

Once around the league means notoriety for Keats

by Tim Enger

At the beginning of every basketball game there is a little ritual where everybody matches up with the person they will be defending against. It's usually no big deal, but lately it's becoming a bit of a bother for Panda forward Kathy Keats.

When she came to the center circle last Saturday night against the Victoria Vikettes the last person she wanted to hear say "I've got 11" did so.

It's bad enough that you have to play the number one team in the nation but it's even worse when you have to drag a three time All-Canadian and Canadian National Team player in the person of Lori Clarke around the court with you.

"It's quite an honor having her guard me," said Keats, "but I'd rather she didn't do me any favors."

Unfortunately, being guarded by one of the oppositions better players is becoming commonplace for the second year Arts student, as coaches and players around the league are beginning to realize that this young lady can do a lot of damage if left alone.

The reason for this sudden popularity is that it is quite rare when Keats is not one of the top two Panda scorers by game's end (including a solid ten points vs. Clarke and the Vikettes, most coming via her patented rainbow jumpshot from the base line).

Last year as a rookie, Keats impressed a lot of people as a solid sixth-(man?) and sometimes starter. But that was not surprising as she came out of high school highly rated.

While at Archbishop MacDonald High School in Edmonton she was a two time All-Star and was named Premier Conference MVP in 1985 (finishing second in voting in 1984). Also in 1985 she led her team to the 3A Provincial Championship after winning the city title. As a result she was heavily recruited (for Canada that is) out of high school.

"I was contacted by most of the local colleges and even the University of Calgary," said Keats, "but I knew all along that I'd go to Alberta."

After a stint with the Under-21 Alberta Provincial team that took fourth place at the 1985 Canada Games Keats joined the Pandas and immediately fit in.

"I really didn't notice any difference in the play (coming right out of high school). I knew most of the girls from the Under-21 team and that helped me adjust to the game quicker."

Except for a rough period near the end of last year, Keats has shown the consistent play that is necessary to be a starter in the tough Canada West Conference.

"At the beginning of this year I had some things to prove. Much more is expected of me now and I like that because it's a challenge."

Speaking of challenges, Keats and her teammates will have all they can handle as they embark on a two game road trip to Calgary and Lethbridge where they will play a pair of crucial matches.

"It's pretty well for sure that the playoff teams are going to be the same as last year (UVic, Calgary, Lethbridge and the Pandas), says Keats. "All that's left now is to see who finishes where and our next four games should have a big effect on that."

So it's business as usual this weekend for the Pandas, and for Kathy Keats, it's another chance to thrive under her increasing workload hopefully leading her team to paydirt.



Kathy Keats (11) is no longer an unknown in Canada West womens basketball. Against Victoria, national teamer Lori Clarke was assigned to defend the Panda



photo Stephen Pandke

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