

JENNIES TO OPEN 2001-2002 BASKETBALL SEASON IN FLORIDA

WARRENSBURG, MO (November 5, 2001) – The Central Missouri State Jennies get an early start to the 2001-2002 basketball season when they travel to Orlando, Fla., this weekend (Nov. 9-11) for three games in the Disney Tip-Off Classic. Coach Scott Ballard's Jennies will be one of eight teams in the event. Their season opener will be Friday at 5:00 p.m. (CST) against Columbus State (Ga.), which was 31-1 last season with its only loss coming in the Division II semi-finals to eventual champion Cal Poly-Pomona. Saturday's game will be at either 2:30 p.m. or 7:30 p.m. against either Fort Valley State (Ga.) or South Dakota State. Sunday's opponent will come from the other four-team bracket that consists of Southern Indiana, Nebraska-Omaha, Franklin Pierce (N.H.) and Minnesota-Duluth. This is the earliest the Jennies have ever started their regular season.

Starting his seventh season as the Jennies' head coach, Ballard has four returning starters from last season's 19-9 squad. Senior guard Lori Nichols has been the team's scoring leader the past two seasons and averaged 14.9 points last season. Senior center Katie Vaske has been the team's rebounding leader the past two seasons and averaged 6.3 last season. Sophomore guard Jena Shackelford was the MIAA freshman of the year last season, averaging 8.2 points and hitting 51 three-pointers. Junior forward Ana Benitez is a solid defender, who averaged 3.4 rebounds.

Ballard is excited about the contributions he expects from some of his newcomers. I'sha Kelley, a transfer from Nebraska, will start at point guard. Freshmen Kinsey Lehe and Bethany Orendorff have been impressive in preseason workouts and are expected to log considerable playing time.

Columbus State is ranked 12th in the *Women's Division II Bulletin* preseason top 25. The Cougars have just one returning starter from last season, junior guard Candace Turner, who averaged 7.5 points per game. The top newcomer for Columbus State is expected to be junior college transfer Tomekia Reed, who averaged 20.0 points and 19.1 rebounds last season at Hinds (Miss.) Community College.

After the three games in Florida this weekend, the Jennies will join the Mules for the Meet the Mules and Jennies Night Tuesday, Nov. 13, at 7:30 p.m. at the CMSU Multipurpose Building. Both teams will be introduced to the fans and conduct brief intrasquad scrimmages. The event is free and open to the public.