


Huskies need to address bad defense

Christopher Loggins Mar 10, 2016 



Freshman guard Mikayla Voigt (left) chases after an opposing player with seconds remaining on the clock during Saturday's game versus Western Michigan University.

Atlee Hargis | Northern Star



Another disappointing season is in the books for women's basketball, which finished with less than 12 wins for the third time in four years.

The Huskies finished the season losing their last four games and eight of their last 10. They ended with an embarrassing 42-point loss to Western Michigan University in the first round of the MAC Tournament on Monday. The loss summed up just about everything from the Huskies' season.

It was NIU's largest loss in nearly 10 years — the team's last loss by more than 40 points came when it lost by 44 points to the University of Iowa in the 2007-08 season. Eleven of the Huskies' 19 losses this year were by double figures, a number that will need to be lowered if the team plans to have any success.

"It's a disappointing end to a season in which you look back on some positives both individually and collectively, understanding the circumstances that we had going into it," said head coach Lisa Carlsen after the blowout loss, according to an NIU Athletics news release. "We knew what our challenges would be this year but this is a disappointing way to end the season because we are better than we showed tonight. Ally [Lehman] is someone we can put pieces around next year. She has the mentality of someone this team needs from a leadership standpoint. Hopefully the underclassmen will continue to learn from her but I'm looking forward to next year with her on this team."

Lehman has been a huge bright spot for NIU this season - the junior only averaged 13.4 points per game but has had a ton of impressive performances. She also averaged 11 rebounds, leading the Huskies in both categories. Lehman tied the NIU record for points in a single game and broke the NIU record for rebounds in a single season with 323. She had 15 double-doubles in 30 games, leading the way for a team that struggled for the final two months of the year.

The Huskies also have young talent that has had its moments - sophomore forward Kelly Smith averaged 10.6 points and 5.6 rebounds and freshman guards Mikayla Voigt and Courtney Woods both contributed more than 10 points per game. A lot of NIU's problems came at the defensive end. They ranked far too low in too many defensive categories and have to give better effort on that end of the floor. The team won't get better until it keeps teams from having high scoring outings on a regular basis. Giving up almost 100 points in a tournament game is unacceptable for any team, regardless of where it ranks in the conference.

The team's first goal should be finishing a season at .500, which it hasn't done since 2008. Having high expectations too quickly would be unrealistic, and you can't expect to go from an 11-win team to a team that wins 20-plus in just a year. The Huskies have a lot of work to do, from working with their current talent to recruiting better talent for the future.



Quick start to men's basketball season is no fluke

Christopher Loggins | @NSSportsLoggins Jan 18, 2016 



Head coach Mark Montgomery contests a call in a Dec. 2 game against Chicago State. Montgomery has coached the Huskies to their best start since his 2011 arrival, and the team is one win away from beating last season's total wins.

Atlee Hargis | Northern Star File Photo



Men's basketball fell to 14-3 following a double-digit loss to Western Michigan over the weekend, but there is plenty to look forward to for fans of the team.

Head coach Mark Montgomery said getting the Huskies to postseason play was one of his main goals heading into the season, and, barring a huge meltdown, his goal is on pace to become a reality. Here are three observations of the team following its recent loss:

NIU's quick start to the season has been no fluke

NIU has had a huge turnaround after finishing last season 14-16. The team already has as many wins through 17 games this year as they did all of last year, and look like a team that has figured out how to play with each other. The Huskies currently hold the best record in the MAC and have held their own with teams such as Ohio State and Missouri.

The team has win streaks of both five and seven games and is on track for its first 20-win season in more than 20 years. The last time NIU won 20 games was in the 1995-96 season. The Huskies went 20-10 and made it to the first round of the NCAA Tournament. The Huskies have completed just three 20-win seasons in the history of the program.

There are 14 games remaining in the regular season and, if they are able to remain as consistent as they have been, the Huskies are on pace to have possibly their winningest season of all time. Their best season came in 1990 when they went 25-6 under head coach Jim Molinari.

NIU has gotten great play from its freshman class



be one of NIU’s top performers.

Key has started 11 of 17 games this season, scoring over 100 points and shooting 50 percent. He’s currently averaging 5.9 points, good for sixth on the roster. He’s also averaging four rebounds. Porter and Bradley have combined for about 10 points per game off the bench. Neither of them average over 17 minutes per game and are shooting solid percentages.

Montgomery has to be excited with what he has seen from his new guys. The future looks bright for his young players and their numbers are sure to increase as their minutes do. It’ll be interesting to see how they perform as tougher stretches of the season approach, but they should adjust well as long as their minutes are managed well.

Mark Montgomery has diffused any questions about his coaching ability

Montgomery has failed to put together a winning season for men’s basketball since taking over in 2011, but his yearly progress has been a great sign. The team won just five games in each of his first two seasons, which can always raise a few eyebrows, but the Huskies have won 15 and 14 games in Montgomery’s last two seasons, which aren’t great numbers but are vast improvements.

NIU has failed to finish higher than fourth in the MAC West in his previous four years. They finished sixth in both 2011 and 2012 and fourth in both 2013 and 2014. They’ll likely finish in the top two this season. They’re two games ahead of Ball State, which sits in second place at 12-5 and will make advances at the number one spot for the next two months.

Montgomery should be applauded for the job he’s done despite where the team finishes. Many people probably didn’t expect a turnaround this quickly, and he has his team looking at a bright future from here on out.











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Opinion: Softball sees one of most impressive seasons in history

Christopher Loggins Apr 28, 2016 



Sophomore infielder Alaynie Woollard swings at an incoming pitch against Ball State on April 5.

Atlee Hargis | Northern Star



Softball is on pace to make a run at its first 40-win season since 1993, and this season stands as one of the most impressive campaigns the team has had in quite some time.

