

Bona In 1966-67? NIT Will Have To Outbid The NCAA!

By BOB DAVIES

You can say you read it here first:

St. Bonaventure University will be one of the first teams to receive a bid, not only to the NIT, but to the NCAA, for post-season basketball tournament play next year.

Now, before you throw up your arms and start to bluster about dumb, foolish, blankety-blank fools, etc., read on, please.

We're putting in our plug for Larry Weise and the Bonnies right now.

THAT'S HOW sure we are that Weise and the Bonnies won't have to sweat out an invitation from the National Invitation Tournament next year.

Why? Bona should have one of the powerhouse clubs in the East in 1966-67. And the Brown Indians

FAIRFIELD HAS QUESTION

Fairfield College coach George Bissaca asked New York basketball writers Monday: "Why isn't my team in the NIT? We have a 19-5 record and we've beaten a few of the best." The final blow, as the National Invitation Tournament completed its 14-team field Sunday, was invitation to Connecticut. It was turned down as was the bid the NIT sent to Bradley. Said John Bach, Fordham coach who is chairman of the NIT's selection committee: "Fairfield and St. Bona didn't get enough votes."

will be wanted early by the NIT, as well as the National Collegiate Athletic Association for one of its at-large berths.

This year the Bonnies finished with a 16-7 record and it wasn't enough to meet the NIT requirement, whatever that may be. Next year's record, we are convinced, will make it impossible for either tournament to skip the Bonnies. Furthermore, the Bonnies will get the best possible publicity exposure by playing in the Holiday Festival tournament in Madison Square Garden. And that field will be as tough as any Christmas whirl in the country. It includes St. Joseph's, Rhode Island, Northwestern, Louisville, Providence, St. John's, Duquesne and Brigham Young.

Next year's Bona club will be the strongest Weise has had. Only two players will be graduated: senior co-captains Rog Bauer and John Riley. Riley will be the lone starter not returning.

But there are three excellent freshmen ready to move up including John Hayes (6-4), who'll be in the superstar category by his senior season. The other two are backcourt operators, Mike Kull (6-foot) and Vinnie Martin (6-4).

THE ADDITION of those three, even though not experienced, will give Weise maneuverability both in backcourt and up front.

He'll have a tested and talented junior, Jimmy Satalin (6-2), at one of the guard slots, along with another junior, Eddie Ahearn (6-4), who showed in the final game the caliber of play expected of him earlier. Ahearn didn't show it in competition, but he's the best percentage shooter on the Brown Indians'

lin and John McLeod, who'll be on hand.

In Kull and Martin, Weise will have the type of guards he likes: good ball handlers and sharp outside scoring threats. Also, Weise's looking at Lockport's senior Mike Brown as a future Bona backcourt prospect.

"You have to have a strong backcourt," Weise has told us more than once. "Remember the line of backcourt men Eddie (Donovan) had when he was at Bona? Don Newhook, Sam Stith, Whitey Martin, Orrie Jirele are just a few of the names that come to mind rapidly. (Weise wasn't a slouch in the backcourt either).

WHEN WEISE thinks of next season's front line, he can't help but smile, with the cat - that - swallowed - the canary-look.

What's he got? Senior George Carter at 6-5, senior Paul Stappenbeck at 6-8 and junior Bill Butler at 6-3 and all of them "just growing boys."

Add, Jeff Hazard, who'll be a 6-4 senior, plus Hayes and you get an idea of the strength Bona will have inside. Hayes or Butler could operate as guards, if Weise desires to do a bit of shifting of personnel.

The point is this: there'll be material to work with both in the backcourt and up front. Most of it will be experienced. There will be size. Plus shooting from all starters. The opposition won't be able to cheat on Butler and Carter inside. They'll have to play those two tough customers straight and honest. When you go one - on - one with those two that close to the bucket, you're in trouble.

At least it's pleasant to think about from now until October, especially in the wake of the disappointment over missing out on the NIT this year.

CERTAINLY, the NIT's decision to by-pass Bona this trip must have been a blow to Weise. But he isn't complaining. He never complains. But, we know this, he was disappointed. And, one good reason for that disappointment could be the young coach now the mature coach — the one who wanted, so very much, to get another shot at Villanova and the others in the present NIT field.

But, we'll show 'em next year.

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Page 12

-- The BOB DAVIES Report: Next Year Could Be THAT NCAA That Got Away -- Season Of The 'IF' Nears End For The Bonnies

By BOB DAVIES

St. Bona's 1966-67 basketball season can be summed up in one word: If.

And, what a big, fat 'If' it turns out to be.

That's the one word that fits the 1967-68 campaign and Bonnie fans are already buzzing about what's ahead.

A win over Canisius Saturday in Buffalo's Memorial Auditorium will give Larry Weise's Brown Indians a 13-9 record. Of course, that's not what Weise figured on before the action started, but considering all that happened, it's an indication of the quality coaching job Weise fashioned in the face of almost total disaster.

That's where the "If" part enters the picture.

THE BONNIES could very easily have had at least an 18-4 record — If. Now, let's backtrack to September.

Weise had his starting team all set — on paper, at least. There was George Carter and Bill Butler back as forwards, plus Jimmy Satalin as his experienced and talented backcourt floor general. He was looking to sophomore John Hayes to fit into the team early. He had the veterans Paul Stappenbeck, Jeff Hazard and Eddie Ahearn. Plus a pair of sophomore guards in Mike Kull and Vinnie Martin.

