

IBL set to make Longview debut

By Rick McCorkle

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High-octane basketball ---- featuring fast-break dunks and long 3-pointers ---- is making its way to Lower Columbia College on Friday.

No, the hometown Red Devils aren't cranking up a spring season. But the Vancouver Volcanoes of the International Basketball League are.

The Volcanoes will "host" the Seattle Mountaineers in a regular-season IBL matchup at 7:15 p.m. Friday at Myklebust Gymnasium, one of 12 home games on the team's 25-game league schedule. The Volcanoes' other home games are contested at Clark College and Hudson's Bay High School.

The IBL has subtle rule differences from conventional college or NBA games. Teams are allowed one timeout per quarter, a 22-second shot clock, and an eight-second backcourt rule is used to keep the game moving. Last season, the league's team scoring average was 127 points per game in contests lasting about two hours.

"We're looking forward to showing the people of Longview an excellent basketball game," IBL commissioner Mikal Duilio said. "I believe they will be impressed by the speed of play and the quality of athletes."

Duilio (pronounced DOO-lee-oh) formed the 17-team league last season, and expanded it to 26 teams when the current campaign kicked off last weekend. Besides Vancouver and Seattle, Pacific Northwest teams can be found in Portland, Tacoma, Salem, Eugene and Bend. In addition, teams are located in California, Colorado, Michigan, Ohio, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and West Virginia, with squads forming in New York, New Jersey, Utah and Las Vegas next season.

The league is also considering a franchise for Longview.

"We're about 85 percent sure we're going to put a team in Longview next season," Volcanoes president and general manager Terrance Dickens said. "Commissioner Duilio has based the league on clusters, with each division having teams within driving distance of each other."

The league has considered a team in either Longview or Olympia, he said.

"But we've seen how Longview gets behind its sports with Mark Morris, R.A. Long and Kelso high schools, along with Lower Columbia College. We think this is a better fit for a small market."

The Volcanoes opened their season Sunday with a 109-99 loss to the Portland Chinooks at the Rose Garden in front of an IBL-record crowd of more than 5,000.

"I wanted to try to make a splash, simple as that," Duilio told the Vancouver Columbian. "In terms of the crowd, it was pretty amazing. I think about half were for Vancouver, half Portland."

Former Clark College men's basketball coach Dave Waldow is back for his second season with the Volcanoes, who finished 4-18 last year. Ex-R.A. Long High, LCC and Central Washington University standout Jay Van Hook played with the Volcanoes last season, but is not with the team this season because of church obligations, according to Dickens.

All-IBL wing Kevin "Pip" Bloodshaw and post Eric Dunn return to anchor the Volcanoes' offense. Bloodshaw, who played at the University of Arkansas, averaged 17.4 points per game a year ago. Dunn, a former University of Oregon standout, averaged 17 points.

Ross Mills, a 7-foot center, and 6-6 forward Jeremiah Martin are back for their second seasons to complement rookie guards Alto Virgil, Brad Lechtenberg, Ryan Menton, Matt Frey and Robert Mitchell, wings Taron Pickett, Porter Troupe, Matt Figert and Jeremiah Martin, and centers Jason Beau Keep and Ross Mills. In addition, guards Chris Neal from Evergreen High and Michael Brown from Prairie are also battling for playing time.

Virgil averaged 26.3 points per game as a sophomore during the 2001-02 season at Passaic County College in New Jersey, where he was named the New Jersey Junior College Player of the Year.

The team will be without the 6-11 Keep, a former first-team all-West Coast Conference player during his senior campaign at the University of San Diego three seasons ago, until early April when the season ends for the other team he plays for in Argentina.

Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$4 for children ages 17-and-younger. Tickets can be purchased at the door or by calling (360) 326-5405.