



2003-04 Season Outlook

The Santa Clara University women's basketball squad and second-year head coach Michelle Bento-Jackson will enter the 2003-04 season with an almost completely new roster, as a core group of five seniors graduated from the program last spring, taking a solid portion of leadership and experience with them. As the Broncos are known to have a program that can reload, rather than rebuild, Bento-Jackson has formed a solid squad to take to the court this year. Returning are starters Kayla Huss and Quinn Thomas, both All-West Coast Conference guards that began to step into a leadership role last season. Also returning are seniors Whitney Satak and Jennie Rondel, as well as redshirt freshman Tori Markey. Those five returners will be surrounded by eight newcomers, highlighting team chemistry, a key component to success on the court.

"I put a lot of thought into team chemistry and I really felt we recruited individuals that would be a good mesh with the players we have returning," Bento-Jackson explained. "I have been pleasantly surprised in the short time we have been back to school how the team is meshing together and how comfortable they seem to be around each other. We are spending a lot of time together in different environments, not just on the basketball court. For example, we recently went on a team bonding retreat in which we were able to learn more about each other, which helped continue to strengthen our team chemistry."

Bento-Jackson credited Huss and Satak in shortening the time it took for the group to become one cohesive unit: "They've been working on their own time to make everybody feel welcome and comfortable with one another. I expect the bonding to get stronger as time goes on."

As the fans become accustomed to the octet of new faces on the court and on the bench, those watching the game will recognize the team's up-tempo pace of play from last season.

"The newcomers that we have recruited fit into our style very well," Bento-Jackson continued. "The fans can expect to see us continuing to play an up-tempo style, which I hope they will find exciting to watch."

The Broncos' strength will continue to be its balance, with a wealth of student-athletes that can put the ball in the basket. Work ethic, energy and coachability of the newcomers are also valuable assets to the program, Bento-Jackson added. The entire squad will need to take advantage of those strengths, as the head coach acknowledges the youth and inexperience of her team.

"We are going to go through some growing pains, which I am fully prepared for," she explained. "It's going to be about how quickly we will be able to learn from our mistakes, correct them and grow from them. I have said through the entire preseason that our newcomers do not have time to be freshmen. Our coaching staff is going to push them extremely hard because they do have to grow up fast. In the long run, I believe it will speed up our maturation process."

Here's a look at the 2003-04 Santa Clara University women's basketball team:

Guards

Juniors Kayla Huss and Quinn Thomas will lead the backcourt again this season. They were the top two point-



Junior Kayla Huss

scorers, accounting for 31 percent of SCU's production. Huss ranked 10th nationally in three-point field goal percentage as a sophomore and led the league in assists (5.62) and was second in three-point field goal percentage (.432). Her performances on the court will be missed if a back injury sustained last season keeps her on the bench this year. Heading into preseason training, Bento-Jackson said Huss' injury was still bothering the star point guard, who will be limited in action.

"Kayla had a tremendous year last year and it will be big shoes for somebody to fill if she can't be on the court with us," Bento-Jackson added. "We're hoping for the best, but right now it's a waiting game as she goes through her rehab."

Thomas could be one of a few players to take over the point, should Huss not be available. An outside scorer who posted at least four three-pointers in 11 games last season, Thomas was ranked 24th nationally in three-point field goal percentage. A returning starter at the two-guard spot, Bento-Jackson credited Thomas' summer conditioning efforts and will look for continued consistency in last year's leading scorer, but added Thomas worked hard in the off-season to add variety to her game and will have much more impact on the team than just from behind the arc.

Senior Whitney Satak started a handful of contests last season. She scored 16 points in her Bronco debut and poured in 20 points off the bench at Oregon. Bento-Jackson said Satak ended her season strongly with an outstanding performance at the WNIT, and added that Satak's experience as a fifth-year senior will help this young squad.

"Whitney needs to play up to her capabilities each and every day," Bento-Jackson added. "We look for her to be a big contributor for us this year."

Five newcomers will add to the backcourt depth. Freshman Ashley Graham will see significant minutes at the point guard slot.



Senior Jennie Rondel



"When I recruited Ashley, I knew she was someone who could come in right away and give us quality minutes," Bento-Jackson said. "She will need to quickly get comfortable with leading this team.

"Of all positions, the roll of point guard is going to be extremely difficult for a freshman to pick up on," Bento-Jackson continued about the 5-7 Graham of Redmond, Wash. "Ashley doesn't have time to be a freshman, so to speak. She needs to come out, be vocal and be a leader from the beginning. The sooner she takes control of the situation, the sooner she will do great things for us. She has an exciting style of play; she pushes the ball great, and is an excellent shooter."