School opened. Butler returned with a dislocated shoulder. Kull reported to school on crutches, with a left knee injury. Not too bad, true, but the handwriting was on the wall.

A FEW DAYS before practice started (Oct. 15th), Satalin collapsed. Tests revealed a vascular condition adjacent to the brain and the Syracuse junior was ruled out of further competition.

It was a knockout blow. Weise had counted on Satalin, a standout guard as a soph, to direct the offense. He was to be the floor leader, the one to lead Bona to its pick of NCAA or NIT. With Satalin in backcourt, Weise could grad-

ually work Kull and Martin into the picture. They would, according to the time-table, get their experience bit by bit, game by game, without the pressure of having to run the team.

If — there it is, 'If' — that had been all that happened, the Bonnies still would have been a formidable foe at the start of the season.

That's not all that happened. **NOW IT'S, OCT. 15,** first day of practice.

It's 3:15 on the Butler Gym clock. Practice is 15 minutes old. Weise is working a one-on-one defensive drill. Hayes drives for the bucket, goes up. And comes down, his right

knee twisted under him and on the floor in agony.

There goes more of Weise's planning — years of work and recruiting, so that this combination could work as a team this year — it's all wasted and down the drain.

Scrap everything and start afresh.

Satalin is finished. Kull isn't able to practice full blast until after the regular season starts. Hayes is a major question mark in December. Will he be able to play? He tried. He got his first taste of varsity play in Cincinnati against Xavier and in 26 minutes of action proved to be all that Weise hoped he would be.

But, disaster hit again.

Hayes crumpled to the Buffalo Aud floor after three minutes of the Denver game and was through. He needed an operation. So did Satalin. Both had the operations in January and only time will tell how successful was the surgery.

WEISE HAD TO improvise.

And the Bonnies showed it. But, things began to fall into place midway through January. That's how long it took to re-make the team into a first rate club. That's when Kull and Martin showed they could run the back court. Since that point, the Bonnies won seven of nine games.

Hayes and Satalin are ex-

pected back for the 1967-68 campaign. Both have to be considered question marks.

Neither one has played to any extent, with the returning Bonnie lettermen. True, Satalin has worked with Butler, but he hasn't played with Hayes or with Kull or Martin.

And, what about the freshmen — good as they are. Weise will have the 6-10 Bob Lanier, plus Willie Mangham, the fantastic leaper, even though he's but 6-foot. And, Billy Kalbaugh, a tough, sharp little guard. If — there's that word again — Jim Gangier gets his marks up to par, he'll also have to figure in Weise's plans.

YOU MIGHT call this the

'If, If' —

beginning of success — but nothing more than that.

Be realistic. If anything happens to Hayes — knee injuries are tricky — who fills in?

If Lanier fouls out, who takes over?

If Satalin needs more time to come back, who'll run the club? Martin and Kull are promising, true, but there's a lot of work ahead.

'If' Hayes is 100 per cent OK.

'If' Lanier, Mangham and Kalbaugh fit in with Martin, Kull, Butler and Ahearn, and nothing happens, the Bonnies could start on the road back.

It takes time to mix styles, personalities and abilities.

'If, If' —

WHAT WITH sophomores John Hayes and Mike Kull yet to scrimmage because of right-knee injuries, St. Bonaventure Coach Larry Weise has never had it so rough in preseason. "Better to have the mishaps now than later," is Larry's optimistic way of looking at the future, which begins next Friday evening with Quincy College as the first foe to play in the new Bona fieldhouse.

PAUL STAPPENBECK, veteran 6-foot 8-inch center, has not been scoring much because of a fractured thumb.

Bona's hopes rest with senior George Carter, Western New York's best rebounder last season, and Billy Butler.

Weise has decided against Butler shifting to guard. "Why convert an excellent forward," he reasons, "into an average guard."

HAYES WILL OPERATE at center when he's fit. Scouts say the sophomore from Niagara Falls has the best pair of hands in upstate basketball. "If he gets one hand on a basketball," said Joe Niland who does a lot of scouting, "Hayes will keep it. Those hands make him a fine rebounder."

Vinnie Martin, who missed more than half the freshman schedule last season because of illness, has the opportunity to win a guard position alongside the veteran Ed Ahearn.

"BUT WE HAVE NO ONE to replace Jimmy Satalin," said Weise. "He developed last season into a playmaker faster than any sophomore I ever coached." Satalin has been ruled out of competition because of vascular condition near the brain, which prohibits any athletic activity.

HAYES, A 200-pounder at 6 feet, 5 inches, and Kull were both All-Western New York schoolboy selections. Martin, 6-3 and 180, was an All-New York City choice.

Weise will have Quincy scouted Thursday at St. Louis University. . . . The treasurer's office at St. Bona is now handling basketball tickets instead of the Athletic Association. . . . Niagara has an allotment of 3000 preferred tickets for each game of the Canisius series Thursday, Jan. 12, and Tuesday, March 7, in Memorial Auditorium.

BOTH GAMES reckon as sellouts well in advance. Canisius season-ticket holders get preference. Alumni groups from Rochester, Syracuse, New York and other cities requesting large blocks of tickets have been turned down. . . . The East team in the East-West All-America game last April in Lexington, Ky., didn't have a single turnover of the ball. "Fake with your hands and shoulders and head, not with your feet," John J. (Taps) Gallagher, who coached the East squad, told his all-stars.

An expert in a national magazine notes that Taps' philosophy was carried out, and the East, avoiding normal errors, won handily.