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2024 HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL PREVIEW

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Prelude to the Preview

KENDALLVILLE — Another season of high school basketball is upon us in northeast Indiana. We are excited to give you the KPC Media/IN All Sports Basketball Preview special section.

We are two and a half weeks into the girls basketball season, and the boys' campaign will begin on Tuesday.

There appear to be some big graduation losses for some of the top teams in our respective conferences to shake up how the top half of those leagues will look. However, there are huge exceptions.

One, the Norwell girls, last season's Class 3A state runners-up. They had some good players graduate, but they appear to be really good again.

Two, the Eastside girls. They did not lose much, and they have a terrific set of guards who are firing on all cylinders in the early going.

Three, the Lakeland boys. Nate Keil graduated, but their core is intact after a couple of solid seasons. Now TJ Schneider returns to the bench to try to get the Lakers over the sectional hump, and they will do so in Class 2A for the next couple of years. Schneider knows what it is like to win sectional championships as an assistant coach for the late Tim Sirk.

I'll have a better idea of the area prep basketball scene as we go. Volleyball just ended a few days ago as I write this column.

Speaking of volleyball, shout outs to Angola for being the Class 3A state runner-up and to Carroll for being the 4A state champion. They overcame their own roadblocks to have special seasons.

And shout out to the 2024 NCAA Division III national champion Trine University men's basketball team, which included East Noble graduate Brent Cox as one of its leading players, EN graduate Hayden Jones and Central Noble graduate Logan Gard. It was home at the MTI Center for its first four wins, then the team finished the job about 40 minutes away at Allen County War Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne.

Coach Brooks Miller's Thunder captured the area and gained a lot of new fans along the way. And they have a very experienced roster and are off to a good start this season.

A lot is going on wrapping up one sports season and starting another. But we take a lot of pride in this section and letting you readers know what to expect from your teams for this season. I appreciate the hustle of veteran reporters Mark Murdock and David Vantress for the work they put into this. Thank you to special sections graphic designer Stevie Lockridge for putting this section together.

Thank you to a couple of our daily editors, Matt Getts and Jeff Jones, for chipping in on the sports side from time to time. All the way around, it's a labor of love.

It will be fun to go out to the gyms this season and see teams grow at their own paces. Some will have championships within their sights, and others will seek competitiveness as a primary goal.

We encourage you to visit our website, kpcnews.com, to follow our coverage on game nights.

Ken Fillmore
Sports Director of KPC Media

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KEN FILLMORE

Westview was the only boys basketball team in the area to win a sectional championship last season. Coach Chandler Prible's Warriors repeated a champions of their own Class 2A sectional, defeating Churubusco 51-39 in the final at the Warrior Dome. The Warriors won their 22nd sectional title in program history and finished their season 20-6.

MATT GETTS

Fremont was the only girls basketball team in the area to win a sectional championship last season. Coach Shae Thomas' Eagles won the Class 2A Eastside Sectional, defeating Central Noble 41-38 in the final for the first sectional title since 2019. Fremont finished the season with a 16-9 record.

ANGOLA HORNETS

Angola High School
755 S. 100E, Angola
Colors: Purple and Gold

Boys
Class: 3A

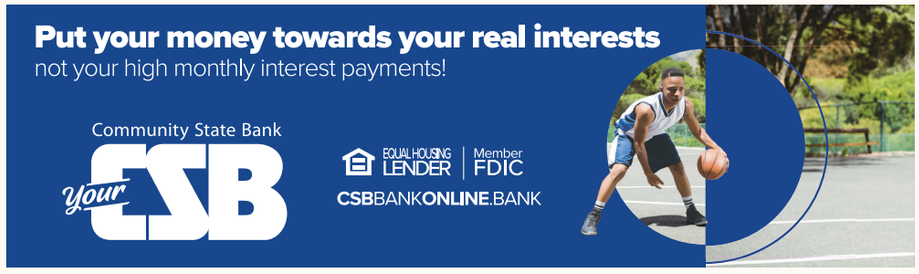
Girls
Class: 3A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 30	H	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Concord	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Northridge	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 20	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 2	A	Dwenger	12:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	N	NECC Tournament	TBA
Jan. 21	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	A	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 11	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 15	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 22	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 23	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 26	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Norwell	12:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 11	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	Concordia	1:30 p.m.
Dec. 18	A	Concord	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 19	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	H	Fremont	1:30 p.m.
Jan. 8	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Prairie Heights	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 11	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	A	Churubusco	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 25	H	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 30	H	Warsaw	7:30 p.m.



Hornet girls have talent to contend for titles

KEN FILLMORE

Angola's Lexi Stillman directs traffic for her team at the point during Class 3A Garrett Sectional first-round game with Leo last season. Stillman will lead a Hornet team with a nice mix of talent this season.

BY KEN FILLMORE
kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

ANGOLA — Angola's girls basketball team has a good blend of athletes young and old that can contend for conference and sectional championships.

"We'll be fun to watch," second-year Hornet coach Dave Panning said. "The chemistry is far better than what it was at the beginning of last year.

"We have a large senior class, and we'll be counting on their leadership a lot. We have a freshman class."

And things racheted up quickly for the Hornet cagers (14-10 last season, including 8-2 in the Northeast Corner Conference) after the Angola volleyball team fell in the Class 3A state championship match to Indianapolis Roncalli on Nov. 9.

Six girls transitioned from volleyball to basketball after a short break. Panning had his full team for its first practice on Nov. 13. Angola is in an opening stretch

SEE **ANGOLA GIRLS,** Page **36**

Weber returns to solidify Hornet boys

BY KEN FILLMORE
kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

ANGOLA — Bryan Weber returns to the Angola High School boys basketball program and will try to get the Hornets back in a winning direction.

Weber is a 1998 AHS graduate and coached in Ed Bentley and Greg Holmes' Hornet programs before stepping away to focus more on family as four children were growing up. Weber's oldest son Cru is now a freshman.

Bryan Weber returned recently to be an assistant coach for the eighth grade boys basketball team at Angola Middle School. He replaced Brandon Appleton as the varsity boys coach at AHS in May.

"I'm looking forward to it," Weber said. "The guys have bought in, and I think it starts to build excitement. We want to get the youth involved.

"We want a staple to be our defensive intensity. We want to play an aggressive style, and effort level is very important. We want teams to adjust to us and not us adjust to them."

The Hornets return nearly all their key players from last season, when they went 8-16, 6-4 in the Northeast Corner Conference. Their biggest losses were the graduations of Cam McGee and leading scorer Dane Lantz.

Angola's last winning season was the 2019-10 campaign when it went 14-9 under Bentley and

SEE **ANGOLA BOYS,** Page **37**

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CENTRAL NOBLE COUGARS

Central Noble High School
302 Cougar Court, Albion
Colors: Maroon and White

BOYS
Class: 2A

GIRLS
Class: 2A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 27	H	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Fort Wayne South	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 18	H	Bremen	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	H	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 3	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Garrett	8:00 p.m.
Jan. 11	A	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 15	N	NECC Tournament	TBA
Jan. 24	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 3	H	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	A	Concord	7:45 p.m.
Feb. 21	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 23	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 26	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	H	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Angola	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Westview	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 20	H	West Noble	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 28	H	Wawasee	6:15 p.m.
Jan. 3	H	East Noble	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 7	H	Bremen	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Garrett	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 14	H	NECC Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 21	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	Eastside	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	H	Churubusco	6:00 p.m.

Cougar boys not as experienced as they have been

LORRIE GETTS

Central Noble's Redick Zolman defends Fairfield's Noah Mast on the perimeter late last season in Benton. Zolman returns to the Cougars for his senior campaign after earning KPC Media All-Area honors last season.

BY KEN FILLMORE
kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

ALBION — It's been awhile since Central Noble had a younger, inexperienced varsity boys basketball team.

Despite having seven seniors, the Cougars will try to grow up quickly.

CN graduated six players from a team that went 16-8 last season, including 7-3 in the Northeast Corner Conference. Five of those six graduates played a lot last season.

"We'll fill in those spots with some other seniors," second-year Cougar coach Ben Lemmon said.

"I think we will grow everyday," he added. "This group enjoys being around each other. They don't care who scores. They want to win."

Central Noble also lost forward Simeon Gard. The junior forward would have taken a valuable varsity role this season, but he and his family moved out of state.

The big addition for the Cougars is senior 6-foot-4 swing man Colt Kirkpatrick. He was homeschooled and lives in the Central Noble district. He plays inside and out.