Anna Martin, a 5-8 guard from Oregon City, Ore., is a natural wing player and described by her new coach as one of the most competitive players on the squad.

"Anna was always labeled as a tremendous defensive player, but she's worked extremely hard all spring and summer to improve her jump shot and the results have really broadened her game. Her defensive ability combined with her competitiveness will help her earn immediate playing time."

Michelle Cozad is a 5-10 transfer from San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton. She graduated as the program's all-time leading scorer and is detailed as a phenomenal shooter that can score in many different ways: "Michelle will definitely be able to help us this year with her scoring abilities."

Yasemin Kimyacioglu joined the team this fall and is described as the "complete package", with her positive attitude and work ethic pushing the rest of the team in daily practice. Lauren Michalski is a transfer from Arizona State who will red shirt this season due to NCAA transfer rules.



Junior Quinn Thomas

Forwards

Senior Jennie Rondel is the only returnee with front-court experience. Seeing action in 27 of 31 games last season at both off-guard and forward, Rondel showed her shooting touch with a season .470 field goal percentage, which included a career-high 17 points off the bench against Loyola Chicago and 16 points at Saint Mary's.

"Jennie can be unbelievable," Bento-Jackson said. "She is one of the best athletes on the team and when she's on her game, she's tremendous. We're working with her to be more consistent and to stay mentally focused. In doing this, she could have a solid senior year."

The head coach added that red-shirt freshman Tori Markey is overly excited to begin the year and show her abilities on the court and is one of the team's best runners.

"Tori can get up and down the floor literally like nobody else, which again, works very well with our up-tempo style of play," Bento-Jackson explained. "During her redshirt season, she worked very hard to improve her post game and to build strength. We just need her to get her feet wet and gain experience, but we have very high expectations of Tori this year."

A trio of newcomers include Jennifer Gottschalk, Ashley Gonnerman and Kasey Monteith. Gottschalk, a 6-0 forward from Littleton, Colo., is detailed as being fundamentally-sound, having great vision and is an excellent passer. Bento-Jackson said the team will use Gottschalk's strength in the paint. Gonnerman, a 6-3 forward from Oregon City, Ore., is also versatile, playing well with her back to the basket but also able to shoot the three.

"Ashley's footwork for a post player coming out of high school is really polished," Bento Jackson said. "She will create match-up problems for us because she is so versatile, but as I told her, she's a sweetheart off the court, but cannot afford to be a sweetheart on the court. She's going to have to get used to the physical-ness and intensity of the game at the collegiate level."

Monteith is a 6-1 forward from Boise, Idaho, and is looked to by Bento-Jackson to be the Kendra Rhea of last year, getting on the boards for the Broncos and being a great post defender.

"Kasey's going to be the banger of the team," Bento-Jackson described. "It's just natural for Kasey to be physical; nothing intimidates her. She's extremely strong and is going to mix things up in the paint."

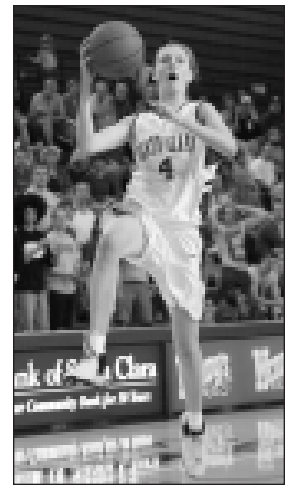
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Santa Clara's long-term goal remains the same: become the first squad to advance past the first round of the NCAA Tournament. However, Bento-Jackson stressed that the squad's main goals will be to improve each day.

"I know that sounds clichÉ, but with so many new players, improving every day is going to be a challenge in itself and that will be our focus this year both on and off the court," she explained. "We want to reach the WCC Championship where we will be at a point of being able to compete for the league title, and to have an opportunity to play in the postseason."

To reach their goals, the Broncos will battle through a tough non-conference schedule, which includes games against 2003 NCAA Tournament participants Wisconsin Green-Bay, Georgia and BYU. Also slated for competition is Oregon, San Diego State, Oklahoma State and Alabama.

"Our non-conference schedule may be a little too tough, considering our youth," Bento-Jackson concluded. "But I also think everybody will grow up that much faster. We are going to be tested and challenged very early on in our season, but it will help us that much more once we begin conference play and really show us what kind of team we are made of."



Senior Whitney Satak