

Commentary: previewing the 1999-2000 men's basketball team

By Nick MacEwen

The UPEI Panthers men's basketball team begins regular season play against Memorial on November 13. The Panthers are hoping to improve on their performances of the last couple of years. They are hopeful that they can make the playoffs and do some damage when they get there.

The Panthers are going to have another tough year this year. They are still a relatively young team who haven't played together for very long. They will probably be battling for one of the last playoff spots this season.

UPEI is a team that can play very well at times but when they

are not at their best, things can really go south. The Panthers have some aspects of their game which they need to improve on if they hope to make the playoffs this year. One of the things that they need to improve on is their rebounding, especially from the guard position. The Panthers usually get a good effort on the boards from their forwards but they could use more size in the paint. Against a team like Saint Mary's, UPEI will just get pushed around inside. Rebounding from the guards is pretty well non-existent. There have been numerous occasions where the Panthers have forced a missed shot from the opposing team but the

guards have not been able to keep the other team's guards from getting inside and getting a rebound. If the guards did a better job boxing out and keeping the opposition off the boards and if their big men could get a little stronger inside, it would be a good start.

The Panthers also have to work on their defense. Opposing teams have an easy time scoring and it is not hard for opposing guards to break down the Panthers defense. UPEI's guards need to work on stopping penetration to the middle and they also have to find a way to stop people inside. The Panthers are too small inside to try and overpower the other teams

big men. When the opposition is able to get the ball in the key, they don't have much trouble scoring. The Panthers need to force the other teams big men to get the ball outside the key and then they could get help down low to make the big men throw the ball back out to the wing.

The other thing they really need to improve on is their foul shooting. There are lots of games that the Panthers have lost that they have been in right to the end but haven't been able to hit those key free throws to be able to pull the game out. Improving their foul shooting would go a long way to helping them to the playoffs this season.

One thing that the Panthers do very well is shoot the ball. UPEI has one of the best shooting teams in the league and their shooting can usually keep them in a game and give them a chance to win. Four of the five Panthers starters can shoot three pointers at any given time and are very good shooters. The only problem is that sometimes they rely a little too much on their shooting and can take some very bad shots at key times during a game. When they are on their game and shooting well as a team, there aren't many teams that want to be facing the Panthers.

When the Panthers work as a team, they are capable

of beating any team in the League. When the Panthers have only one or two players taking all the shots and being the only threats to score, they become a very easy team to beat, but when they let everyone on the court touch the ball and when they have five people who are threats out on the court, they become a very good team which they showed with their 91-61 victory over Dalhousie in their tournament.

The Panthers have a lot of work ahead of them if they hope to make the playoffs. If they work together as a team and improve in some areas of their game, they will make the playoffs and be a very tough team to contend with. END

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