



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Basketball season gets underway Thursday night as the Colby High School varsity and junior varsity teams travel to Scott City to take on the

Beavers. ABOVE: The Lady Eagles in action last year against the Scott City Lady Beavers.

Winter sports jumps out of the gates Thursday

By DARREL PATTILLO

Colby Free Press

The winter sports season gets underway Thursday for Colby High School, as the boy's and girl's basketball teams travel to Scott City for junior varsity and varsity action, which gets underway at 3 p.m., at the Scott City High School gym.

Friday night, the junior varsity and varsity wrestlers travel to WaKeeney to start the wrestling season.

The wrestlers will be back on the road Saturday morning, with the varsity heading to St. Francis and JV wrestling at Goodland.

Saturday night, The Eagles open the home basketball season with games

against Russell at both the Colby Community Building and the Colby High School gym.

Saturday's action gets underway at 6:15 in the high school gym for JV boy's, and 6:30 at the Community Building for the varsity girls.

The high school 'C' team Eagles will play their first games Tuesday against

Hays, prior to the JV and varsity games.

Colby Middle School basketball continues Thursday at the Colby Middle School gym, against the middle school teams from Scott City. Those games, which will include 7A, 7B, and 7C, and 8A and 8B, will start at 4:30 p.m.

It'll be strictly business Sunday for Vermeil against Rams

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — It's strictly business, Dick Vermeil says, nothing personal.

He wants to win on Sunday for what it would do for his Kansas City Chiefs, not for what it would do to the St. Louis Rams.

"Playing the Rams is a critical game but it's not a personal game," said Vermeil, who coached the 1999 Rams to the Super Bowl title and then retired for a year before becoming head coach of the Chiefs.

That said, Vermeil still acknowledges a soft spot for his old team.

"I root for them to be successful every Sunday," he said. "I check the scores as they flash across the screen during our games just to see how they're doing. I can't help from doing that because I have a lot of personal friends there."

The Chiefs (6-6) are clinging to the slimmest of playoff hopes, figuring they'll need to win their last four games to have a chance in the hotly competitive AFC West, where they're in last

place behind San Diego, Oakland and Denver.

The bruised and battered Rams (5-7) are in much the same shape as the Arizona Cardinals, whom the Chiefs clobbered 49-0 last week in Arrowhead.

Injuries to Kurt Warner and Marc Bulger will force them to start Jamie Martin at quarterback. And they said Tuesday that tackle Orlando Pace will be sidelined at least two weeks with a torn right hamstring, further weakening an already thin offensive line.

"They've had more injuries than is fair," Vermeil said. "I have never been in a situation as a head coach that I've experienced the injuries that they have experienced and continue to experience. They get somebody back and they get him hurt again. They get Orlando Pace back and they get him hurt again. Last week, they played with two starters in the offensive line."

Although retired, Vermeil was still contractually obligated to St. Louis when Carl Peterson, the Chiefs' gen-

eral manager and a longtime friend, convinced him to get back into coaching.

NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue ordered the Chiefs to give the Rams a third-round draft choice for signing Vermeil — who then hired Al Saunders off Rams coach Mike Martz's staff to be his offensive coordinator.

Some have wondered if there might be bitter feelings between the two clubs, but Vermeil said it's nonsense to even speculate.

"There are 17 guys on the (Rams) roster that we brought there," Vermeil said. "So, you just can't throw away those relationships and those feelings that were developed together."

Roy Williams says there's no panic for Jayhawks after embarrassing NIT

By DOUG TUCKER

AP Sports Writer

LAWRENCE (AP) — Basketball practice has been more intense than usual this week at Kansas, as the Jayhawks try to rebound from their embarrassing Thanksgiving trip to New York.

On Tuesday, coach Roy Williams was still at a loss to explain what happened last week, when the Jayhawks lost to North Carolina and Florida in the Preseason NIT — and played perhaps their worst game of the 15-year Williams era in the 67-55 setback to the then-unranked Tar Heels.

"I don't know what that was against North Carolina," Williams said. "I've had coaches tell me they've never seen one of my teams play like that. I've never seen one of my teams play like that. That was an aberration."

After the losses, Kansas tumbled this week from No. 2 to No. 14.

Before going through a tough practice on Monday, Williams got his staff and team together for a meeting.

"It's not panic time," Williams said. "I'm trying to make sure our players don't overreact and our coaches don't either."

"It's not like we've fallen off the top of a bridge, or we've forgotten how to play basketball. You go around the country and pick out some schedules, give us some of those schedules and we'd be 4-0 right now and we'd be fat and happy. But we don't choose to play that. We played good teams."

Williams said that during the meeting he, asked his players one question: "Tell me or tell yourself, what was your thought process before the Carolina game or in the first 6-8 minutes of the Carolina game?"

The malaise was also present in the consolation game against Florida until the second half, when the Jayhawks chopped a 19-point deficit down to 2 points before finally losing 83-73.

"Everything was lacking in the North Carolina game, a sense of ur-

gency, a sense of humanity," Williams said. "It wasn't Kansas basketball. I guess you have to live through one like that every so often. I hope it's once every 15 years."

The Jayhawks get back into action Wednesday night at home against Division II Central Missouri State. But then the schedule gets tough again with games against No. 7 Oregon and No. 19 Tulsa.

Guard Kirk Hinrich, who will sit out Wednesday night's game with a sore back, said in New York that some players had not been paying attention to details. Senior forward Nick Collison said Tuesday that that, too, had been addressed.

"It was a matter of people being late to a bus, and to a meeting, either late or making it barely on time," he said. "Little things like that are just possible signs of people not being as committed as they should be. Those issues have been addressed. But we'll see how we act and play the rest of the season, how we practice."

Collison said team chemistry was not a problem.

"We get along fine. We just need — certain guys as a team — we need to do a better job focusing on the little things, the details."

While Hinrich struggles with his back problem, sophomore forward Wayne Simien has been nursing a sore ankle but does not plan to take any time off.

"It's going to be a problem," Williams said of Simien's injury. "We know that. It's going to be a problem for a long time. If you give him one month off, he could sprain it the first day back, so what have you gained?"

"It's a sprained ankle. It's going to take its own timetable to get better. To me, the good news is he rolled it twice in the North Carolina game and went back in and played, and played effectively against Florida two nights later. His ankle is bothering him. But we don't have any other choice."

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