

A Fresh Look At Nebraska

-Isms

By LuAnn Schindler

They've been dubbed the dream team, the girls with hoop dreams, whose Sunday late-night loss ended a Cinderella season with a dismal case of Kentucky blues.

Kelsey Griffin and company explored basketball courts where no other Husker team has gone before. They rebounded from a drab 2009 campaign to the top of national charts. The Big Red machine earned an unblemished record in Big 12 paint, entering March Madness with a lone loss.

The dunkadelics who play winter's game of contentment brought a renewed sense of pride to this "volleyball state."

Connie Yori's squad made history with a Sweet 16 appearance and the best single-season record.

But the history of Husker women's b-ball proves that this magical basketball ride began with another standout personality.

Nebraska's basketball pioneer, Louise Pound, organized and played on the first teams.

In 1896, the University offered women's roundball in PE courses. The first all-women's team played in front of its first audience in 1897 at the annual Gymnasium Exhibition.

In March 1898, the team tipped off against Council Bluffs. Pound compromised on the game rules. The first half followed men's rules; the second, Smith College, or modified women's rules, were in effect. Pound connected on three field goals and five free throw attempts. Nebraska won 15 - 7.

Men attending the sporting event had to be accompanied by a lady because single men attracted the wrong type of audience, states the Nebraska Journal.

For several years, a limited number of intramurals were played. Why? Lack of room. A pipe organ was stored in the gym.

In 1901, the Huskers met the University of Missouri in the first intercollegiate match for girls ever played in the west.

The 1905 team completed the season undefeated, 3-0.

The Board of Regents abolished intercollegiate athletics for women in 1908. If co-eds wanted to play, they enrolled in PE classes.

Nearly 60 years later, the dribble of basketballs could be heard in campus as club teams alley-ooped their way back into the history books. For 11 years, a string of coaches experienced ups - and primarily - downs with the team.

Enter Angela Beck in 1986. Stability defined the lady's program. In year two, Beck led her team to its first NCAA bid.

Paul Sandeford followed and brought added excitement to the program.

But since Connie Yori's 2002 debut, women's basketball has flexed its muscle on campus, earning post-season invitations and player accolades.

Hopefully, fans understand the floorwork Pound provided for women's athletics. Without her contributions, our athletic heritage would have been benched and blocked until Title IX.

Fans celebrate the players who've made history: Maurtice Ivy, Karen Jennings, Nicole Kubik.

And today, we wonder what the future holds for the fantastic five who allowed Nebraska daughters to dream they, too, could someday record a double-double in Nebraska's basketball history.

Ladies, we've come a long way from playing in the Nebraska armory to in front of sell-out crowds in The Bob.

I'm predicting the program's tradition continues.

You can bank on it.