

MIZZOU

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10 11 tiger basketball

From the ground up

New coach leads a team in transition

Story by Marcus Wilkins

Like a determined rebounder cleaving through defenders to crash the backboard, newly hired Coach Robin Pingeton cuts right to the chase about the state of the women's basketball program at Mizzou. "We are in a major rebuilding situation here," she says. "However, we are excited and extremely optimistic."

That might be because, for the 2010–11 Tigers, there is literally nowhere to go but up. Missouri posted a 12-18 record in 2009–10, lost 16 of its final 18 games and finished at the bottom of the Big 12 Conference.

The Tigers must replace forward Jessra Johnson, departed leader in points and rebounds. Fortunately, three of last season's top five scorers return poised to break the double-figure threshold in average points per game: senior forward Shakara Jones (9.1) from St. Charles, Mo.; senior guard RaeShara Brown (9.7) from Little Rock, Ark.; and junior forward Christine Flores (9.3)



Junior forward BreAnna Brock from San Antonio battles in the lane against Arkansas–Pine Bluff

from San Antonio.

Dec. 21, 2009, at Mizzou Arena. The Tigers will need to mature in the paint to be successful in 2010–11. Photo courtesy Mizzou Intercollegiate athletics

Pingeton expects more from senior guard Jasmyn Otote from Duncanville, Texas, this season, and junior BreAnna Brock from San Antonio will provide depth in the post. “We are going to rely heavily on our seniors,” says the former Illinois State coach. “I believe Jones and Otote will have a great year for us. They’re practicing with a sense of urgency and toughness.”

The Tigers’ No. 1 weakness in 2009–10 was shooting percentage (.375), and they will benefit from the return of junior guards Bailey Gee (Andover, Kan.) and Bekah Mills (Towanda, Kan.) as well as junior center Kendra Frazier (Altamont, Kan.). All three players are recovering from ACL injuries.

Sophomore guards Trenee Thornton (Kansas City, Mo.) and Sydney Crafton (Jefferson City, Mo.) will also compete for minutes, and four freshmen round out the roster. But the new regime’s biggest challenge will be generating recruiting momentum in one of the nation’s toughest conferences. The 2010 Final Four featured two Big 12 teams: Baylor and Oklahoma. “There are too many talented players from this state playing on other teams in the Big 12,” Pingeton says. “It is a priority for us to lock down these borders.”

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