Mroczek said.

They include Jilanne German, Karlee Palmer, Lexee Reichert, Chantal Heathers and Shannon Liewer.

Chase County's other senior, Dinelly Benitez, is a first-year player, as are the three freshmen.

Here is the roster by class:

Seniors—Jilanne German, Dinelly Benitez.

Juniors—Karlee Palmer, Carolina Ramos, Catarina Ramos, Lexee Reichert, Alexis Tropf.

Sophomores—Chantal Heathers, Michaela Ketter, Shannon Liewer.

Freshmen—Kayla Brown, Morgan Fisher, Bethany Sorensen.

Nancy Sorensen replaces Matt Jablonski as the team's assistance coach.

### **Chase County in Class C2**

The Lady Longhorns will be in Class C2 this year, dropping from Class C1.

While the schedule won't change much, it does mean a closer subdistrict come February. Last year, the Chase County girls had to travel to Alliance for subdistricts.

One other change on the schedule is the holiday tournament, which will be in Perkins County this year Dec. 28-29.

Other teams at the tourney will be Kimball and Maxwell, both of whom are not on this year's regular season schedule.

The rest of the schedule is about the same, including two games every weekend until the Christmas break.

With the exception of the girls' Southwest Consolidated game on Dec. 19 and the Sutherland game Jan. 29, the rest of the regular season features all boy/girl contests the same evenings.

The SPVA conference tournament will again be held in North Platte involving both girls' and boys' varsity teams the week of Jan. 18, 2010.