

The Pensacola News-Journal

SPORTS



Earle of Sports

EARLE

BOWDEN

Sports Editor

A Man of Progress

Raphael (Shorty) Sneed, a tall-in-the-saddle Alabamian addicted to the craze known informally as bounceball, stuffed practice uniforms into a new automatic washing machine in the dressing room of Pensacola High's house of basketball. Mr. Sneed, coach-laundryman, is mighty proud of his new automatic; it cuts down the cost of laundry.

The morning air carried a light nip of basketballishness. And youngsters darted about the big hall mashing rubber-soled shoes against the polished floor. If you could move your imaginative powers to such flights of fantasy you could see a football season disappearing in the shadows and another basketball year rising from the moth balls, the closets, the minds and hearts of teenagers.

"This new washing machine is the greatest thing since the invention of the roundball," the soft-spoken Tiger cage coach was saying with a grin as he parked his six-foot-eight frame into his office chair. He was about to usher in the 1957-58 season, Sneed and Tiger-style.

"We could run our own laundry or do television commercials," he laughed. "But mostly we like to play basketball around here. I hope we can do plenty of it this winter."

With this Shorty Sneed, Pensacola's Mr. Basketball who is conditioning an inexperienced squad for the opening of his 12th season as PHS, began an enlightening conversation which proved (1) his Tigers need most of all plenty of experience and (2) the 1958-59 season should find PHS back on its feet as a basketball powerhouse.

With the exception of little Mason Morris, durable 5-10 guard ticketed for the Tiger captaincy, Sneed will go into this winter's competition relatively experience-free. Few times in the Sneed era has PHS been so lacking in veteran hands.

Quoth Mr. Sneed:

"They're young and willing. And I expect progress as the season moves along. But we don't plan to set any records this year. I hope we can come up with a creditable showing . . . and we should if we work and work hard.



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"Actually it's not out of the realm of possibility for our squad to develop into a fairly strong club before the season ends. And if they do we could be rough the following year. Actually it looks very promising for next year. With only four seniors on the squad, most of our kids will be returning.

"Too, we have a fine little guard in Mason Morris. Not only is he a scrappy, competitive athlete but a fine gentleman with it." (Morris, a senior, plans to go into the ministry).

Hoping to pluck a quintet of creditable capabilities from last year's junior varsity, Sneed has B teamers: LeWayne Haughton (6-0 senior) and Robert Burt (6-3 junior) leading a pack of forward candidates, with Tommy Rinks (6-1 senior), Bill Krietlein (6-2 junior) and Floyd Price (6-1 junior) battling for a starting assignment.

At center B teamer George Beischer (6-5 junior) currently is a step ahead of 6-7 senior George Crooke, a youngster trying varsity basketball for the first time.

In the back court department, captain Morris will have help from Charles Soule, 5-9 junior, a bevy of sophomores and a handful of football athletes who join the squad Monday afternoon. Billy Jackson, 5-11 junior transfer from Dothan; Carlyle Williams, 6-1 junior; and Bobby Macon, 5-9 junior, are switching from football to cage duties along with Jack Willis, Ricky Rooker, John Sanson and Homer Miller.

Jackson, a second-team Dothan High forward last year as a sophomore, may be the sparkplug Sneed needs to bolster his attack, which sadly lacks hoop experience. The youngster, who developed into one of the Tigers' most elusive tailbacks and topped the scoring parade with 60 points, poured in 12 points to lead Dothan offensively in a losing cause against Sneed's Bengals here last season.

"We've been doing plenty of juggling since practice began," Sneed said, pushing his chair back and putting a burning match to a filter-less cigarette. "And we plan some more when we get the full squad together next week."

Sneed's crop of first-year men up from the junior high courts include Larry Bulger, Gene McCutchin, Tucker Cotton, Buddy Bridges, Terry Jenkins, Francis Smith, Al Riddlehoover, Robert Hoffield, Jerry Morris, Billy Bell, Larry Foxworth and Morris Parker. Juniors seeking berths include Robert Hart, Buddy Fleming, David Krasnosky, James Hobart, Ronald Ellison, James Everage and William Bell.

The Bengals, who open the season here next Friday night against Crestview, have rolled up over 230 victories for Sneed in the 11 seasons the former University of Alabama cage star has been running the show. Prior to the 1955-56 debacle, when PHS won only four games and lost 11, the Sneed-coached Tigers had lost only 18—including tournaments. The loss column now barely exceeds the 30 mark.

"Yes, there are plenty of joys one gets from coaching basketball," Sneed was saying while glancing at the wall pictures of young athletes he has coached here since arriving in the fall of 1946. "Mostly the joys come from watching the kids in later life, after graduation . . . hearing from them . . . watching their progress.

"Too, watching a team develop throughout the season has its pleasures. I get no thrills from a winning season and a championship if the boys haven't shown remarkable improvement along the way. If they begin the season as a crackerjack outfit they should continue to progress."

Across the walls of his gymnasium office the Tiger coach has hung pictures of bright, fresh faces . . . His All-Staters: Billy Renfro, guard, 1948; Johnny Tringas, forward, 1950; Toby Hertz, forward, 1947; Loren Peace, forward, 1953; Harold (Herky) Payne, forward, 1948; Larry Scott, guard, 1951; Bobby Nims, forward, 1951-52; A. C. Sheffield, forward, 1954; Billy (Red) Vickery, center, 1951; Art Radvilas, forward, 1955; George Peace, guard, 1953; Johnny Stanhagen, forward, 1957; Ed Sears, guard, 1954.

There are pictures of the teams . . . the 1952 state champions . . . the unbeaten Tigers of '54 . . . the 1949 team which won 25 and lost three . . . the 1951 outfit which won 27, lost two and was state tournament runnerup. Even the 1956 crowd that won only four and lost 11 . . . they were there with a footnote "gym trouble."

Sneed and his Bengals in short pants aren't bothered anymore with gym trouble. Their house of basketball is one of Florida's finest prep plants. Only the opposition poses trouble for these young athletes, who doubtless will progress with the rapidity expected by the Tall One as the winter nights get colder and March winds whistle the coming of Gainesville's state tournament spectacular.