CN's leading returners are senior guards Redick Zolman and Jayden Tilley.

Zolman was a KPC Media All-Area selection last season, averaging 10.4 points, 4.5 rebounds, 1.5 assists and 1.2 steals per game. He is in his third varsity season, and was on the bench as a freshman when the Cougars were in the Class 2A state championship game in 2022.

"Redick is super-athletic and plays above the rim," Lemmon said. "He can go score on his own, but is also happy to make the right play. He is stepping up more into a leadership role."

Tilley will take on a bigger role after playing around several minutes per game last season.

Also taking on a bigger role will be senior point guard Carmine Shoda. However, he will share time at the point with freshman Marek Malcolm, the son of Cougar girls basketball coach Sam Malcolm.

"Marek is a true point guard and a smart kid,"

SEE **CN BOYS,** Page **38**

Finding right combo challenge for CN girls

BY MARK MURDOCK
mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

ALBION — The potential is there for Central Noble to be one of the area's top girls basketball teams in 2024-25.

Some assembly may be required.

The Cougars have a deep roster with plenty of experience. Finding the right combinations for success will be the main task for third-year coach Sam Malcolm.

"We're deep and we're competing at practice, and we hope those dividends pay off later in the year," Malcolm said.

"If I have a concern it's how do we get 12, 13, 14 deserving girls the playing time that they've earned? We have so many girls that are similar in their skill sets. It will be a challenge for us to put together those combinations that can succeed on the floor."

The Cougars have a strong nucleus of four seniors back from last year's 14-11 club, including Kierra Bolen, Megan Carnahan, Taylor Custer and Kennedy Vice.

Juniors Abby Pliett and Grace Swank were KPC Media Group All-Area picks last year. Katie Forker, Austen McGlothlin and Whitny Replogle are also back as juniors.

"We have a lot of weapons," Malcolm said. "How we put them together is going to be the challenge. We've got experience, we've got depth at all of the positions. We go three or four deep in our bigs and six or seven deep in our guards.

"If you were to take the top 14 players in our program, line up and count off 1-2, 1-2, 1-2, and put those girls against each other and play 10 games, I think it

SEE **CN GIRLS,** Page **38**

MARK MURDOCK

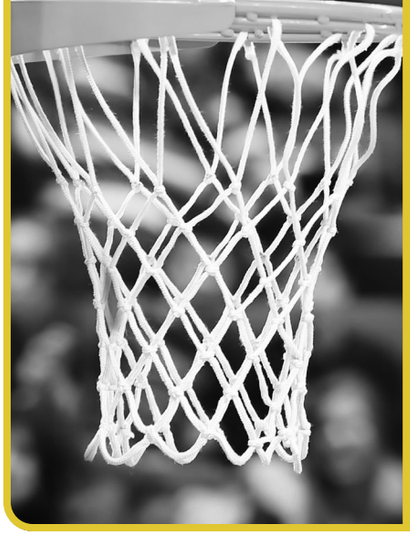
Abby Pliett, right, is one of several returning players for Central Noble's girls this season.

CHURUBUSCO EAGLES

Churubusco High School
1 Eagle Drive, Churubusco
Colors: Old Gold and Black

Boys
Class: 2A

Girls
Class: 2A



BOYS SCHEDULE

Dec. 6	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Northrop	2:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	South Adams	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	N	Trine University Classic	12:00 p.m.
Dec. 27	A	Luers	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 2	A	East Noble	2:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	A	NECC Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	Manchester	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	Argos	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 11	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	H	Hamilton	7:00 p.m.
Feb. 18	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 22	H	Whitko	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 26	A	Lakeland Christian	6:0 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 11	H	Eastside	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 13	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	H	Prairie Heights	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 21	H	Canterbury	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 8	H	Manchester	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Fremont	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 14	A	NECC Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 21	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	Angola	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Feb. 1	A	Northfield	7:30 p.m.

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New coach to guide experienced 'Busco girls

BY DAVID VANTRESS
dvantress@kpcmedia.com

CHURUBUSCO — For the second straight season, the winds of change are blowing through Churubusco High School's basketball program.

The Eagle girls have a new coach in Dawn Kock, a longtime Carroll assistant.

Gabe Garman, also a former Carroll assistant, took over the Eagle boys program last year.

Key returning players for the Eagles in 2024-25 start with talented senior guards Brooklyn Sinclair and Bridget Timbrook.

Sinclair averaged 9.9 points per game last season and Timbrook chipped in with 9.3 points per contest.

Junior guard Patty Wiggs returns. She scored 6.3 points per game and led the team in rebounding last season.

Senior forward Lilly Rinker is also back to form part of a strong returning core for the Eagles.

Churubusco has room to grow and improve in Kock's first year. The Eagles were 5-18 in 2023-24, including 2-8 in the Northeast Corner Conference.

Kock said the Eagles' strengths this season are speed, physicality and senior leadership.

The Eagles are hungry for a winning season, Kock said, and the ball is in good hands with seasoned senior guards like Timbrook and Sinclair leading the way.

"Both are capable of having a hot hand at scoring," Kock said.

Kock said the Eagles will capitalize on their speed and physical strength by playing an aggressive style of defense.

"Our ability to have a successful season will be determined by our desire to stay together, commit to work, and keep the faith," Kock said.

The Eagles' last winning season was in 2014-15 when they posted a 14-10 mark and won their sectional opener.

The Eagles are off to a 1-3 start, with the win coming Nov. 9 over Hamilton 65-9.

A new-look NECC is now set. Hamilton has left to join the Hoosier Plains Conference.

Koch is assisted by varsity assistant Cassidy Yant and junior varsity head coach Abi Erwin.

KEN FILLMORE

Churubusco sophomore Weston Ott grabs the ball as he begins to make a move toward the basket against Westview in the second half of the Class 2A Westview Sectional final last season. He will bring an interior presence to the Eagles this season.

DAVID VANTRESS

Churubusco's Braylon McCoy drives past Prairie Heights' Lance Speck during a Class 2A Sectional 35 quarterfinal game last season at Westview. McCoy is back for his senior season to the Eagles takes some steps forward.

Churubusco boys ready to step up in 2024-25

BY DAVID VANTRESS
dvantress@kpcmedia.com

CHURUBUSCO — The Churubusco High School boys basketball team has some room to get better in 2024-25, but has to replace a couple of key players who were mainstays on the Eagle roster the past few seasons.

Head coach Gabe Garman is entering his second season guiding the Eagles. Churubusco was 9-16 a year ago. The Eagles made it all the way to the Class 2A Sectional 35 championship game at Westview.

Sectional 35 will look a little different this season as Lakeland drops down from Class 3A to join the fray.

SEE **BUSCO BOYS,** Page **37**

DEKALB BARONS

DeKalb High School
C.R. 427, Waterloo
Colors: Red, Black and White

Boys
Class: 4A

Girls
Class: 4A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 27	H	Northrop	7:45 p.m.
Nov. 30	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Fort Wayne North	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Homestead	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	H	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	H	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 27	N	Shanandoah Tournament	10:30 p.m.
Jan. 11	H	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	A	Carroll	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 17	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	A	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 29	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	A	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 8	A	Luers	1:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	H	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	H	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	Northridge	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 23	H	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 29	A	Northrop	5:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	H	Carroll	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	A	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	A	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 7	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 11	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 16	H	Blackhawk	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	A	Bluffton	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	Snider	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	H	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.

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MARK MURDOCK

Caiden Hinkle returns for his senior season at DeKalb.

DeKalb boys small in size, big on effort

BY MARK MURDOCK
mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

WATERLOO — DeKalb will have to find other ways to be big this season.

The Baron boys are not blessed with a lot of size, but hope they have the resources to make up for being smaller and compete hard.

"We have probably the deepest group we've had," fourth-year coach Marty Beasley said. "They're extremely hard-working. We have guys who really, truly want to be good.

"They're getting it done in the weight room. They're getting it done in skill development. We're excited to see them continue to develop. They're not overly talented but they make up for that with hard work, dedication and a little bit of grit. That goes a long way."

The Barons return a large junior class with varsity experience from last season's 9-14 club. The depth and quickness should help in playing more of a full-court game, Beasley believes.

"With our quickness we have to turn the other team over a little bit," Beasley said. "In the full court we have to be able to put pressure on people to a) wear them down a little, and b) make them play a little faster, and maybe they'll throw a few passes our way.

