

THE OUTLOOK

"We are green, and we have lost more starters than any other team in the league," says head coach Stan Watts. "Consequently, it may take us longer to reach our peak. But if the pieces should fall into place, we could have as good a team as we had last year."

There's just the right amount of pessimism and optimism in that statement o pu it dea don the mark. The Cougars will be hurting, especially on the forward line, but could emerge with a pretty fair squad. That, of course, remains to be seen.

But loss of three starters, plus the addition of new squad members, should mean the general complexion of the squad will be changed. Watts indicated that the '70 club will be bigger overall, but perhaps slower. As a result, Stan hinted, the Cougars may have to do things a little differently.

One of the different things will be a switch of positions for at least two players. Paul Ruffner, the Cougars 6-9 starting center of last year, will be working at both forward and the post. The forward line of last year, was cleaned out, and it was felt that an experienced player of Ruffner's ability was needed to anchor one of the positions. Ruffner has a good outside shot and can still get his share of rebounds. In the other change, forward Bob Davis, a senior, has been moved to the guard line. In neither case will the Cougars give up anything in the way of fire power.

Even with these changes, Watts will have to shore up the obvious weak spots with newcomers or less experienced personnel.

A pair of three-year lettermen, Kari Liimo (6-8) and Marty Lythgoe (6-4), no longer man the forward line. Ruffner could fill in one spot, but the other is a question mark. A 6-8 junior, LeRoy Maughn, could move in, or transfer Larry DeLaittre (6-7) is another possibility. Another candidate is Phil Tollestrup, a 6-6 sophomore, with good potential but not enough experience.

If Ruffner remains at forward, the post will be held down by Scott Warner, (6-6), a two-year veteran who may be relatively short for a center, but lacks nothing in every other respect. But centers often foul out, and the bench strength is a key factor here. A junior, Vieikko Vainio (6-9), will be joined by sophomore Clyde Baker (6-7). Neither reserve has much playing experience, but here again the potential seems to be present.

As for the guard line, senior Doug Howard (6-3) has a firm grip on one position. Doug will be starting for the third year, and there is no question about his ability to play the game well. Best bet for the other starting berth at guard is Jim Miller (6-5), a

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Miller guarding a Wyoming player

junior from Las Vegas, Nev. Miller doesn't pump up the shots very often, but his floor game is polished and consistent. Jim, too, is expected to score more frequently this season.

Senior Bob Davis (6-3), may need a little more time to develop his technique as a guard, but he, too, will be heard from. The other candidates include two sophomores, Gary Radunich (6-2), and George Wilson (6-1), plus junior Steve Kelly (6-3). Radunich, in particular, displays great promise as a guard. He averaged 21.7 as a freshman, and he is fitting into the varsity very well. Wilson is another player of promise, but shy on the experience.

In all fairness to those five lettermen and three squad members returning, this year's club may be hard pressed to match the efforts of the '69 group. With two more teams in the WAC race, it will become just that much more difficult to get even a share of the title.