The Huskies (32-13, 12-5 MAC) proved to be a team on the rise in 2015, ending the year at 28-25 but showing glimpses of brilliance at various points in the season. They went on winning streaks of at least three games three times and were one of the most exciting teams in the MAC, but had their season cut short after disappointing performances in the MAC Tournament against Miami University and the University of Akron.

Perhaps one of the brightest moments of last season was the performance of junior first baseman Kayti Grable, who set a then-record for most home runs in a season at NIU with 15. In the same season, sophomore Alaynie Woollard hopped into the top three of the very same list, hitting 10 home runs of her own.

Rather than letting an unfortunate end to last season discourage them, the Huskies have returned in 2016 with a vengeance, solidifying themselves as the top team in the conference. They came two games short of setting an NIU record for consecutive games won — their streak ended at 14 — the record is 16, set in 1988.

Grable's single season home run record was broken this year by senior catcher Emily Naegele, who is up to 16 on the year and has already taken home multiple weekly MAC awards.

Freshman Alex Frenz has led the way on the pitching side, going 14-4 with a 2.50 ERA and 103 strikeouts in 134.2 innings of work. She's followed by sophomore pitcher Tara Thacker, who is up to 9-6 on the year with a 3.33 ERA.

"Those two are a really nice one-two punch right now," said NIU head coach Christina Sutcliffe, according to an NIU Athletics news release. "Tara's been doing an amazing job coming in in late innings under a lot of pressure and being able to get us out of the innings. Her composure has been phenomenal and she's done a really nice job."

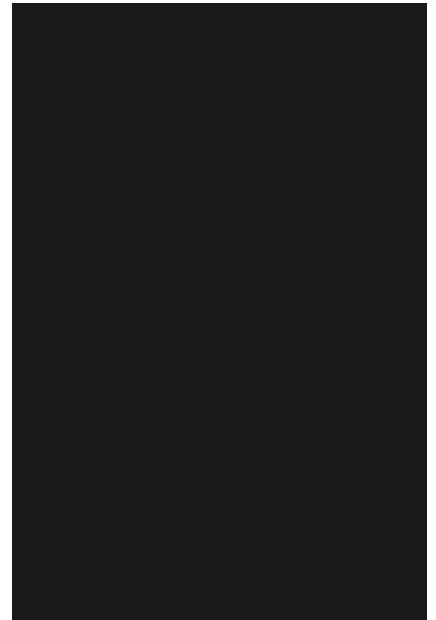
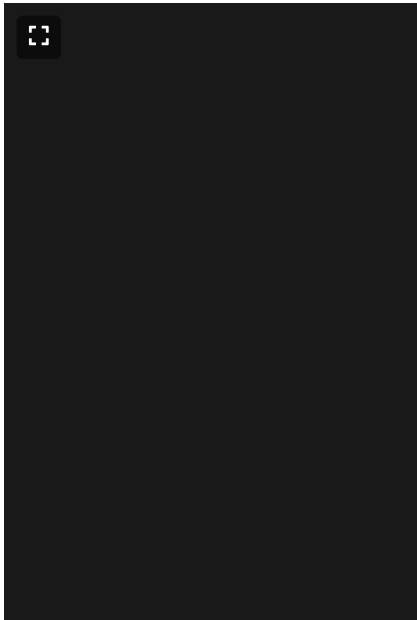
What's most exciting about the Huskies' season is that it doesn't look like they've played their best softball yet. After a recent skid where the team lost three out of five games, it has picked its play back up again, winning five consecutive games and seven of its last nine.

Although it would be considered a disappointing season if the team isn't able to win the MAC Tournament, the season will stand out as one of the brightest NIU has had in quite some time. Since the team's last 30 win season in 1999, it has only finished with a winning record twice.



DeKalb man charged in slaying of 19-year old girlfriend

Christopher Loggins Jun 13, 2016 



Michael Kulpin poses for a mugshot after being charged with aggravated battery, first degree murder and concealment of a homicide in the death of his 19-year old girlfriend, Moorea Desroches.

Photo Courtesy DeKalb Police Department



A DeKalb man is still behind bars after being charged with aggravated domestic battery, first degree murder and concealment of a homicide on June 5.

The charges came after an incident that occurred late on the night of June 3 — 20-year old Michael Kulpin reportedly got into an altercation with 19-year old girlfriend Moorea Desroches, which led to Kulpin stabbing Desroches multiple times before wrapping her body up and hiding it in a closet of their apartment, located on the 900 block of Kimberly Drive.

Desroches' body wasn't found until June 5 when authorities searched the apartment at the request of her mother, who reportedly claimed that her daughter hadn't shown up for work. Desroches and Kulpin had a child together and were engaged, according to Desroches' Facebook account. The couple's child is in custody of its grandparents.

There were two other people at the apartment at the time of the arrest, but neither of them were charged, nor were they suspected to be of any involvement in the murder.

Kulpin's initial bond was set at \$2 million by judge Philip Montgomery and the amount was maintained at Kulpin's first court date. The defendant reportedly scored a 9 out of 9 on a pre-trial report, meaning his chances of offending again were very high.

If released on bail, Kulpin would be restricted from any contact with his child or the victim's parents, and would be forced to yield to GPS monitoring. Kulpin reportedly announced having no source of income on top of owing car and towing payments.

There were also two previous cases that he failed to show up to court for. He had only lived on Kimberly for three months.

Kulpin's last Facebook post would suggest he and Desroches' relationship may not have been on the best of terms — on May 31, he posted a status claiming that "All people want/need in a relationship is true honesty but why does it always seem to be easier to lie than to be true and loyal. As people of society we all know true right from wrong but we always turn to the bad instead of good because wrong always felt better. I guess thats why we lie — especially to the ones we claim to love the most."

