

RIT Team Uses Sign Language

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John DiTullio

The Tigers are 7-3

Debbie Buff is in her 5th season as the RIT women's basketball coach, and the team is off to their best start at 7-3.

"They work hard every day," says Buff, "It's definitely the hardest working group of athletes I've had. They are very focused, they believe they can win...it's just really a great experience...the whole family atmosphere is very, very close."

The Tiger family features three players that are hearing impaired, including senior, Jenna Newberry.

"I've been probably playing since I could walk," says Newberry, "I mean the minute I could pick up the ball I just developed a love for the game, and I have been playing since I can remember."

Because of Jenna and her teammates, Shannon Bean and Christine Rowinski, coach Buff has altered her coaching tactics.

"I think the fact that we changed all our verbals to visuals...all the time," says Buff, "can be frustrating. During the game if something quick happens and you want to make a quick change I will relay a message out to our captains and they will make sure the three athletes get the change in it, so it really has been all sign."

"When I first met my team, it was actually kind of difficult to communicate," says Newberry, "because my teammates really didn't know sign...soon they all took sign classes so they were able to communicate with me better and my coaches...(now) everyone knows signs for different plays."

Jenna and her teammates open Tuesday's Chase Tournament as the fourth seed.

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