"We're deep enough that we have to be able to play 84 feet and make up things on that end of the floor to where we can't just get destroyed rebounding. We're going to give up some offensive rebounds no doubt, because we're not very big."

DeKalb is working to improve problem areas. Beasley said several players come in and take extra shots before school in the mornings. The Barons have shot 32.7% and 31.9% from three the past two seasons, and are looking to get into the high 30s.

"Everybody wants that quick result," Beasley said. "'I worked out three days and I should be good.' No. You've got to do it consistently over a period of time.

"The results may still not be what you want them to be. When you achieve something, you have the tendency to get complacent. Now you've got to keep working harder."

The team's shooting approach also has to be right.

"Maybe we've got to take fewer shots," Beasley said. "Maybe we have to have the right guys shooting it. Hopefully with the number of guys we've got coming in and shooting, they're going to be confident and be able to make shots."

SEE **DEKALB BOYS,** Page **38**

Baron girls look to continue strong defense

BY MARK MURDOCK
mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

WATERLOO — At the end of last season, DeKalb held Huntington North to one field goal in the first half of that game.

The Barons' intense zone defense often frustrated opponents, but the seniors who left were its heart and soul. Getting the defense back to that point is the main task for the Barons as they look to the 2024-25 season.

"We've got to find ways to stop other teams from scoring," said Noah Stuckey, beginning his fifth year with the Barons. "The girls that graduated last year, defensively they were very tough and physical, and rebounded well. They did everything the right way.

"Skill-wise offensively we'll be better than we were a year ago. We just have to find that defensive toughness."

The main scoring threat will be KPC Media Group All-Area Prep of the Year Ashley Cox, a two-time All-Northeast 8 Conference pick who averaged a shade under 20 points a game last year. She also led the team in rebounding, assists and steals.

Abbie Harris averaged nine points a game and provided needed ball handling as a freshman, and had a strong offseason, Stuckey said. The Barons also bring back a valuable role player in Bree Fordyce.

Sophomores Reese Schmidt and Grace Pfister could also provide scoring punch, while freshmen Ellington Sparkman, Mollee Sonnenberg and Kyla Kjendalen will provide depth.

The Barons have the makings of a more diverse attack this season.

"That's where we've changed offensively,

SEE **DEKALB GIRLS,** Page **39**

MARK MURDOCK

DeKalb's Ashley Cox is back after an outstanding junior season.

EAST NOBLE KNIGHTS

East Noble High School
901 S. Garden St., Kendallville
Colors: Royal Blue and Gold

Boys
Class: 4A

Girls
Class: 4A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Dec. 7	H	Carroll	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Northrop	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 16	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	H	East Noble Tournament	TBA
Jan. 2	H	Churubusco	2:30 p.m.
Jan. 3	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 7	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	H	Snider	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 17	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	H	Lakeland	7:45 p.m.
Feb. 1	A	Norwell	1:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 12	A	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	H	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	A	Homestead	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	Wawasee	7:45 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 23	H	Fort Wayne North	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 26	A	Carooll	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Northridge	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Northrop	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	H	Columbia City	2:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	H	East Noble Tournament	TBA
Jan. 3	A	Central Noble	6:0 p.m.
Jan. 8	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 11	A	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	H	Norwell	7:30 p.m.

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EN girls ready to speed things up

BY MARK MURDOCK
mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

KENDALLVILLE — Britain Isaacs wants to go faster in his second year leading the East Noble girls basketball program.

The Knights, who lost only two seniors, will have a smaller, guard-oriented unit with quickness and athleticism. Isaacs wants them to use that to their advantage.

"We're even more dynamic, get it and go," Isaacs said. "I challenged them to play a lot faster this year than they did last year. We're hoping with the maturity the game has slowed down for them.

SEE **EAST NOBLE GIRLS,** Page **36**

MARK MURDOCK

Addison Deming, left, is one of several returning players for the East Noble girls basketball team this season.

Veteran East Noble boys expect big year

BY MARK MURDOCK
mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

KENDALLVILLE — Long before the tipoff of the new season, the injury bug bit East Noble's boys.

Ryker Quake, a first-team all-conference choice last year, suffered a knee injury.

That hasn't dampened the enthusiasm fourth-year coach Brandon Durnell has for this year's edition of the Knights. The other four starters return from last year's 12-11 club: Mason Treesh, Landon Swogger, Nathan Bowker and Kobe Ritchie.

"When I got the job they were freshmen, so this is my first senior class I've had all the way through," Durnell said. "There's trust there and we're excited to have a good season with these guys because they've put in a lot of work the last four years."

Building depth became more of an urgent necessity when Quake was hurt.

"We have a lot of our role players and bench that have to fill those minutes Ryker had," Durnell said. "He was going to be a guy that played the whole game. That's 32 minutes that opened up.

"We have about four or five kids that are battling for those minutes. We're spending a lot of the preseason working to develop those guys and develop some depth."

The Knights' commitment to meshing the entire program together will pay off, Durnell hopes.

"The good news about what we're doing is we have assistant coaches that do great in going to our younger players at lower levels to where we're running the same system at all levels all the way down to third grade.

"The kids should know the system and it should not matter who's out there. All five guys have been practicing and working in this system since I got the job."

SEE **EAST NOBLE BOYS,** Page **36**

MARK MURDOCK

East Noble's Mason Treesh, right, looks for room against Snider defender Nathan Griffin in a Class 4A East Noble Sectional game last season. Treesh is one of four starters returning for the Knights this season.

EASTSIDE BLAZERS

Eastside High School
603 E. Green St., Butler
Colors: Kelly Green and White

Boys
Class: 2A

Girls
Class: 2A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 30	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 2	H	Edgerton (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	A	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	A	Edon (Ohio)	12:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14-18	A	NECC Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	H	Hamilton	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 15	A	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	H	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 26	H	Bishop Luers	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 11	A	Churubusco	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 13	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	A	Lakewood Park	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 21	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 27	A	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 30	H	Edon (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 3	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 7	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14-18	A	NECC Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 21	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	A	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 27	H	Hamilton (JV Only)	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 30	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.

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It's a blank slate for new Eastside coach

BY JEFF JONES
jjones@kpcmedia.com

BUTLER — It's a blank slate in more ways than one for the Eastside Blazers.

Will Lewis takes over as head coach after the Blazers finished 8-15 for David Prokop, who is now athletic director at Hamilton.

Four of the leading scorers from that team — Noah Acquaviva, Loden Johnson, Clayton Minnick and Ryder Reed — graduated. Junior Nolan Baker has the most returning experience, averaging 4.7 points per game a year ago.

Lewis is counting on Baker, Bryan Cuenca, Evan Elden and Bryce Strong, among others, to play bigger roles this season.

He's not sugar-coating anything.

"The only thing we know about Eastside basketball is that we don't know anything about Eastside basketball," Lewis said.

"We are a blank slate. I'm in a fortunate situation to start building our team toward my vision," he continued. "We're going to learn to love this journey together — process over prize.

"I'm excited about the energy bubbling up and what the future of Blazer basketball looks like. Whatever it takes!"

Austen Brow and Jack Lilly will be assistant coaches for Lewis.

JEFF JONES

Eastside's Nolan Baker splits the Edgerton defense for two points in a Blazer victory last season in Edgerton, Ohio. Baker is back for his junior season to lead a young Eastside boys basketball team.

Eastside girls using how last season ended as motivation

BY JEFF JONES
jjones@kpcmedia.com

BUTLER — It could be another fun season in eastern DeKalb County.

The 2023-2024 Eastside Lady Blazers set a new program record with 21 wins while also winning the Northeast Corner Conference tournament for the first time since the 1993-1994 season.

Most of the players from that squad are back and they will be supplemented by players from a JV squad that went 19-2 a year ago.

Head coach Mike Lortie, 82-41 in five seasons at Eastside, returns five players who were either All-Northeast Corner Conference picks or received honorable mention a season ago.

He has a three-headed monster in seniors Sydnee Kessler, Lily Kreischer and Paige Traxler to lead the way.

Kreischer averaged 11.8 points per contest last year. Traxler was right behind at 11.1 points a game while Kessler chipped in with 10.3 points per game.

As freshmen, Lucy Kitchen and Taylor Mack provided plenty of support. Kitchen averaged 6.2 points per game while Mack added 5.3 points per contest.

Adelaide Elden, Paige Kreischer, Addison Moughler and Rylan Moughler all got into varsity games last year, and will be counted upon to make bigger contributions this season as dependable players Jayci Kitchen and Haley Wies graduated.

