LN Has Much to Look Foward to in Women's Basketball

Maggie Sikkema
Staff Writer

Senior Janell "Nelly" Smith just recently verbally committed to play basketball for University of Michigan in the 2008-2009 season. Being verbally committed means that there is a spot on the team for you, but you're not attending the school on a sports scholarship. She has been playing basketball since the age of six. Janell Smiths' dream was to play basketball for Tennessee, but at this point in time Michigan appears to be the best choice for her.

"It [U of M] was the right choice for Janell academically and athletically," said Coach Damian Smith. Coach Smith has been coaching Janell Smith for two years. He said Janell Smith is fun to be around and just a happy and humble person. Coach Smith said that on the court Janell Smith has a need to get to the ball.

"She is very quick and has a knack for getting the ball," said Coach Smith.

Janell Smith's goal for this season is to do well. She wants to win districts and regionals. She knows that regionals will be a challenge.

"It will be tough, they'll give us a run for our money," Janell Smith said with a smile on her face.

Janell Smith has gotten to where she is today with the help of her mother and brother. She knows that they will always be on her case. They give her positive criticism and are always there to support her.

Coach Smith has two main goals for this LN basketball season. The first is to get all players on all three teams to have at least a 3.0 GPA. This is twice the required 1.5 GPA you must have to try out for any sport. Last year the team finished with an overall GPA of 3.2. Coach Smith's second goal is to develop the freshmen and junior varsity levels, he feels developing the teams leading up to the varsity level is important for the future of the program. A key player in the development of the program is freshmen Abbi Schreck.

MADISON KAY/ KNIGHT LIFE

The LN girls basketball team faced off against Battle Creek Central on Friday, November 30th. Maria Davis tried her best to defend the Knight's basket, and eventually stole the ball back for LN.

> "She is very quick and has a knack for getting the ball."
> -Coach Smith

Schreck made varsity this season but has been moved down to play with the JV team. Schreck was moved down because Coach Smith thought varsity was moving a little too fast for her. He also didn't want Schreck to lose the confidence she already has. Schreck is hoping to be able to play at the varsity level sometime this season. Schreck practiced with varsity this summer.

"I want Abbi to develop into a basketball player on and off the court," explained Coach Smith.

Although varsity may be moving at a higher pace than Schreck is ready for, Coach Smith still has high hopes for her. Coach Smith said that Schreck has a good work ethic, and Schreck wants to improve. Schreck feels she needs to improve on her jump shot and defense.

"It [getting moved down] definitely makes me want to be better," said Schreck. She plans on staying after practice and playing on the weekends to improve on her game.

Schreck looks up to Janell Smith on the varsity team the most.

"[She's a] great individual on and off the court," said Schreck.

Janell Smith knows when Schreck is ready to be on varsity, she will be able to contribute a lot to the team and really commit herself.

The Lady Knights finished their season last year with the record of 19 wins and 6 losses. Coach Smith hopes to have another successful season this year as well.

Wrestling Team: Weighing In

Angelo Murray
Photo Editor

Wrestling is an aggressive sport that challenges young men and some women physically and mentally. With hardcore exercises and a goal to lose or gain weight, the wrestling team of Loy Norrix met their first Alpha weigh-in Thanksgiving week. The Alpha weigh-ins are important because wrestlers learn which weight class they will be wrestling in for the upcoming season. Weight classes match opponents based on their weights, and wrestlers are officially registered on the team.

Losing 11 pounds and gaining muscle in a matter of weeks was the amazing result for LN first time wrestler, junior Andrew Blodgett. Blodgett's workouts consist of lifting weights and running and can take up to 5 hours a day. One of the craziest things the coach has ever made him do was run back and forth in the gym (suicides) after intense conditioning.

Blodgett described it as, "running through hell!" Blodgett also maintains a healthy diet. He likes to eat wraps, and is committed to not eating greasy foods or fast food.

Blodgett's family and friends support him and compliment him for losing weight. His goal is to lose a total of 30 pounds. Blodgett thinks hard work will pay off,

"I'll be skinnier one day and fit and healthy," said Blodgett. Blodgett currently weighs in at 219 pounds.

Salads, fruits and vegetables, drinking lots of water, eating less meat, staying away from fatty substances, pop and greasy foods is the diet for LN wrestler Tracy "TJ" Gum, senior. Gum's weight class is 125. This will be Gum's fourth year wrestling. He previously wrestled for Milwood Middle School.

Gum started wrestling to try something new, he was inspired by his father who wrestled in high school. Gum compares the running exercises to cross country because both sports take lots of endurance and stamina.

Gum has wrestled very diverse people over his years as a wrestler. He has wrestled a girl but didn't treat her any different from a male wrestler.

"If she's man enough to step on the mat, she's man enough to take the punishment!" Gum said.

After high school Gum wants to wrestle for the Marines and possibly in college.

ANGELO MURRAY/KNIGHT LIFE

Tracy Gum shows Charles Lipsey who's boss, by doing hard grappeling moves. Lipsey is a sophomore at LN and is a new LN wrestler.

ANGELO MURRAY/ KNIGHT LIFE

Chris Craft and Tyler Selph show off their wrestling skills during practice. They will learn from mistakes and use the techniques during matches.

