The first day of spring in Cleveland this year was ushered in with a raucous celebration by CSU's Vikings. Dancing in the NCAA Tournament for the first time in 23 years, the #13 seed Vikings marched all over ACC power and #4 seed Wake Forest (84-69) in the Tournament's biggest upset. The future is very bright for the Vikings, and today, coach Gary Waters checks in to outline what it takes to sustain success in college basketball and right now at Cleveland State. Thanks coach!

The first day of spring in Cleveland this year was ushered in with a raucous celebration by CSU's Vikings. Dancing in the NCAA Tournament for the first time in 23 years, the #13 seed Vikings marched all over ACC power and #4 seed Wake Forest (84-69) in the Tournament's biggest upset.

The Vikings' return to glory-and repeat role as America's Cinderella story-capped a memorable 26-11 season in which CSU defeated three ranked opponents: #11 Syracuse (on Cedric Jackson's 65-foot buzzer-beater), #16 Butler (at historic Hinkle Fieldhouse in the Horizon League Championship) and the aforementioned #12 Wake Forest in the NCAA Tournament.

The NCAA Tournament has a long playlist of 'one-hit wonders'-schools that find their way to the Big Dance once, but just can't capture the magic again. Since the NCAA Tournament field expanded in 1985, 65 teams have been limited to just one appearance in the Big Dance.

With two Tournament appearances now (albeit 23 years apart), CSU has twice found the magic and Danced.

So what's next for Cleveland State's Vikings? Is a repeat performance too much to ask? This year's Vikings graduate five seniors, including co-MVPs Jackson and J'Nathan Bullock, leaving CSU without a senior on the roster for the 2009-2010 season.

In this column, CSU coach Gary Waters outlines what it takes to sustain success in college basketball and right now at Cleveland State.

After a great season, one of the primary ways to help sustain success is to use the NCAA Tournament's national exposure to recruit higher-level players. Improved recruiting can help to ensure great success in the upcoming years.

After achieving success in the NCAA Tournament and winning the Horizon League Championship, we have put ourselves in a position to attract a much higher caliber of student-athlete.

Recruiting is the lifeblood of any program and the first key to achieving repeat success, so every step we take towards obtaining our recruiting goals is vital to the enhancement of our program.

Recruiting well now will help to determine the success we will have in the coming years.

Secondly, proper scheduling is another way to sustain success over the years. Being identified as a mid-major program, we must find innovative ways to create a schedule that is conducive to having success.

Our non-conference schedule should include a number of high-major opponents along with a fair amount of quality mid- to low-major programs.

In scheduling, it is not only important to plan out who you play, but also where and when.

If we can manage the dates we play certain opponents, it will allow us to have a better chance of succeeding against higher-level competition.

Furthermore, the mixture of high- and mid-major teams will also prepare us for success in Horizon League play.

Ultimately, we hope the experience gained through good scheduling will enhance our chances of sustained success throughout the season and during post season play.

A third key area in sustaining success is player development. It is very important that our underclassmen put in the time in the offseason to develop their skills to a high level to regularly compete at the post-season level.

In the times when we are allowed individual instruction, we must develop their skills when the pressure of the season has ended.

The improvement of their skill level is paramount to their development and our program sustaining a high level of success.

We must understand this key point if we want to compete against the quality teams on our schedule and again be prepared for post season play.

Finally, we must use our NCAA tournament exposure to generate additional resources and revenue to improve important key areas of our basketball program in order to sustain success. Such areas would include our basketball budget, facilities and retention of key staff members. Further more, it is now even more important to create ways to increase home attendance, and to improve the fan experience as a result of the success we have achieved in the NCAA Tournament this year.

These areas must be enhanced in order for us to sustain the quality of success that a perennial NCAA Tournament-level team should possess.

If we can use our success this season to recruit a higher-caliber athlete, challenge our team through a tough but well-planned schedule, develop our players' individual skills and leverage our on-court success into additional resources and

revenue, we can indeed build on the foundation we've laid in our first three seasons at CSU. Sustaining success is the next challenge for CSU Basketball-and we look forward to meeting that challenge.

Cleveland State's first practice of the 2009-2010 season-October 16-is just five months from this Saturday. To request ticket information, go to CSUVikings.com and click on the Basketball Tickets link on the front page.