As great as the 2023-2024 season was, it ended with a disappointing 47-42 loss to Central Noble in sectional play.

"The year ended not as planned, but a great year nonetheless," Lortie said. "We are all using the way the season ended as fuel every day since to attempt a deeper run at the end of the year."

MARK MURDOCK

Eastside's Paige Traxler, right, takes the ball to the basket against Central Noble in an NECC Tournament game last season. Traxler is back to be a part of a solid Blazer backcourt group this season.

FREMONT EAGLES

Fremont High School
701 W. Toledo St., Fremont
Colors: Red, Black and White

Boys
Class: 2A

Girls
Class: 2A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Dec. 3	A	Elkhart Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Lakewood park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 27	A	LaPorte	3:30 p.m.
Jan. 3	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	H	NECC Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	H	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 8	H	Canterbury	1:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	A	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	H	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	A	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 26	A	Wayne	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 29	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	A	Edon (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Fort Wayne North	5:00 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	Fairview (Ohio)	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 17	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 19	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 2	H	Luers	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	A	Angola	1:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Churubusco	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 14	H	NECC Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 25	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 30	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.

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Fremont girls dealing with big expectations

BY KEN FILLMORE
kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

FREMONT — Led by the big three of Addy Parr, Grace Scharlach and Mya Turner, big things are expected for the Fremont girls basketball team.

"They play hard," third-year Eagle coach Shae Thomas said. "Now that they have a year and a half playing together, there are no excuses.

"They have fun playing together. They have learned how each other plays inside and out," she continued. "With experience under our belt this year, we expect to compete at a high level."

Fremont (16-9 last season, including 6-4 in the Northeast Corner Conference) returns its entire starting five in Parr, Scharlach, Turner, senior center Claire Foulk and senior wing Brayleigh Moss. Another letterwinner is back in sophomore Chloe Verdin, who split between the varsity and junior varsity teams.

Support around the athletic Parr (12.5 points, 3.3 rebounds, 1.9 assists and 1,8 steals per game last season) and very good basketball players in sophomores Scharlach (12.5 ppg, 3.7 rpg, 2.8 apg) and Turner (9.6 ppg, 5.6 rpg) could put Fremont among the state's best 1A teams.

Junior forward Hailey Heller will contribute. She transferred from Adams Central and was ineligible for all of last season until the postseason. Sophomore wing Mallorie Hufnagle will get a chance to play point guard so Scharlach can play off the ball.

"Addy has grown a lot. She's a huge leader on our team," Thomas

SEE **FREMONT GIRLS,** Page **37**

KEN FILLMORE

Fremont's Mya Turner drives to the basket against Jimtown's Liberty Dover (14) in a non-conference prep girls basketball game last season in The Cage at Fremont High School. Turner and the Eagles will look to repeat as sectional champions as they move from Class 2A to Class 1A.

Fremont boys to lean on senior starting five

BY KEN FILLMORE
kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

FREMONT — Fremont's boys basketball team will rely heavily on its five starting seniors to get to where it wants to go this season.

The Eagles return to Class 1A and will host a sectional that will include defending 1A state champion Canterbury and a Lakeland Christian team now coached by former longtime Fremont basketball and tennis coach Neal Frantz.

Fremont graduated six seniors from a team that went 12-11 last season, including 6-4 in the Northeast Corner Conference.

It will be more of a similar makeup like it has been for coach Josh Stuckey recently. He hopes a couple of younger guys will emerge to help the team and give it some depth. But he will lean on seniors Colten Guthrie, Bryce Parnin, Cayden Hufnagle, Ethan Grimm and Landon Jaeger regardless.

Jaeger is a transfer from Lakeland.

"I've got a new weapon," Stuckey said of Jaeger. "He's so fast, and he's so quick. And he loves to play defense."

The leader of the senior group is the 6-foot-3 Parnin, who averaged 8.8 points, 6.4 rebounds and 2.7 blocked shots per game last season. He has built up his body and further developed his post game.

"At his ceiling, he is a conference player of the year," Stuckey said of Parnin. "It is not a shocker if her can stay out of foul trouble and handle double teams."

Stuckey, in his fifth season at the helm, thought Hufnagle and Grimm have improved over the offseason. Hufnagle has a better understanding of basketball.

"Ethan has never been the best player," Stuckey said. "He's capable

SEE **FREMONT BOYS,** Page **38**

DAVID VANTRESS

Fremont's Colten Guthrie dishes the ball off to a teammate during a Max Platt Ford Holiday Shootout game last season at the Big Blue Pit in Kendallville. Guthrie will be a part of a solid senior starting five for the Eagles this season.

GARRETT RAILROADERS

Garrett High School
801 E. Houston St., Garrett
Colors: Maroon and Navy Blue

Boys
Class: 3A

Girls
Class: 3A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 27	H	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Prairie Heights	8:00 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 18	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	H	Bluffton	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	A	East Noble Tournament	TBA
Jan. 7	A	Hamilton	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Central Noble	8:00 p.m.
Jan. 16	A	NECC Tournament	TBA
Jan. 28	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 15	A	Tippecanoe Valley	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 26	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	A	Prairie Heights	6:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 19	H	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	N	East Noble Tournament	TBA
Jan. 3	A	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 7	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 14	N	NECC Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 21	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	H	Lakeland	6:30 p.m.

New Garrett boys coach has returning pieces

BY JEFF JONES
jjones@kpcmedia.com

GARRETT — New Garrett boys basketball coach Logan Traylor has plenty of returning pieces to work with.

Four letter winners — Carter Coffman, Royce Fuentes, Jakob Hoover and Parker Reed — are back, along with players like Gabe Armstrong, Javin Bailey, Lucas Collins, Jacob Gonya, Aiden Reed and Kohen Smith. This group hopes to improve upon last season's 5-18 record.

The Railroaders lost Luke Coffman, Drayton Myers and Jaxon Robinson to graduation.

"I'm very excited to coach this group," Traylor said. Adam Crone will serve as assistant coach.

MARK MURDOCK

Garrett's Parker Reed, left, goes up to score against Heritage defender D'Vontaye Washington early last season. Reed is one of the Railroaders' top players returning from last season.

Garrett girls are looking to improve

BY JEFF JONES
jjones@kpcmedia.com

GARRETT — While the team will be younger than last season, overall, coach John Bodey said his Garrett girls basketball team has more skill.

Bodey welcomes back four letter winners from last season's 8-16 team: seniors Madison Freeze and Delaeni Hixson; junior Sarah DePew and sophomore Rilyn Flotow.

Hixson averaged 4.8 points and 6.2 rebounds per contest last season. Flotow added 2.2 points per game and Freeze averaged 1.6 points per game.

While Kelsey Bergman and Brooklyn Jacobs were among the players who graduated, Bodey welcomes four newcomers: senior Ava Secrest, sophomore Charlotte Lemen and freshmen Emma Coffman and Hadley Flotow.

"We will be a young team but more skilled than last year," Bodey said.

He's counting on DePew, who averaged 12 points and 6.3 rebounds per game to be the team's leader.

"Sarah DePew had a good sophomore season and had a good summer. She should be better as a junior. She will be expected to lead our young team," Bodey said.

"Emma Coffman brings overall skill and intelligence to our team," he said. "She will be counted on to score as well as be our main ballhandler."

DAVID VANTRESS

Garrett's Sarah DePew dishes the ball off to a teammate on the perimeter during a Class 3A Garrett Sectional semifinal game with Woodlan last season. DePew will be one of the leaders of a young Railroader squad this season.

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HAMILTON MARINES

Hamilton High School
901 S. Wayne St., Hamilton
Colors: Royal Blue and White

Boys
Class: 1A

Girls
Class: 1A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 29	A	Elwood	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Elkhart Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Lakeland Christian	4:00 p.m.
Dec. 21	N	West Central (Illinois) at Hoosier Gym	12:00 p.m.
Jan. 7	A	Garrett	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 11	A	Trinity Greenlawn	3:00 p.m.
Jan. 14	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	A	Career Academy	1:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	H	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 11	H	Smith Academy	6:00 p.m.
Feb. 14	A	Churubusco	7:00 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 23	A	Career Academy	12:00 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Elkhart Christian	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Lakeland Christian	1:00 p.m.
Dec. 11	H	Pansophia Academy (Michigan)	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 19	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	N	West Central (Illinois) at Hoosier Gym	10:00 a.m.
Dec. 27	N	Lakeland Christian Tournament	TBA
Jan. 7	H	Fort Wayne North	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 11	A	Trinity Greenlawn	12:00 p.m.
Jan. 14	N	NECC Tournament	TBA
Jan. 24	H	Lakeland	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 25	H	Bethany Christian	3:00 p.m.
Jan. 27	A	Eastside	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 28	H	Clinton Christian	6:15 p.m.

