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Final Story

IMC 361 MWF

Ole Miss Women's Basketball: Moving Forward

When Ole Miss fans think of basketball season, some might sweep women's basketball under the rug. Even though they haven't had a winning season since 2016, it is time to start paying attention to women's basketball because they are young and ready for new beginnings.

In 2018, Ole Miss hired Yolett McPhee-McCuin, better known as Coach Yo, as the head coach for women's basketball, and she will be entering her third season. Even though her first two seasons did not look great, going 9-22 in 2018 and 7-23 in 2019, Coach Yo is hoping that this upcoming team will be the beginning of rebuilding the program.

The revamping started with the No. 9 nationally ranked and No. 1 SEC ranked 2020 signing class. This signing class includes five-stars Jacorriah Bracey and Madison Scott and three-stars Snudda Collins and Caitlin McGee, who are ready to prove themselves on the college level.

"Our freshmen are going to be up and down all season," Coach Yo said. "Sometimes they look really good in practice, and then sometimes they look like freshman. So, I think that's what [the] whole season's going to be like, and we are going to depend on

the other kids that are older and have a little bit more experience to help us through those moments.”

One of those older and more experienced players would be Maryland transfer, Shakira Austin. She was rated ESPN’s No. 1 transfer this season and was able to gain immediate eligibility in late October. Austin was added to the Lisa Leslie Award Watch List and named preseason second-team All-SEC.

“Coming here having a mindset of that I was going to sit this year and being prepared to work and watch my teammates play,” Austin said. “Then, getting the news that I am going to be able to help contribute this year was definitely shocking, and it was a great feeling.”

On Nov. 11, this young, inexperienced women’s basketball team went through a trial run of how the season will go by participating with men’s basketball in Pavilion Madness, which replaced the Square Jam that annually took place on the Oxford Square.

“That gave us an incredible opportunity to get out there and play in an environment that we haven’t been playing in in a long time,” Coach Yo said. “It allowed them to get out there and be able to play and get some type of normalcy.”

Even though playing in the Pavilion will not be the same pre-coronavirus, Coach Yo and her team are excited to start their season on Nov. 25 against Northwestern State.

“It is definitely different,” Austin said. “But, you know we are just excited to be able to get the chance to play and showcase what we have been working on. It’s just a good feeling regardless.”