

Sophomores Step Up To Build Team Culture

By: Savannah Stricker

Typically the leaders of the basketball team are the seniors. Generally the ones with more experience and more leadership skills but that is not the case for this young Illinois team. The Illinois women's basketball team's top three leading scorers are sophomores, so stepping up and making a change for this program over this season has been important for the team this year. A key factor for this team is trust and loyalty.

Illinois can be very young at times, with that being said, their top three leading scorers are sophomores. Kennedi Myles, Jada Peebles and Jeanae Terry are not just leaders on the scoresheet, but also team leaders. Terry, at the guard position averaging 10.8 points per game, knows she has to be able to lead her team.

"Being able to direct my teammates in the right way for my teammates to understand me better, we all needed to understand what's going on," Terry said.

The team's leading scorer is Peebles. Peebles averages 12 points per game. Peebles is trying to take her leadership to another level by using it to better not just herself but others as well.

"Coach Fahey has taught me how to lead in my own way, being effective with it," Peebles said.

One of the main focuses for these underclassmen is building a culture within the program. As they learn things throughout the season they are building this way of functioning. Coach Fahey is very proud of what these sophomores are doing for this program.

"These sophomores are trying to prove culturally what it's like to be successful at this level," Fahey said.

As tough of a season as it has been, there have been many COVID-19 complications for this team this year. The sophomores stated how they had to make many adjustments on the fly for the safety of the team. Myles, who averages 8.6 points per game, mentioned that they faced a variety of challenges related to COVID-19.

"Having games cancelled, people on the team getting sick, having to make adjustments, and regular season injuries were tough," Myles said.

Terry felt that the lack of fans in the stands forced players to step up.

“If you don’t bring any energy it will look dead,” Terry said. It may be quiet and awkward for these teams at times but they had to come out there and be that player who talks and helps someone up when they’re down on themselves.

As the season finishes off, the team may not have gotten as many wins as they wanted to, but they did grow together as a team. Through this crazy season and unexpected happenings, the sophomores have fought through this tough season and will lead their team in the future.