In case you missed his first column for us, Cleveland State men's basketball head coach Gary Waters is the latest addition to the TCF famiglia, giving our readers unprecedented insight into the inner workings of his Viking basketball team, which won 21 games and went to the NIT last season. In his second column for TCF, Coach Waters recaps the past eight months including spring recruiting, summer school, the Vikings' ten-day trip to Spain and preseason conditioning.

Tonight (Monday, November 10) Cleveland State plays John Carroll in an exhibition game at the Wolstein Center. In the 260 days since CSU's last home game (a 59-44 BracketBusters victory over Marist on Feb. 23), the Vikings finished the 2007-2008 regular season with a win to claim the #2 seed in the Horizon League Tournament, where they advanced to the title game before falling short to Butler. CSU's 21 wins, coupled with strength-of-schedule and RPI rankings in the 70s, earned the Vikings a berth in the National Invitation Tournament.

In the locker room following CSU's NIT loss to Dayton, Coach Gary Waters challenged his team. In his second column for TCF, Coach Waters recaps the past eight months including spring recruiting, summer school, the Vikings' ten-day trip to Spain and preseason conditioning.

At 10 p.m. on March 19, 2008, after a very tough NIT tournament game loss at the University of Dayton, I walked off the court and into our locker room. The moment I stepped through the door of the locker room, I saw most of our players with their heads down, their faces in their hands.

I immediately said to them, "Get your heads up. You have done what only 16 teams in NCAA history have done-lose 20 games in one season and win 20 games in the next season. What you have done is remarkable, but it is not enough. Now, if you don't want to be a part of this program you need to leave here because of what this program is going to achieve.

If you don't want to be a part of this, you need to leave this room immediately."

Then I went to the board and wrote three things that had to be understood if they wanted to continue as part of Cleveland State Viking Basketball:

1. *We are going to win the Horizon League next year.*

2. *We are going to receive an NCAA tournament bid.*

3. *Not a person in this room will have less than a 2.7 grade point average.*

These are our goals and this is what we are going to accomplish this year.

And that was how we ended our 2007-2008 season after losing at Dayton in the NIT.

Since that day, it's been a great spring, summer and fall for our team. There truly is no "off-season" at our NCAA Division I level of competition.

But each year has a cycle, and immediately following the end of a playing season, the focus turns to spring recruiting in preparation for the National Letter of Intent

signing period that starts in April.

We were pleased to sign three outstanding players in the spring and are excited about adding Jeremy Montgomery, Charlie Woods and Josh McCoy to our team. All three are winners and will be great additions to our program.

- Jeremy Montgomery is a point guard from Lincoln Park HS in Chicago where he was a first team all-Chicago Public League player and third team all state.

He is a strong floor leader and showed that when he led his team to the quarter finals of the tournament.

- Charlie Woods is a forward from East Lansing HS in Michigan. Charlie was named first team all state after leading his team to the semi-finals of the state tournament.

He is very long and athletic with great potential for growth.

- Josh McCoy is a shooting guard who was a two-time first team all state pick in Missouri, where he led his team to the state final four in St. Louis. Josh has great length for a guard with the ability to shoot from long range.

We are expecting great things from Jeremy, Charlie and Josh. They are all very good perimeter shooters and led their teams in scoring.

We are also excited about two other additions to our roster. Trevon Harmon is a guard from Pasadena HS in California who transferred in and enrolled this spring.

Trevon is a high-scoring combo guard that led his team to a state championship and was named the John Wooden Award winner as the top player in his division.

Tim Kamczyc is a forward from Strongsville HS who can play both outside and in.

Tim is a real competitor who was also named second team all-state as quarterback of his high school team.

We really wanted to improve our perimeter scoring ability with this recruiting class and I think we've done that.

After spring recruiting is completed, the Division I college basketball cycle turns to summer school. I am happy to say that this summer was an outstanding one for our CSU players. There are two summer school sessions at Cleveland State, and we only required our players to stay here for the first session.

However, when the first summer session was over, the players came to us and asked if they could all stay for the second summer session so they could work on their game and better themselves for this season. I think that's a great indication of the kind of players we have here at CSU and an indication that they understand the commitment necessary to accomplish the things I wrote on the board in Dayton.

The commitment by our players to work out individually while in summer school carried us right into our 10 allowable practices before our team trip to Spain in August. We tried to teach as much as we could in those ten days. Per NCAA rules, our practices and team traveling party were limited to players who were eligible to play at the end of the 2007-08 season (without freshmen).

It was great to see that our seniors and returning players were anxious to be back on the floor practicing.

On the night before we departed, our CSU season ticket holders held a great send-off for our team. You should know that our season ticket holders are a really loyal and enthusiastic group. In fact, about a third of them have been on board with the Vikings for 15 or more years.

It was great to see them come out in the middle of August to support our players.

In Spain, we played four games in 10 days against high level professional teams. We played teams in Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona and experienced the culture of three historic and beautiful cities.

From a basketball standpoint, our only loss came on our first day in Spain in a game played at what would have been 6 a.m. at home.

But most importantly, our players had to depend on each other to learn a foreign language and foreign customs.

Trips like these are great team-building experiences and our young men grew and developed in all areas of their lives.

We returned home from Spain the night before fall classes started. Typically, the start of fall semester means it's time for the preseason conditioning phase of college basketball to begin.

But this year, after a full summer of individual workouts followed by 10 team practices and 10 days in Spain, we wanted to first make sure every player was well rested and focused academically before starting our fall conditioning program.

In addition to individual basketball skill instruction, drills and weight lifting, our preseason conditioning program involves running.

Specifically, we time our players in the mile run and set target times for each player.

I'm happy to report that every player met their timed mile goal and enhanced their physical development. Fall conditioning culminated with our annual Viking Madness celebration to kick off preseason practice. Viking Madness on October 17 was a great evening of entertainment and excitement, including performances by cheerleaders and bands, student games and contests, the introduction of our CSU men's and women's basketball teams, basketball competition and a concert.

It was great to see our campus community and fans come out to celebrate the

start of basketball practice.

Now we're almost ready to start a new season. Our players have worked extremely hard to be successful and to be prepared for the season home opener against Oakland. They are looking forward to playing this entire season for each other and for the goals we've set.

I hope you get on board and come see us play.

CSU opens the 2008-2009 season at home against Oakland this Saturday night, Nov. 15. As part of the Great '08 Tip-Off Special, $8 seats are Buy One-Get One Free. The Vikings return four starters and eight lettermen from a year ago and were picked as the favorite to win the Horizon League in a preseason poll of the coaches, sports information directors and media in the league.

For tickets and more information, visit www.csuvikings.com or call (216) 687-4848.