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1980-81 University of Montana Gymnastics Preview

Added depth should make the University of Montana women's gymnastics team stronger than in years past. The team is preparing for the first competition of the season, which will be the Missoula City Open Dec. 13.

"The over-all team strength, because of the number of all-around gymnasts, is really good this year," according to coach Terry Hamilton. "We'll have more depth than we've ever had before. Consequently, our team score should be higher."

Hamilton has five returning letter winners on the team. They are junior Kari Shepherd (Anchorage, Alaska) and sophomores Kit Curry (Missoula, Mont.), Mercedes Gonzales (Vancouver, Wash.), Shawn Leary (Helena, Mont.) and Cathy Sowl (Anchorage, Alaska). Curry specializes in the vault while the others are all-around gymnasts. The team's other sophomore is Carol Brown (Great Falls, Mont.), also an all-around gymnast.

Hamilton is looking toward the team's five freshmen to provide a lot of help. They are led by Carol Quenemoen (Great Falls, Mont.), last year's Montana Class AA All-Around champion. Hamilton says Quenemoen could place in the top ten in the region. Other freshmen on the team are Sue Harris (Helena, Mont.), who specializes in the balance beam and floor exercise and all-arounds Jackie Judson (Mankato, Minn.), Deanna Nixon (Libby, Mont.) and Nancy Wilson (Billings, Mont.).

Last year, the team scored 123 points and was ninth out of 15 Division I and II schools in AIAW Region IX. This year, Hamilton believes the team can score 130 points,

(more)

Gymnastics--add one

which should move the Grizzlies up to fifth or sixth.

Among the Division I schools, Hamilton says Oregon State has the best team. He said Oregon and Washington will also be strong. However, he said Montana has a good chance of catching Montana State and Washington State.

"All the girls worked out hard this summer. We started practices a month early, so we're a little ahead of earlier years. Because of that, we've been able to add more difficulty into our routines," Hamilton said.

Hamilton also has some advice for gymnastics fans.

"We will be particularly fun to watch this year," he said. "The girls are going to be throwing exciting routines with a great deal of finesse. So in terms of being a spectator, I think we'll really be fun to watch this year."

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