

Point guard Bentley excited for season



Andrew Dunheimer/Colegian

Alex Bentley (20) is pressured by a defender last season.

By Jake Kaplan
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Last season, the Penn State Lady Lions were led by guard Tyra Grant, a four-year starter who finished her career as the third-leading scorer in team history.

This season, the backcourt will have a different feel. Grant has since graduated, and in a sense, the reigns of the team have been handed over to another guard — Alex Bentley.

Bentley is embarking on her sophomore season after a successful rookie campaign. The 5-foot-7 point guard earned third-team All-Big Ten and first-team All-Freshman team last season after averaging 11.8 points per game and leading Penn State in assists. Lady Lions coach Coquese Washington said Bentley's role has not changed this year in the sense of what the team expects her to do, but it has changed in that she will not be playing alongside Grant.

"Her role is going to change in that she is going to have to be a smarter player," Washington said at the team's

media day Oct. 11. "She has got to be the player who is going to lead the team, but she has to grow in her understanding of the position and how to impact the team as a leader and not simply as a scorer."

Bentley, whose 365 points as a freshman ranks her sixth in the program's history for points in a rookie season, said she is comfortable entering the season. Penn State plays Gannon (Pa.) in an exhibition game on Nov. 7 at the Bryce Jordan Center before opening the season on the road against Dayton on Nov. 12.

The Indianapolis native will carry a bigger burden this season, as well, as reserve point guard Emily Phillips transferred to Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) in May. When Bentley is not on the floor, the Lady Lions will play point guard by committee, Washington said.

Washington said junior Zhaque Gray will see time at the position, as will freshman Maggie Lucas and sophomore Gizelle Studevent, when Bentley needs a breather.

"We've got to keep the flow of the game the same. We can't have a downfall when Alex comes out of the game," said Gray, who figures to be Bentley's primary backup.

"Her role is going to change."

Coquese Washington
Lady Lions' coach

"We've got to get her some rest because we're going to need her."

Bentley said she knows she will have to be in better shape this season to handle more minutes, but she has complete confidence in Gray to play the position when Bentley is on the bench.

Washington said Bentley, along with sophomore center Nikki Greene, learned a lot from their freshman years. Penn State lost 10 of its last 12 games to end last season, which Washington said helped the younger players understand how long the season is and that will help them this year.

"I think having that experience and again talking about Nikki Greene and Alex, who played every game, started every game for the most part last season, having that experience is going to be very valuable for them coming in to this season," Washington said. "They were kind of washed off about it and they want to play better."

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Freshman Edwards ready to make impact

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Christ the King Regional High School, located in Queens, N.Y., owns an impressive list of basketball alumni that includes the names Lamar Odom, Sue Bird, Tina Charles and Jayson Williams.

It's also the former home of Lady Lions freshman forward Ariel Edwards. While Edwards hasn't attained the success of those who came before her, the forward's Penn State teammates see plenty of promise in the freshman.

"I think Ariel is going to be a better player than I ever was," senior captain Julia Trogele said at media day. "She is already coming into college at a different level than I was. I think that she is going to get a lot of playing time this year because I know for a fact my knees can't play 40 minutes a

game, and I think that is going to help her grow and mature into a greater player."

As a high school senior, the 6-foot-2 Edwards averaged 17.5 points and 11.5 rebounds per game while helping Christ the King to a 26-5 record.

The freshman, who said she expects to see plenty of minutes on the floor, slots in best as a small forward. While Trogele, last season's leading rebounder, is the starter, the senior has seen flashes of Edwards' potential and believes the freshman will one day take on her role.

Edwards can score, but it's her athleticism and willingness to defend that should get the freshman on the floor for longer stretches.

"Ariel, she is active, long, a tremendous defender," Lady Lions coach Coquese Washington said. "So, I think she is going to impact us defensively and get us

out of transition, and help our transition game get going."

In the last three seasons, Trogele has developed a dangerous inside-out game where the senior can post up in the lane or drift out to the perimeter for 3-pointers. While Trogele thinks Edwards can imitate that style of play, the senior made sure to note Edwards is "far more athletic" than she is. Once junior guard Renee Womack thought about it, she saw plenty of similarities between Trogele and Edwards. With the Lady Lions looking at a transition style of play, having two talented swing players running the wings is something Womack is looking forward to.

"They're the big ones on the wings so I like that about both of them," Womack said. "They both slash and they've got the shot so, I mean I never really looked at that before but they do have similarities."

"She is going to get a lot of playing time."

Julia Trogele
forward

It hasn't taken long for Trogele to become a mentor to Edwards. While Trogele's role as a captain dictates helping her teammates, Edwards said the senior has really embraced the role.

"Julia, she's a great captain. She is a great leader," Edwards said. "She's told me a lot about being competent on the court and how when she was a freshman, she was really thin like me and had a hard time with that aspect of the game. If you see her now she's strong and she knows that I'm going to get there."



Tyler Sizemore/Colegian

To e-mail reporter: adr5079@psu.edu Ariel Edwards points at media day.

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