By Jan Schultz
The Imperial Republican

Coming off a 40-38 exhibition game win last week, the Lady Longhorns head into this week's season opening contests with a lot of anticipation.

The team has a roster of 18 players this season—two seniors, seven juniors, seven sophomores and two freshmen.

First opponent for the Lady Longhorns will be Cozad, who will travel to Imperial for JV and varsity games today (Thursday). Chase County and Cozad both are competing in Class C1 this season.

For Thursday's opener, both the girls' and boys' JV teams will open action at 4 p.m. with the girls playing in the Longhorn gym and the boys in the Shorthorn gym. Girls' varsity action will follow the JV girls in the Longhorn gym, with the boys' varsity game following the girls.

It will be the same format in McCook Friday, when the Lady Longhorns travel there to face the Class B Lady Bison. JV action starts at 3:30 p.m. MT in two gyms, followed by the girls' varsity and boys' varsity in the high school gym.

Coach Nancy Sorensen said since practice started Nov. 12, the team has spent a lot of time working on offense against the press. They expect to be facing a strong presence of that in at least the first four games of the season.

A focus has also been limiting turnovers and not forcing passes and plays, things that worked against them last season.

The team is hoping to improve on its 6-17 record last year.

Likely starters for Thursday's varsity season opener will be Morgan Fisher, Kristen Jussel, Bethany Sorensen, Kaycee Bubak and Bridget Langin.

Coach Sorensen said the team is dealing with some injuries to a couple of key players, MaKenna Ketter and Emma Bauerle.

Ketter has a hamstring injury and is in physical therapy. She's likely not to see action until Christmas or after, Sor-ensen said.

Bauerle is dealing with a hand injury and was to see a specialist this week.

One of the schedule changes this season will be the team's holiday tournament in Sidney. The Cabela's Holiday Shoot-out will be Dec. 27-29, with teams guaranteed three games.

In addition to Sidney, other teams invited include Broken Bow, Gering, Hershey, Gothenburg, Douglas, Wyo., and Love Christian Fellowship High School in Denver.

The SPVA Conference Tournament returns to North Platte Community College Jan. 15, 18-19 and the Lady Longhorns will be in Lexington for subdistricts Feb. 11-12 and 14.

Coach Sorensen is being assisted by Chris Sander again this season. Blair Hartman is team manager.

Here is the roster of players for the 2012-13 season:

Seniors—Morgan Fisher, Bethany Sorensen.

Juniors—Kristen Jussel, Makala Bartels, Kaycee Bubak, Bridget Langin, Kelsey Wood, Anna Bauerle, Jodi Koellner.

Sophomores—Makenna Wallin, Paige Spady, Emma Bauerle, MaKenna Ketter, Mindy Castle, Valeria Cervantes, Jessica Hartman.

Freshmen—Annika Swanson, Cheyanne Kuhlmann.

Exhibition game victory

The Lady Longhorns took a 40-38 win from Hitchcock County in the Nov. 20 exhibition game held in Imperial.

Coach Sorensen said she was pleased with the team's ball movement and their free throw shooting, hitting seven of nine attempts.

"It was a good test to show what we needed to do at practice," she said.

It also helped "get some of the nerves and jitters" out before the regular season started.

All of the 18 players saw action in the game, which benefitted the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame.

Scoring for Chase County were Jussel 12, Spady 10, Bubak 4, Langin 4, Koellner 4, Fisher 3 and A. Bauerle 3.