Hamilton girls learning with new coach

BY MARK MURDOCK
mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

HAMILTON — Hamilton's girls basketball team started the season a few steps behind.

Most of the players were involved in fall sports. New coach Kris Tadsen was not hired until Aug. 15 and he did not have any chance for offseason work with the team.

It's the first head-coaching opportunity for Tadsen, who was an assistant in the Eastside boys program last year under David Prokop. Prokop is now Hamilton's athletic director.

Hamilton has a roster of eight, and Tadsen likes what he sees so far.

"The eight girls we have are extremely hard workers," Tadsen said. "They get along well. They're eager to learn. I couldn't ask for a better group of girls for my first head-coaching gig."

Tadsen started at square one.

"Right now we're working on getting them to play as a team," he said. "We had issues in the past with a lot of drama. We've been working on relationships.

"We've been working on conditioning so we can run with the other teams, and then just back to the basics, Not being scared of dribbling the ball, don't be scared to shoot the ball."

The Marines have a mixture in game knowledge. They have some first-time players and they have others who haven't played basketball since junior high. It will take time to learn and come together as a unit.

"The more the girls get to play together, and once they kind of learn each other and what they're doing, we're going to get a lot better with knowing where girls have to be," Tadsen said.

The Hamilton program hasn't had a great deal of success in recent years. Building confidence is necessary for moving forward.

"The first thing I talked to the girls about is confidence, just keeping your head up," Tadsen said. "There are going to be missed shots, there are going to be turnovers. We're all learning the game together.

"If you miss a shot that's two seconds out of a 32-minute game. Don't worry about it. Get back on defense, keep you head up and move on."

Tadsen knows progress will come in small steps.

"I get very excited over little things," he said. "When we had a scrimmage at South Side, I had one of the guards bring the ball upcourt. I told her to go left. She went left twice and it was two turnovers, but I

SEE **HAMILTON GIRLS,** Page **39**

Marine boys must take care of ball

BY MARK MURDOCK
mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

HAMILTON — Chase Holden welcomes back a group of six seniors as he begins his second season as Hamilton boys basketball coach.

"It's been nice to have everybody back from last year," Holden said. "They're more acquainted with me and I'm more acquainted with them and what they can do.

"We're way farther along than when I started last year. We understand our plays a lot better. They understand what I expect out of them."

The Marines begin play in the Hoosier Plains Conference this season. The school made the move from the Northeast Corner Conference last spring.

Holden, a star player on Hamilton's regional championship team in 2001, feels two areas will be crucial if the Marines are to improve on last season's 2-15 season.

"We've got to be better rebounding," Holden said. "I remember preaching that a lot at the end of last season. There were times we just didn't want to go rebound and go after those loose balls.

"(Another area for improvement is) taking care of the basketball. If we can clean up those two areas, we'll be in more games and have an opportunity to win more games."

Turnovers caused Hamilton to give up several easy baskets last season.

"We gave away way too many easy layups," Holden said. "We'd make one or two passes then we'd turn the ball over and the other team is going in for a wide open layup.

"If we got back and played defense, we did a great job of slowing teams down. When we turned the ball over and they got easy layups it just killed the swag of our guys. Their heads dropped. It's not easy when your heads start dropping."

The rebounding comes down to want-to.

"Their biggest thing is they've got to want to go get the basketball," Holden said. "They can't let the basketball come to them. We're not the most athletic group, but we've got guys that can go up and get it. We've just got to go get it.

"When I played a long time ago, I wasn't the most athletic one but I wanted the basketball more than somebody else wanted it."

Jagger Hurraw leads the returning senior class as the top ball handler and a key scorer. "He puts a lot on himself to run the team," Holden said. "We need him to score, too. I wish I had another guy who could bring the ball up. He's a leader, he'll do anything I ask of him."

Drew Merritt was a key scorer for the Marines last year.

"As much as he did last year, he's got to learn to score more," Holden said. "He'd lose confidence. I've been

SEE **HAMILTON BOYS,** Page **39**

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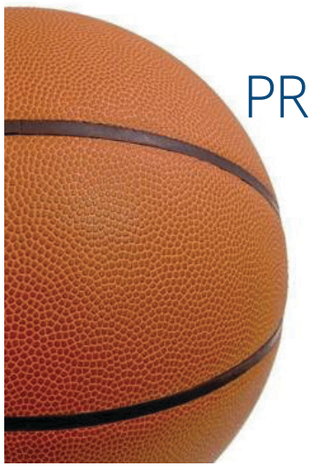

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LAKELAND LAKERS

Lakeland High School
805 E. C.R. 75N, LaGrange
Colors: Columbia Blue, Red and White

Boys
Class: 3A

Girls
Class: 3A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 30	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	H	South Bend St. Joseph	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 27	N	Trine University Classic	11:00 a.m.
Jan. 4	H	Centreville (Michigan)	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 15	N	NECC Tournament	TBA
Jan. 23	A	Elkhart Christian	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 11	H	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	H	Northridge	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 26	H	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Leo	3:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Bethany Christian	4:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	H	Westview	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 19	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	H	Eastside	7:30 a.m.
Jan. 3	A	Heritage	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 7	H	Lakeland Christian	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	West Noble	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 14	N	NECC Tournament	TBA
Jan. 21	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	A	Hamilton	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 30	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Garrett	6:30 p.m.

New coach, new outlook for Laker boys in 2024-25

BY DAVID VANTRESS
dvantress@kpcmedia.com

LAGRANGE — The new Lakeland High School boys basketball coach didn't need to do much work to get up to speed on the Lakers' program.

T.J. Schneider, a former assistant to late Laker coach Tim Sirk, is preparing for his first season as a head coach. He takes over for Chris Keil, who stepped down at the end of the 2023-24 season.

The Lakers were 17-7 last season and made it to the Class 3A Lakeland Sectional semifinals, where they fell to NorthWood 46-43.

The Lakers lost standout guard Nate Keil to graduation. The son of the former head coach, Nate was the Lakers' leading scorer with 22.6 points per game last season.

Nate Keil is now playing at Glen Oaks Community College in Michigan, where he's averaging 3.3 points and 1.7 rebounds per game through his first three games.

The Lakers were regular season champions in the Northeast Corner Conference last season, and Schneider can look forward to a strong returning core in his inaugural season.

That core includes a number of returning letterwinners, including senior point guard Justin Carlson, senior guard Anthony Khanchareun, senior forward Chuck Schackow, junior guards Keyan Arroyo, Levi Cook and Kyle Hartsough, junior forward Keegan Merrifield and sophomore guard Cole Riehl.

Hartsough is the top returning scorer for Lakeland as he averaged 8.8 points per game last season. Arroyo averaged 7.9 points per game and Merrifield was at 7.7 points per contest.

Replacing both Nate Keil's production and leadership won't be easy, Schneider said, but one guy won't be expected to fill those big shoes.

"Collectively replacing the output of a player like Nate Keil will be important," Schneider said. "It won't be one person stepping into that

SEE **LAKELAND BOYS,** Page **36**

DAVID VANTRESS

Lakeland's Keegan Merrifield (20) tries to get to the basket as Westview's Austin Schlabach guards him during an NECC Tournament quarterfinal game last season at the Warrior Dome. Merrifield is part of a solid group of juniors for the Lakers this season.

Laker girls ready to move up in 2024-25

DAVID VANTRESS

Lakeland's Dulce Canedo looks to pass the ball inside as Westview's Janissa Lehman defends during an NECC Tournament quarterfinal game last season at the Warrior Dome. Canedo will once again lead a building Laker team this season.

BY DAVID VANTRESS
dvantress@kpcmedia.com

LAGRANGE — It was a learning process in 2023-24 for new Lakeland High School girls basketball coach James Benson and his team.

Growing pains were experienced on the way to a 4-19 record. One positive for the Lakers last season was a three-game winning streak in late December and into early January. The Lakers defeated Fort Wayne North Side in the Parkview Holiday Shootout, then followed that win up with victories over West Noble and Westview to start 2024.

