



Revamped Volcanoes look to season opener

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By **TIM PYLE** Columbian staff writer

They have no reality TV show, but the Vancouver Volcanoes have undergone their own version of "Extreme Makeover" heading into Year 2 of the International Basketball League.

After finishing with the third-worst record in the league at 4-18 last year, the Volcanoes have revamped their roster in search of youth, athleticism and, ultimately, success.

As training camp opened last week, returning coach Dave Waldow said early impressions of the reclamation project are good.

"I'm excited," Waldow said. "We'll have more speed. We'll have more athleticism. We'll have more depth. ... I think we have some guys that are going to play a real exciting brand of basketball."

Vancouver has signed eight players for the season, which tips off March 12 against the Portland Chinooks at the Rose Garden.

Wings Kevin "Pip" Bloodsaw and Jeremiah Martin and post Jay Van Hook all played for the Volcanoes last season. The newcomers are center Jason Beau Keep, wing Taron Pickett, guards Brad Lechtenberg and Ryan Menton and point guard Alto Virgil.

The team plans to carry 15 players on its roster.

Former Evergreen High standout Chris Neal, who played collegiately at Texas-El Paso, is among those competing for a spot in training camp. Post Ross Mills played for Vancouver last season and also has attended early practices.

"I feel really good," Volcanoes co-owner Terrance Dickens said. "We're a lot younger. We might have went from the oldest team last year to one of the youngest. That's what I learned last year about this league -- youth helps a lot."

Bloodsaw, who represented Vancouver in last year's IBL all-star game, echoes the optimism.

"Overall, we've gotten more athletic at pretty much all the positions," said Bloodsaw, who is nursing a groin injury. "Keep, I think he's going to take up a lot of space in the middle. We definitely need that. Lechtenberg, I've had a chance to play with him a couple times, and he can light it up from outside. That will spread out the defense. ... Virgil is a penetrator, like a Stephon Marbury-type guard. He

can handle the ball real well."

The 6-foot-10 Keep, a former first-team all-West Coast Conference star at the University of San Diego, currently is playing professionally in Argentina. He averaged 18.0 points and 9.1 rebounds a game as a Toreros senior in 2002-03.

The 6-2 Lechtenberg also played at San Diego, where he shot an NCAA Division I-best 52 percent from 3-point range as a senior in 2003-04.

The 6-2 Virgil was the New Jersey Junior College player of the year in 2002, when he scored 26.3 points per game for Passaic County (N.J.) Community College.

The IBL has expanded from 17 to 28 teams, including new franchises in Seattle, Salem and Eugene.

The Volcanoes' 24-game regular season will end June 24 and features 11 home games, at least eight of which will be played at Clark College.

"I know for sure our team will be better," Waldow said. "But it's all relative -- I don't know how much better the rest of the league will be."

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