



Crandall Chargers university men's basketball player Taylor Norum practises yesterday. *GREG AGNEW/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT*

UNIVERSITY BASKETBALL **HOOPS CHARGERS ARE NATIONALLY RANKED**

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There's a buzz around the Crandall Chargers men's basketball team again.

The Chargers, who made their one and only appearance in the Atlantic Collegiate Athletic Association conference final in 2009, are off to their best start in school history.

Crandall started the season at 4-0 and now sits in second place in the eight-team conference with a 5-1 record. Last week, the Chargers made the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association national rankings for the very first time.

One of the largest crowds in the team's history took in a win over the Mount Saint Vincent Mystics on Sunday.

"I think it's the combination of the players we have. They work well together and their talents compliment each other," said Crandall basketball co-ordinator and men's head coach Greg Maillet.

"To be nationally ranked is something they're excited about and they're excited to see what we can do this year."

The Chargers visit the Mount Allison Mounties (4-3) Wednesday at 8 p.m. at the McCormack Gymnasium in Sackville. The schools meet in a women's game at 6 p.m.

Crandall returned seven players from last year's team, which finished with a 12-9 regular-season record before losing to the University of King's College Blue Devils in a quarter-final.

Expectations were raised with the additions of Riverview brothers Alex and Craig Macleod and rookie Jerry Jesseau of Newfoundland. Alex Macleod was a standout with the Holland College Hurricanes for the past three seasons.

"You want to achieve your potential every year and develop as much as possible. I thought we could be good and we've won some close games, which helps. Part of that is the composure and experience of our players," said Maillet, whose team dropped two spots to No. 15 in this week's CCAA rankings.

"But I think the biggest thing for us is that we're a team that supports each other on and off the court, win or lose. We had a bad game at Holland on Saturday (a 95-59 loss in Charlottetown). A lot of things went wrong, but we put that behind us the next day and supported each other as strong as

ever and went out and had one of our best wins ever (an 83-75 victory over Mount Saint Vincent). I think we're capable of being a very good team if we can keep improving and developing as a team."

The Chargers are led by fifth-year forward and co-captain Kemoy Shaw. He is the only remaining player from the Crandall team, which lost to Mount Saint Vincent in the 2009 ACAA championship game.

"Kemoy brings a lot of leadership and character. He really stresses the importance of guys helping each other on and off the court, which I think is a big thing over the length of a college season," said Maillet. "On the court, he brings a lot of rebounding and inside scoring."

The Chargers starting lineup also includes all-star centre and co-captain Taylor Norum, forward Alex Murphy, who provides a strong defensive presence, tough point guard Nathaniel Fells and shooting guard Alex Macleod, formerly of Holland College.

Maillet said Alex Macleod has "probably been the best shooter in the ACAA for the last three years.

"He led Riverview High School to the 2009 provincial championship, but he's really developed an all-around game," added Maillet. "He plays excellent defence and drives to the hoop. He's a great player and he's also very team oriented."

First off the bench are usually shooting guard Craig Macleod, who tore his ACL in high school and landed at Crandall after three years studying at the University of New Brunswick, and speedy point guard Shane Fletcher.

Maillet said his team was disappointed with the loss to No. 6 nationally-ranked Holland College on Saturday, but chalked it up to just one of those days.

"A lot of college teams have days like that. Some times everything goes wrong and the shots you normally make aren't falling," the coach said.

"Kemoy summed it up at the end of the game. He said, 'This is one day, we forget it and we move on', and we played great the next day."

Crandall edged Mount Allison 73-72 in Moncton in their only meeting of the season.

"We know Mt. A is talented veteran team, too. We expect to be in a tight and competitive game and should enjoy that challenge," said Maillet. "Every Mt. A game I've been in has been close and competitive and exciting. Those are the fun games to be a part of."

The Mounties women's team is 3-4 on the season while the Chargers are 1-5.