



The fall and rise of women's B-ball

Flint has moved the Yeowomen from obscurity to national prominence

Jules 'Sparky' Xavier

In the first year of women's athletics the 1966-67 York women's basketball team won their initial game 18-16 playing Waterloo Lutheran (Laurier). They finished the season with a 3-5 record setting the tone for years to come.

In the early seventies the women's basketball teams went through a long drought of not winning a single league game. Players became discouraged as did coaches and did not stay with the team too much longer. There was no pride in playing basketball at York.

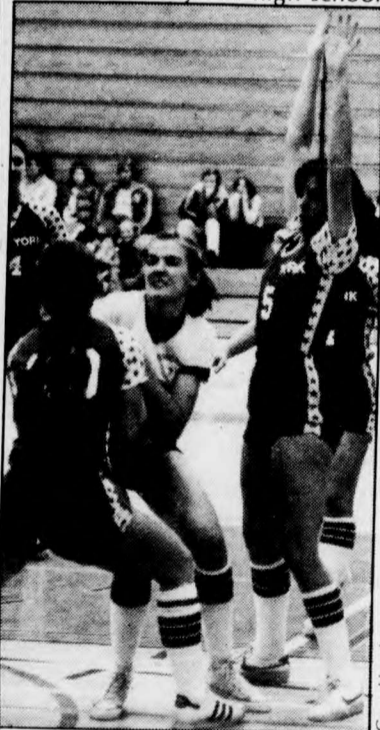
Alf Lane, coach in 1974-75, felt the York women's basketball team had a future with possible play-off or championship success. He felt this would come about after an intensive recruiting program was instituted to retain many of Toronto's outstanding female athletes. "Women like to be recruited," he said.

Lane figured that the liaison between the high schools was crucial. A substantial upgrading of the calibre of women's athletics would occur if the University showed an interest in this area.

Lane's ideas finally began to take root four years later when a very attractive and eager coach was hired by the Faculty of Physical Education as both a teacher and coach.

During the past three seasons of competition the York Yeowomen basketball team has moved from relative obscurity to national prominence. The Yeowomen success story begins with coach Frances Flint who took over the team in 1978.

Flint began her coaching career out of necessity. In high school



Rookie Elaine Stewart (5)...the coach did one hell of a job.

knee injuries forced her off the courts to the bench where she coached the senior team. At the University of Toronto Flint was a member of the Lady Blues. She later coached at the University of Oregon while furthering her studies in Outdoor Education.

In her initial 1978-79 season, coach Flint recruited a number of young, but outstanding players, and the team went 7-5 in the Ontario Tier 2 division for a fourth place overall finish, just out of play-off contention. The year before, the team was 2-13.

Still young but determined, the goal for the Yeowomen in 1979-80

was a move to a top position in Tier 2 and the opportunity to move into Tier 1. The team accomplished that goal behind the excellent play of rookies Barb Whibbs and Kim Holden, finishing the regular season with a 10-2 record for second place and a berth in the Ontario pre-finals.

The team then made a clean sweep of the pre-finals with three straight wins which qualified York for Ontario championships. As a result of their performance at the pre-finals the Yeowomen were guaranteed a spot in Tier 1 for 1980-81.

During their first year in Tier 1 the team set out to prove their strength in the tougher division and to map out a playing strategy which would lead them to the Ontario finals as one of the division's top teams. York maintained a number one spot on top of Tier 1 for much of the season of play but finished the season with an 8-4 record and second place. In the Ontario finals York finished third overall.

In addition, the Yeowomen reached another landmark in 1980-81 when they were ranked nationally as the country's ninth best on December 9, 1980, York's first-ever national ranking in women's basketball.

Flint's first priorities after taking the helm of the Yeowomen were a total rebuilding of the personnel, practice procedures and playing attitudes. The most important change had to come in the area of self-image.

"The team did not have any self respect or feeling of worth and, therefore, other teams did not regard them highly," commented Flint as she felt pride was the first necessary component to be injected into the team's attitude.

The Yeowomen have definitely gained the respect they justly deserve. "The players are now proud to walk into another gym with York on their shirts. They've now got something to be proud of," said Flint.

"Coaching is the act of catching a player doing something right."

In the coach's eyes it takes more than one year to rebuild a team. "The 1979-80 season was the most critical in York's return to respectability. If the recruits come through and help build on what we have started, then York will begin to gain the reputation of a women's basketball school. This will make rebuilding and recruiting easier each year." This definitely held true for the Yeowomen as everything fell into its proper place.

Coach Flint doesn't strike you as a basketball coach when you first meet her. She is quiet, well-mannered person who is very interesting to speak with. Talking with her you soon see the coach in her come forth. Speaking on basketball you see how knowledgeable she really is. She also has a definite winning attitude which compliments the technical knowledge she offers the players.

Commenting on coaching Flint responded, "Coaching is the act of catching a player doing something right."

She feels the most important ingredient to the success that York has enjoyed is hard work and



York coach Frances Flint has been the driving force behind the Yeowomen success in the past three years. A composed Flint analyzes the Yeowomen game. (Inset)

recruiting. "My ability to analyze the players performances provides them with useful information that can only make them better basketball players," she added.

The planned realignment next year to the East-West divisions has coach Flint thinking about next season as the West will be the tougher division. "More exhibition games will have to be arranged so when the play-offs

team felt the coach did a hell of a job in making York a Tier 1 contender.

Third year veteran Anne Kinsella thinks Frances has laid the foundations for York's basketball program of the future.

"She's done well in recruiting though she still hasn't used the players to their fullest yet. Her program has made better players which will attract other better players," said Kinsella.

players in Toronto as being higher today enabling Frances to develop a better team. "She has more to work with than past coaches," commented Kinsella.

Observing Flint from a spectators point of view one comes to admire and respect her as both a coach and an individual.

Her part in restructuring the Yeowomen basketball program over the past three years is both commendable and praiseworthy. The Yeowomen of the future will be a team to watch under her expert guidance.

Kinsella sees the calibre of



Dina Sullivan (12)...praised the coach for her encouragement.