Eight returning letterwinners give the Lakers a strong foundation for the 2024-25 season: junior point guard Dulce Canedo, senior shooting guard/small forward Briana Poe, junior small forward Katelyn Ryan, sophomore shooting guard McKenzie Carlson, sophomore small forward/shooting guard Zoey Bowman, senior power forward Arlene Thompson and senior power forward/center Cara Schackow.

Canedo is the Lakers' leading returning scorer at 8.3 points per game. Bowman averaged 4.5 points per game. and Ryan chipped in with 4.2 points per contest. Schackow contributed four points per game.

Key newcomers for the Lakers include freshman guards Chloe Yoder and Olivia Winans, freshman forward Ella Huppenthal, freshman center/forward Carmen Rettig and senior forward Ane Laspiur.

Key losses to graduation for Lakeland included Jaden Moore, Takya Wallace and Bree Vander Meulen. Wallace, who is running track at the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne, did not play basketball for the Lakers in her senior season due to a knee injury.

"Last year was a learning experience for a lot of players on our team," Benson said. "We had lower numbers and a lot of key injuries hampered last year. But after Christmas, we really started to jell, come together as a team and play our best basketball. This year, we hope to have those struggles pay dividends and take a step forward in the NECC.

"We return 90% of our production

SEE **LAKELAND GIRLS,** Page **37**

LAKEWOOD PARK PANTHERS

Lakewood Park Christian School
5555 C.R. 29, Auburn
Colors: Columbia Blue, Black and White

Boys
Class: 1A

Girls
Class: 1A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 26	A	Southern Wells	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Edon (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	A	Bluffton	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 7	H	Monpelier (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Smith Academy	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 11	A	Whitko	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	A	Hamilton	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 17	H	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 20	H	South Adams	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 30	H	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	H	Lakeland Christian	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 8	A	Elkhart Christian	2:30 p.m.
Feb. 11	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	H	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	H	Clinton Christian	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 26	H	Fort Wayne North	TBA
Dec. 3	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	A	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	H	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	Blackford	TBA
Dec. 17	H	Eastside	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 19	A	Hamilton	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 7	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 9	A	Bethany Christian	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 11	A	Elkhart Christian	2:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	H	Clinton Christian	6:30 p.m.
Jan. 16	H	Whitko	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	A	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	A	Blackhawk	2:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	H	Wayne	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Lakeland Christian	7:30 p.m.

Panther girls hope to win with different look

BY MARK MURDOCK
mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

AUBURN — Four solid seniors are gone, but the expectations remain high for the Lakewood Park Christian girls basketball program.

The Panthers will have to adjust with new personnel after last year's 16-7 campaign, but have every intention of having another successful season.

"That's the standard we're setting now with this program," fourth-year coach Jared Estep said. "Our feeder program looks good. When I have conversations with them they're expecting to not miss a beat and

SEE **LAKEWOOD PARK GIRLS,** Page **38**

MARK MURDOCK

Ava McGrade, right, looks to have a big senior season at Lakewood Park.

Panther boys plan to be hardest-working

BY MARK MURDOCK
mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

AUBURN — The nightmarish image has finally faded away for Lakewood Park boys basketball.

The sight of the wild, off-balance, falling-down shot falling through the net at the buzzer in the Class 1A sectional final and Elkhart Christian denying the Panthers the title is now in the past.

The Panthers are ready to try again in the fourth season for coach Tim Voss.

The team will have a new look this season without 6-foot-7 Mason Jolloff in the middle.

The team will build around 6-6 junior Avery MacFarlane and senior point guard Davi Freitas.

MacFarlane is a threat inside or out.

"He's an athletic big man," Voss said. "Hopefully we can get him in mismatches. If he's got a big man guarding him he can bring it outside. If the defender is smaller, he can post up.

"He's been working on his three-point shot over the summer. We'll see how well he does with that."

Freitas is an exchange student from Brazil who was eligible only for the sectional last year after playing the regular season with the junior varsity. This year he'll be varsity from day one.

Senior guard Carson Houser is another key returnee from last year's 7-17 edition.

Voss hopes to play quickly and put pressure on opponents. His own team will have to get used to that style first.

"Right now we're focused on conditioning," Voss said. "A lot of our new guys have to have their conditioning at a much higher level.

"We have to be the hardest-working team out there."

Voss hopes some younger players moving up will take advantage of the opportunity before them.

"It's nice to get some of the other guys who haven't had the chance to play varsity that opportunity," Voss said. "Hopefully we can come together as a team."

MARK MURDOCK

Avery MacFarlane (15) is a top returning player for the Lakewood Park boys team this season.

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Prairie Heights High School
305 S. C.R. 1150E, LaGrange
Colors: Red, White and Black

Boys
Class: 2A

Girls
Class: 2A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 26	H	Jimtown	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Garrett	8:00 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Elkhart Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 18	H	Career Academy	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 11	H	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 15	H	NECC Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	A	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	H	Whitko	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	H	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 11	H	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	H	Hamilton	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 30	H	Garrett	6:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	H	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Churubusco	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 28	A	West Noble	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 7	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Angola	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 14	H	NECC Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 21	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	Concord	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 30	H	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.

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PH girls still young, looking to grow

BY KEN FILLMORE
kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

BRUSHY PRAIRIE — Prairie Heights will still have a young girls basketball team this season.

The Panthers were 7-16 last season, including 5-5 in the Northeast Corner. They graduated three starters and a key reserve. That includes guard Sarah Park, who is on the developmental/junior varsity team at Saint Francis.

Emily McCrea is the lone senior on the roster. She averaged 9.7 points, seven rebounds and 1.4 steals per game last season. Junior guard Avery Wagler is the only other returning varsity player.

"We are a young team that is looking to build confidence throughout the season," fifth-year Prairie Heights coach Bill Morr said. "We will be looking to a few newcomers to contribute right away."

Those newcomers include sophomore point guard Bailee Godsey and athletic 6-foot-1 freshman post player Avery Certain. Godsey had 10 points in the Panthers' 31-11 season-opening win at Jimtown on Nov. 6.

"Avery has a knack to be where the ball is," Morr said. "We are looking for Bailee to grow in confidence handling pressure."

Wagler is coming off a fall season where she was an All-NECC selection in boys soccer.

"Avery loves contact and is not going to back down," Morr said. "She is showing signs of attacking and learning to score."

Junior Maddison Certain made a great enough improvement to earn a start on opening night.

A lot will be expected from McCrea to lead this young Panther team.

"Emily is just a competitor," Morr said. "She can do it all. She has a mix of good post moves and perimeter skills from the 3 spot. We'll go where the mismatch allows us."

In the Jimtown game, McCrea had to play through quick foul trouble. She picked up two fouls in the first four minutes of the contest, then played a large majority of the game without picking up another foul. Morr got McCrea right back in the game with a minute left in the first quarter.

The Panthers will look to utilize their combination of quickness and some height to put themselves in the middle of the NECC mix.

PH boys look to become aggressors

BY KEN FILLMORE
kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

BRUSHY PRAIRIE — Prairie Heights' boys basketball team looks to be better able to play at the varsity level after taking many lumps last season with an young, inexperienced roster.

Eight juniors will return from a Panther team that went 2-21 last season, including 0-10 in the Northeast Corner Conference.

"Jake Stoy is also back after being the starting point guard as a freshman, and he learned some tough lessons," fourth-year PH coach Delmar Bontrager said.

"We had a great offseason," he continued. "We're stronger. We're more comfortable. We can manage the speed of the game better. We have more of a sense of urgency. "We're a little faster and more intense in how we play.

"We want to prove naysayers wrong."

Strength and conditioning classes have been a thing at Prairie Heights for a couple of years. It is under the direction of strength and conditioning coach Jerry Matthews and has helped the Panther football team grow to where it won five games for the first time since 2013. Bontrager sees that helping his players, too.

About everybody from last year is back, led by Stoy (4.8 points, 2.5 assists, 2.5 rebounds and 2 steals per game last season), junior forward Cade Bachelor (11.6 ppg, 4.1 rpg, 1.5 apg) and junior guard Leo Hare (3.2 ppg, 3.8 rpg).

"Stoy improved his quickness. He has grown and matured," Bontrager said. "Leo is a solid defender."

Heights wants to play fast and aggressive. It will help carry that out by going eight or nine deep.

