



## Lady Longhorns will be on road to Cozad for opener Thursday night

**By Jan Schultz**

***The Imperial Republican***

Chase County lost just two seniors from its 2012-13 Lady Longhorn basketball team, so Coach Nancy Sorensen said it's great to have some experience back this year.

The Lady Longhorns open their 2013-14 season tonight (Thursday) on the road to Cozad, but will be back in Imperial Friday for their home opener against McCook.

In addition to the experienced players back, including eight returning letterwinners, Coach Sorensen is also liking the numbers this year.

Twenty-four girls are on the roster, a 33 percent increase over last year's 18.

"The numbers are wonderful and it's great to have that experience back, too," she said.

The additional players help practice run more smoothly, she said, and makes it more competitive for the girls.

She said they have all their strong rebounders and post players back, so are good in the height department.

Last year's two graduated seniors, Bethany Sorensen and Morgan Fisher, were Chase County's main ball handlers. They are needing to be replaced this season, and Sorensen said they continue to work on getting the right combination together.

The team's been helped by a large freshmen class of nine, as well as two seniors who didn't play last year, Sabrina Huicochea and Emma Engbrecht.

Huicochea, who started in last week's exhibition game, just moved to the community this summer, and Engbrecht sat out last season while she attended another school.

The status of a few injuries on the team will be key as Chase County opens play this week, Sorensen noted.

Senior Kaycee Bubak was the team's leading scorer last year (5.3 point-per-game avg.), but she's been sidelined a bit with a back injury. She played in last week's exhibition game and has been at practice, but Sorensen said her status for playing this week was still questionable Monday.

The team is also hampered by a couple of other injuries to senior Bridget Langin and junior MaKenna Ketter, both key members of the team.

Langin is also dealing with some back issues, and has not practiced yet, Sorensen said. Ketter, who has some knee issues, didn't practice the first week (Nov. 18-22), but is practicing now and saw some action last week at the exhibition game.

If the early injuries improve and the team stays healthy, Sorensen said they will be strong in the post positions. Another positive is that they work well together, she added.

There are still areas to be worked on at practice even though the first games loom this week. Sorensen said it would be nice to have another week of practice, but the girls are also ready to

play.

Mark Bottom is the new girls' team assistant coach this year, replacing Chris Sander, who moved from the community. Coach Sorensen said he is an excellent resource for the team.

The Lady Longhorns, who finished 7-18 last year, lost to Cozad and McCook in 2012 on this opening weekend.

However, Sorensen noted both teams have lost a lot of seniors to graduation, but will also have some experience back, too.

She expects full court pressure and man-to-man defense both Thursday and Friday nights.

This year's Lady Longhorn roster includes seven seniors, seven juniors, one sophomore and nine freshmen. An "lw" behind a name indicates they are a returning letterwinner from the 2012-13 season.

Seniors—Makala Bartels (lw), Anne Bauerle (lw), Kaycee Bubak (lw), Emma Engbrecht, Sabrina Huicochea, Jodi Koellner (lw), Bridget Langin (lw).

Juniors—Emma Bauerle, Mindy Castle, Valeria Cervantes (lw), Jessica Hartman, MaKenna Ketter, Paige Spady (lw), Makenna Wallin.

Sophomores—Cheyanne Kuhlmann (lw).

Freshmen—Sarah Allen, Brittanie Benge, Shaylee Heathers, Molly Luhrs, Taylin McNair, Kaylee Meeske, Kadyrn Milner, Josie Peterson, Destiny Reinke.

In Cozad tonight (Thursday), action starts at 4 p.m. Both JV teams will play at that time, followed by the varsity girls' and boys' games in the larger gym.

Games will also start at 4 p.m. in Imperial Friday when the McCook Lady Bison are in town. The same schedule is set with both JV contests at 4 p.m., followed by the varsity games in the Longhorn gym.

The girls' C team will travel to Holyoke, Colo., Monday for a 6 p.m. contest.

### **Big win at exhibition game**

Chase County had little trouble putting away Hitchcock County Nov. 26 in an exhibition game that supported the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation.

The game was played in Trenton as Chase County took a 54-14 win.

The Lady Longhorns started slowly, trailing 6-4 after the first quarter. But that was followed by three strong quarters of scoring, as Hitchcock County was held to single digits each of the ensuing quarters.

Coach Sorensen said it took her team a little time to warm up, and had better offense in the final three quarters of the contest.

Chase County took 12 players to the game, and nine scored, led by Jodie Koellner with 15.

Also scoring were Makenna Wallin 8, Emma Engbrecht 7, Makala Bartels 6, Emma Bauerle 6, MaKenna Ketter 4, Anna Bauerle 4, Valeria Cervantes 2 and Paige Spady 2.

Besides Huicochea, other starters for the exhibition game included Bartels, Bubak, Spady and Cervantes.

Points by quarters:

Chase Co. 4 14 8 28—54

Hitchcock Co. 6 3 3 2—14