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1972-73 GRIZZLY BASKETBALL OUTLOOK IS SCRAMBLED

by George Fultz--SID

MISSOULA----

A knee operation, two varieties of ineligibility and young sophomores in key starting roles has scrambled the picture for University of Montana basketball fortunes in the 1972-73 basketball campaign.

Six weeks ago Grizzly mentor Jud Heathcote was looking to the basketball season with optimism and high hopes, but with reservations as to how long it would take for two sophomores, center Ken McKenzie and forward Larry Smedley, to adjust to varsity competition.

Today Heathcote is faced with the problem of playing the first four ball games of the 1972-73 campaign without three of his top four guards. Only all-conference Mike Murray, a 5-11 senior with great talent, returns. Murray was the leading Grizzly scorer (14.7) a year ago.

Montana has lost starting guard Robin Selvig to a knee operation for at least six weeks of the season, and junior guards Kevin Rocheleau and Eric Hays are ineligible. Rocheleau, a returning letterman, will miss the first four games, but will be able to play Dec. 15 against Washington State. Hays, a transfer from Washington State, will not be eligible until Jan. 3.

Heathcote has moved forward Dale Parker, a 6-5 senior, to guard, and is giving sophomores Mark Nord (6-0) and Tom Peck (5-10) a long hard look. Nord and Peck, the starting guards on last year's 17-1 frosh crew, have had their problems in running the fast break effectively in practice sessions and Heathcote is giving freshman Mark Wells a chance with the fast break this week. Wells is 5-10 and very mature for a freshman. Newcomer Carnail Banks has great quickness, but is inexperienced.

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McKenzie and Smedley were the two leading rebounders and scorers on last season's fine freshman team and have been promoted directly to starting slots on this year's varsity. The 6-8½ McKenzie will be an outstanding post man as soon as he gains consistency on offense and begins to rebound with authority according to Heathcote. Until the disaster hit the guard ranks Heathcote felt that the outcome of the 1972-73 season would hinge largely on how rapidly McKenzie developed, and the big lefty's development is of even greater importance now. 6-7 Cris Anderson, a letterman a year ago, will serve as McKenzie's back up.

Joining 6-6½ Smedley, a 19.9 scorer on the frosh team, at forward will be Earl Tye. Tye, a 6-7 senior, is basically a defensive player and does not score much as witnessed by his 4.9 average as a starter last year. Tye however is the Big Sky's premier inside defensive player and will be complemented well by Smedley. Smedley is a solid offensive threat.

6-6 Scott Hollenbeck will serve as the number one back up in the forecourt, but is being pushed for that role by Anderson and 6-7 sophomore Tim Stambaugh. Returning squadman Blake Lyman will also see a reserve role.

Heathcote admits that the early part of the season will be a real trial for his basketball players, but that he hopes to have a strong team by the beginning of conference play January 4.

"We will probably get off to a slow start because of the loss of Selvig, but we hope to have it together by the beginning of the conference season and be a contender for the title. Our sophomores will have matured, we will have Rocheleau and Hays eligible, and with the anticipated return of Selvig we will be a stronger club than last year's by the time Big Sky plays begins," Heathcote says.

Montana opens its season Monday night against Morningside College in the newly renovated, 9,300 seat Harry Adams Fieldhouse.

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