KEN FILLMORE

Prairie Heights' Cade Bachelor, right, surveys what is in front of him as he is in the triple threat position against Concord in the Panthers' season opener last year at Prairie Heights High School. Bachelor will be part a big group of juniors for Prairie Heights this season.

Juniors Keegan German (4.2 points and 2.1 rebounds per game last season) and Lane Yoder (3.7 ppg) also played a lot of varsity minutes last season.

"Keegan will be important as the backup point guard, and he can shoot it pretty well," Bontrager said.

Other returning letterwinners are seniors Lance Speck and Caleb Freed. Varsity newcomers expected to contribute are juniors Caston Day and Brady Strater and sophomore Connor Sizemore.

"Day is a 6-foot-3 guard. He gives us length and a little physicality," Bontrager said. "Strater is one of the best shooters in our gym."

WEST NOBLE CHARGERS

West Noble High School
5094 N. U.S. Hwy. 33, Ligonier
Colors: Red, White and Blue

Boys
Class: 3A

Girls
Class: 3A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 26	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	A	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Wawasee	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 11	H	Concord	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	N	Trine University Classic	4:00 p.m.
Dec. 28	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	H	NECC Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 29	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Fairfield	6:00 p.m.
Feb. 6	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 8	A	LaVille	2:30 p.m.
Feb.11	H	NorthWood	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 15	H	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 22	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	A	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 23	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 29	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	H	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	H	Whitko	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 21	N	Elkhart	2:00 p.m.
Dec. 28	H	Prairie Heights	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 7	A	Concord	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Lakeland	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 14	H	NECC Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 21	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.

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Charger girls look to take steps forward

BY DAVID VANTRESS
dvantress@kpcmedia.com

LIGONIER — As West Noble head girls basketball coach Haley Holliday opens her second season guiding the Chargers, there is much room for improvement.

West Noble was 2-21 in 2023-24.

Holliday's roster for this season includes no seniors. The Chargers have six returning letterwinners: Juniors Kayle Jordan, Cloie Ulrey, Stella Venturi and Kylie Ware, along with sophomores Marley Mast and Allison Recendiz.

Other returning players for West Noble this season include sophomores Leah Pruitt, Madi Sitts and Reagan Eash.

Freshmen Addy Burns, Elyse Mead, Ella Limerick, Ava DeLong, Nat Gow and Jaylah Macias are expected to make an impact as well.

Alexia Mast and Alayna DeLong were key losses to graduation for West Noble.

Holliday is optimistic as the 2024-25 season gets rolling.

"We have a very young talented roster with a lot of incoming young talented freshmen who have been working very hard and meshing well together. We are excited to get started this season and continue to keep growing off a successful summer and preseason," Holliday said.

Molding the Charger culture is a key priority for Holliday in her sophomore season guiding the West Noble girls.

"We also have been building a strong, positive team culture with a family-based outlook, so (we want to) to keep building and growing that aspect as well," Holliday added.

Better defense and offense will be top priorities for the Chargers this season: West Noble gave up 51.3 points per game in 2023-24 and averaged just 28.3 points per contest on the offensive end.

So far this season, the Chargers are doing slightly better on defense, surrendering 46.7 points per game. They scored 27 points against Bethany Christian and 35 against Blackhawk Christian.

Holliday has some valuable experience beside her on the Charger bench, as she is assisted by former West Noble girls head coach Dale Marano.

As of press time on Nov. 15, the Chargers were off to an 0-3 start with losses to Bethany Christian, Blackhawk Christian and Columbia City.

DAVID VANTRESS

West Noble's Nolan Kelly finds himself boxed in between a pair of Fairfield defenders during a Class 3A Lakeland Sectional semifinal game last season. Kelly will be a key contributor for the Chargers this season.

West Noble boys want to rebound in 2024-25

BY DAVID VANTRESS
dvantress@kpcmedia.com

LIGONIER — You could say that 2023-24 was an off year for the West Noble High School boys basketball team.

The Chargers slipped to 8-15 a year ago after going 21-4 in 2022-23 and making it to the Class 3A sectional final.

But as Charger head coach Ethan Marsh begins his sixth season, he sees reason for optimism.

The Chargers definitely took their lumps last season, Marsh said. But some young players gained valuable experience and he's hoping that experience translates to wins in 2024-25.

"We graduated two players from last year that played a role for us for (a long time)," Marsh said. "We are now more experienced after last year saw several younger players get that valuable playing time. We are excited to see their progress moving forward."

Six returning letterwinners lead

SEE **WN BOYS,** Page **37**

WESTVIEW WARRIORS

Westview High School
1635 S. 600W, Topeka
Colors: Scarlet Red and Old Gold

Boys
Class: 2A

Girls
Class: 2A

BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 26	H	Bethany Christian	6:15 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Northridge	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 3	H	LaVille	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	NorthWood	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 7	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 15	A	NECC Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 8	A	Blackhawk	2:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	A	Wawasee	7:45 p.m.
Feb. 21	H	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	Concord	7:45 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 26	H	Bethany Christian	4:45 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Mishawaka	11:30 a.m.
Dec. 5	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 17	A	Lakeland	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 19	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	H	Elkhart Christian	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 7	H	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 9	A	Jimtown	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	A	NECC Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 21	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	Fairfield	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 30	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.

Mature, experienced Warriors aim for sectional three-peat

BY DAVID VANTRESS
dvantress@kpcmedia.com

EMMA — You just get used to seeing the Westview High School boys basketball team hoisting the sectional hardware on a cold Indiana winter night in early March — typically on their own floor at the Warrior Dome.

The Warriors under third-year year coach Chandler Prible have won the past two Class 2A Sectional 35 titles.

Last year, they were eliminated from the Class 2A regional by Wabash, a team led by guard Izaak Wright, who is now on the defending NCAA Division III national championship Trine University men's basketball team.

Westview was 20-6 overall last season (8-2 Northeast Corner Conference). The Warriors were runners-up in the NECC Tournament.

The Warriors lost several key players to graduation: Luke Helmuth, Wyatt Zepp, Wiley Minix, Wade Springer and Christien Noward.

Zepp is now a member of the men's basketball team at Concordia-Ann Arbor, where he saw 20 minutes of action in the Cardinals' 83-78 season-opening victory over Goshen College Oct. 29. Zepp scored two points, grabbed three rebounds and dished out a pair of assists.

Zepp also had 11 points in 22 minutes in Concordia-Ann Arbor's 111-46 exhibition loss to Valparaiso on Nov. 8.

Westview in 2024-25 features a mature, experienced core that includes six returning letterwinners: seniors Owen Brill and Kamden Yoder, juniors Kaden Grau and Milan Miller, and sophomores Austin Schlabach and Daniel Yoder.

The Westview roster also includes junior Brett Springer and sophomores Pierce Yoder and Kaine Reinhold.

Prible is assisted by Russ Yoder, Collin Barker and Karl Grau.

Despite the loss of experienced players like Zepp and Helmuth, Prible is still optimistic about the impending 2024-25 season and the expectations haven't changed.

At Westview, they never do.

"We will be younger, but excited about the talent within our younger group," Prible said. "We are hoping to compete for championships again this season."

DAVID VANTRESS

Westview's Austin Schlabach looks to get the ball inside as Churubusco's Ethan Hartsock defends at the Warrior Dome early last season. Schlabach will be a key player for the Warriors this season as a sophomore.

MARK MURDOCK

Westview's Janissa Lehman, right, and Alyssa Eby of Churubusco pursue a loose ball during a Class 2A Eastside Sectional game last season. Lehman will be a key player for the Warriors this season.

Experienced Warrior girls look to make strides

BY DAVID VANTRESS
dvantress@kpcmedia.com

EMMA — As Ryan Yoder looks forward to his fourth season guiding the Westview High School girls basketball team, he has reason to be optimistic that his team can improve on its 5-19 record from a year ago.

The Warriors were 2-8 in the Northeast Corner Conference and won a Class 2A, Sectional 35 game, topping Churubusco 51-42 in the opening round before falling to eventual sectional champion Fremont 54-32 in the semifinals.

Westview has a pretty big pair of shoes to fill in graduated guard Hope Bortner, who was an All-NECC selection.

But Bortner was the only senior the Warriors lost, and most of their scoring from last season is back.

Yoder would just like to see more of it this season.

