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A year ago, a trio of freshmen, guard Katy Winge and forwards Brianna Puni and Maddie Oliver, entered the ISU women's basketball program. Now as sophomores, their ability to remember what it is like to be a newcomer just last year has helped them in aiding this year's incoming class.

"The transition from high school to college is so much more than just basketball, and I know we learned that coming in," Winge said. "It's a lot of time management stuff and helping them off the court as much as it is on the court, like little things such as making the adjustment. And obviously they can't play the same style of basketball as they did in high school.

It's much bigger, faster and stronger. So we are just there to help them keep their confidence up and tell them that they are going to contribute to this team already as freshmen."

While the sophomores have taken on the task of helping out the newcomers, they still have the team's five seniors to serve as mentors to them.

"I think we're very lucky to have the amazing seniors that we do this year as sophomores," Winge said. "As a team, we are trying to keep our confidence up and just have a good all-around stat sheet."

Being a year older now and moving up the seniority ladder, the sophomores are expected to step up and take on an increased role to help fill the shoes of the individuals from last season's team whom did not return this year. Two student-athletes on the 2011-12 roster are not on the team this year, one was anticipated and the other was unexpected.

Last year's team Co-MVP Katie Broadway led the squad with 16.2 points per game and 89 three-pointers, a school record. She is also one of 27 ISU women's basketball players in school history to score 1,000 points.

Forward Marley Hall, who transferred to Western Illinois in August just before the start of the school year, held the team's best field goal percentage at 48.3 last year and earned Most Improved Player honors on the squad.

Oliver believes a collective effort by all team members has allowed the team to replace the two losses from last season's squad.

"We have a lot of minutes and points to be replaced this year and I think everyone on the team has been doing a really good job of stepping up where it's needed," she said. "I think we are just as good if not better than we were at this point last year."

Now, having collegiate experience under their belt, the second-year team members have a higher level of familiarity with what is coming up which has allowed them to have better preparation as a result.

"The biggest thing is that our confidence is so much better this year," Winge said. "We know exactly what to expect and we know what the coaches expect of us. So that makes it a lot easier for us to perform and focus on certain tasks. We definitely focused on that over the summer and improved on that in that sense. So I think that our goals are just a lot more targeted and we are ready to do what we can to make the team better."

Winge has noticed a different style of play this year compared to last.

"We approach the game differently and we're trying to play a lot faster this year and more aggressive," she said. "We're really focusing on our defense and creating our offense from our defense."