Freshmen Twins Tumble Toward Success

Daedal Derks
Staff Writer

Cheerleading is an age-old tradition of combining elements from tumbling, dance, and stunting to cheer for a team. Many people don't believe that cheerleading is a sport, including junior Ben Fleming.

"The only part of cheerleading that I would consider a sport is when they do flips in the air, but other then that the rest is just jumping up and down," said Fleming.

It is this attitude that has created a tough situation for the Norrix cheer program. It often isn't realized what kind of athleticism and fitness one must have to be a cheerleader. Many cheerleaders have backgrounds in tumbling and gymnastics which both require an extremely well maintained physique.

DAEDAL DERKS / KNIGHT LIFE

Cheerleaders stretch and condition during a practice. The effort the team shows in practice is likely to directly contribute to their success this season.

Last year the competitive cheer team at Norrix set a goal of reaching a .500 season by winning half of their competitions. The team came within a hair of making it, finishing at .486. With five returning members from that successful team and the addition of several freshmen, cheer coaches and cheerleaders alike are expecting big things this season.

"We should do very well in competitive this year," said coach Lori Bell.

Two new additions to the team this year are freshmen twins Haley and Brianna Pfeil. They have both been cheerleading since fifth grade and really love it. After moving to Kalamazoo from Arizona, they discovered that cheerleading here is a little bit different.

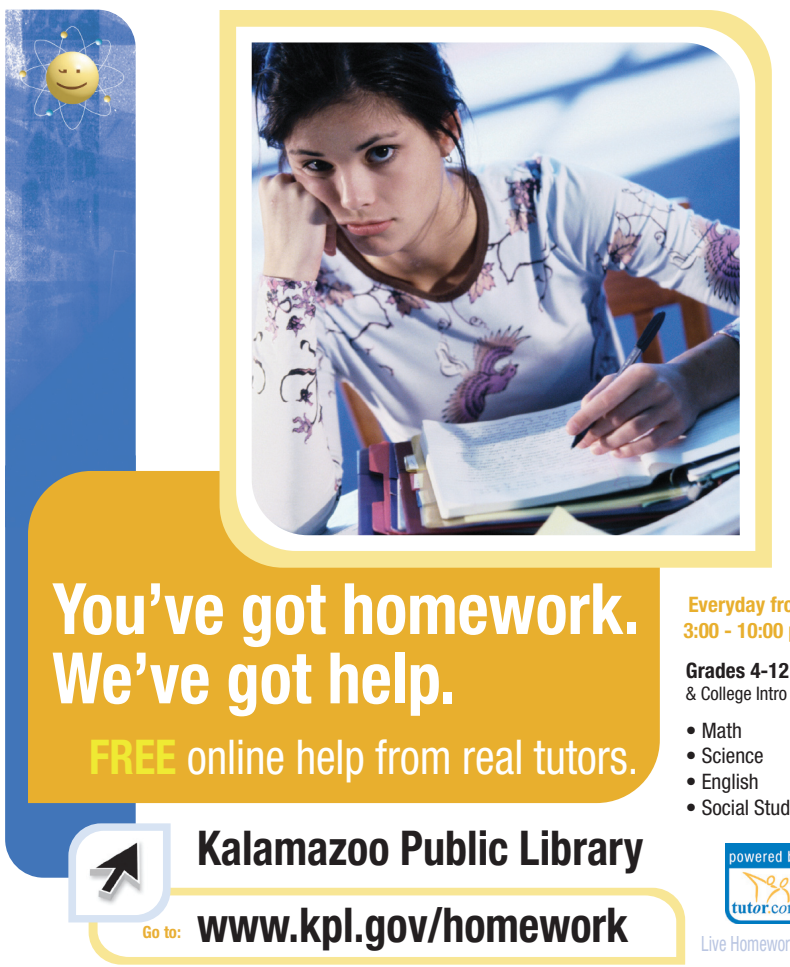
In Arizona they both did competitive cheer but had never participated in sideline cheer. "During the football season this year we practiced twice a week, but we'll do more for competitive," said Haley Pfeil.

Both Haley and Brianna do running and stretching in the off-season to stay in shape for cheerleading and Haley takes tumbling classes. Both are looking forward to the coaching of Lori Bell and harder skill level routines than what they have done in the past.

Lori Bell has coached for several years at Norrix but not continuously. She started coaching in 1998 but then stopped in 2003 when Norrix started up its competitive cheer program. Bell stopped because she had very little experience with competitive cheer and thought that someone with more experience would be better suited for the job.

"Sideline cheer is about getting the crowd involved but competitive is more tumbling and stunting and stuff," said Brianna Pfeil. After working through several coaches between 2003 and 2006, Lori Bell decided to take the job again and try her luck at coaching a competitive cheer team. She did well last year coaching the girls to that almost .500 season and is hoping to improve this year.

"I like to take old material and bring it up to the new millennium," said Bell about her style and how she comes up with cheers for the team.

Bell was a cheerleader in high school, but went to Kalamazoo Central, our crosstown rivals. When she took the job at Norrix she thought it might be difficult to make a switch and help out her rival, but she has made the transition well.

"My son was an '02 grad and he played sports here [at Loy Norrix] so that made it easier for me," stated Bell.