Key returning players for Westview include senior Karis Weinberg (6.6 points per game last season), junior Bre Cory (8.6 ppg), senior Morgan Riegsecker (2.7 ppg) and sophomore

SEE **WV GIRLS,** Page **37**

BELLMONT BRAVES BOYS

1000 E N Adams Dr, Decatur
Colors: Blue and Red
Class: 3A

Nov. 30	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	H	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 18	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	H	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 27	N	Delta Tournament	TBA
Jan. 3	H	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 11	H	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 17	A	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 22	H	Northrop	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	H	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
FEb. 6	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 15	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	A	South Adams	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	A	Bluffton	7:45 p.m.
Feb. 22	A	Luers	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	H	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	Jay County	7:30 p.m.

BELLMONT BRAVES GIRLS

1000 E N Adams Dr, Decatur
Colors: Blue and Red
Class: 3A

Nov. 23	H	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 26	A	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.
Nov.l 29	A	Homestead	6:30 p.m.
Dec. 2	A	Blackhawk	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 11	H	Luers	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	A	Carroll	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	A	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 3	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	H	Bluffton	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	A	Northrop	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	H	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	A	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.

CARROLL CHARGERS BOYS

3701 Carroll Rd, Fort Wayne
Colors: Blue and Gray
Class: 6A

Nov. 27	H	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Penn	4:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Wayne	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	A	Warsaw	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 27	N	Valparaiso	11:30 a.m.
Dec. 27	N	South Bend St. Joseph	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	N	Hamilton Southeastern	11: 30 a.m.
Jan. 10	H	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	A	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	Fort Wayne South	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 25	H	Fishers	4:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Snider	7:45 p.m.
Feb. 1	A	Yorktown	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	A	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 11	H	Fort Wayne North	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	A	Northrop	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	H	Homestead	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 22	H	North Central (Indianapolis)	5:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	Luers	7:30 p.m.

CARROLL CHARGERS GIRLS

3701 Carroll Rd, Fort Wayne
Colors: Blue and Gray
Class: 6A

Nov. 23	A	Carmel	1:30 p.m.
Nov. 26	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Penn	3:00 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Homestead	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	H	Northridge	1:30 p.m.
Dec. 11	A	Warsaw	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	Concordia	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 17	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Wayne	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 7	A	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 8	H	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Dwenger	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 11	A	Hamilton Southeastern	2:30 p.m.
Jan. 17	A	Luers	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	Fort Wayne South	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 28	H	Fort Wayne North	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Snider	6:00 p.m.

FAIRFIELD FALCONS BOYS

67530 US-33, Goshen
Colors: Navy Blue and Gold
Class: 3A

Nov. 26	A	Wawasee	7:45 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	NorthWood	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	A	Jimtown	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	A	Concord	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	N	NECC Tournament	TBA
Jan. 24	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	Mishawaka	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	H	West Noble	6:00 p.m.
Feb. 1	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 11	A	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 15	A	Elkhart Christian	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	A	Bremen	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	H	Northridge	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.

FAIRFIELD FALCONS GIRLS

67530 US-33, Goshen
Colors: Navy Blue and Gold
Class: 3A

Nov. 23	H	Jimtown	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	A	Concord	2:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Elkhart Christian	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 7	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	N	NECC Tournament	TBA
Jan. 21	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	A	Westview	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 27	A	Bethany Christian	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 28	H	NorthWood	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 31	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.

v

HUNTINGTON NORTH VIKINGS BOYS

450 Macgahan St, Huntington
Colors: Red, White & Black
Class: 4A

Nov. 27	H	Northfield	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Mississinewa	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	H	Warsaw	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Manchester	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	H	Marion	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 2	H	Gary Lighthouse	11:00 a.m.
Jan. 2	H	South Bend Adams	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 11	A	Southwood	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 17	H	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	A	Fort Wayne North	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	H	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	H	Carroll	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 8	A	New Haven	2:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	A	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 15	H	Fort Wayne South	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	H	Luers	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	A	Tippecanoe Valley	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	H	Kokomo	7:30 p.m.

HUNTINGTON NORTH VIKINGS GIRLS

450 Macgahan St, Huntington
Colors: Red, White & Black
Class: 4A

Nov. 26	H	Fort Wayne South	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Hamilton Heights	2:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	Luers	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Manchester	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	Marion	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 18	A	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	H	Mississinewa	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	H	Huntington North Classic	TBA
Jan. 11	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 15	A	Wayne	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	A	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	H	Indianapolis Cathedral	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.

LEO LIONS BOYS

14600 Amstutz Rd, Leo
Colors: Purple
Class: 4A

Nov. 27	H	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 4	H	Wayne	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Fort Wayne South	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	H	Northrop	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	A	Homestead	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 7	A	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 11	H	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 17	A	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 27	A	Fort Wayne North	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 8	H	Adams Central	2:30 p.m.
Feb. 11	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	H	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	A	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	H	Snider	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	H	Blackhawk	7:30 p.m.

LEO LIONS GIRLS

14600 Amstutz Rd, Leo
Colors: Purple
Class: 4A

Nov. 26	H	South Adams	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	A	Lakeland	3:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	A	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 11	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 18	A	Fort Wayne North	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	H	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 7	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	H	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.

NEW HAVEN BULLDOGS BOYS

1300 Green Rd, New Haven
Colors: Purple and Gold
Class: 4A

Nov. 26	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	Northrop	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Blackhawk	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 11	H	Wayne	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	Homestead	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	A	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 27	A	Kokomo	11:00 a.m.
Jan. 7	H	Snider	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 11	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	A	Luers	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 17	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	H	Carroll	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 22	H	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	H	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 8	H	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	A	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	H	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 27	H	Fort Wayne South	7:30 p.m.

NORWELL KNIGHTS BOYS

1100 US-224, Ossian
Colors: Old Gold and Navy
Class: 3A

Nov. 27	A	Carroll	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	H	Mississinewa	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	H	Oak Hill	1:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	A	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Blackhawk	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	H	Bluffton	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 3	N	Wawasee Tournament	TBA
Jan. 11	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14	H	Wayne	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 17	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	A	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	A	Luers	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	East Noble	1:30 p.m.
Feb. 8	A	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 11	A	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	H	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	A	Jay County	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 22	H	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	H	Homestead	7:30 p.m.

NEW HAVEN BULLDOGS GIRLS

1300 Green Rd, New Haven
Colors: Purple and Gold
Class: 4A

Nov. 23	A	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 26	A	Bluffton	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	A	Fort Wayne North	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 3	A	Wayne	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	H	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17	H	Marion	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 18	H	Fort Wayne South	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	A	Warsaw	11:00 a.m.
Jan. 10	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 13	H	Luers	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	H	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	A	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.

NORWELL KNIGHTS GIRLS

1100 US-224, Ossian
Colors: Old Gold and Navy
Class: 3A

Nov. 23	H	Oak Hill	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 26	H	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	A	Angola	12:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	H	Columbia City	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 17	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	A	Noblesville	10:00 a.m.
Jan. 7	H	Carroll	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 15	A	Dwenger	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 18	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	H	Jay County	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 24	H	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.

EAST NOBLE BOYS

FROM PAGE 13

Durnell feels the Knights have the capability to score. He wants to see continued improvement at the other end. Last season, East Noble allowed just less than 52 points a game after surrendering 62 on average the year before.

"Defensively we made a huge jump from two years ago to last year and I think there's still another jump that we have to make if we're going to be one of the better teams in the area, which we think we can be," Durnell said.

"We have some offensive firepower. Are we going to get after it defensively like we're capable of. We have the athletes to do it. Are we going to be committed to that end of the floor as well?"

East Noble will strive for that improvement playing mostly man-to-man.

"We'll be man a lot. I'm not a huge zone guy but we'll mix it in," Durnell said. "We'll be pressuring the ball like we did all last season. Hopefully our help side can come up another level, and hopefully we're more on the same page this year than we were last year."

The Knights won't have much size, and will have to find ways to compete on the boards.

"We will be small," Durnell said. "Our center's 5-11, Kobe Ritchie, but he gets the job done. He can jump out of the gym. He plays like he's 6-6.

"That's an area that may also be a concern. We have some lengthy guards and hopefully we can use that to our advantage. We'll have to be super physical on the glass."

Another key is how long the Knights can make their bench.

"That's a big key. Are our bench guys and our role players going to take it up another notch? If they do we're going to have a lot of options and that's going to make us super dangerous," Durnell said.

Durnell is rooting for the Knights' football team, but is confident his club can create some excitement of its own.

"We're super excited. We've had this group since day one," Durnell said. "Yes, there's some pressure with that because this is one of the better teams we've had. Once football gets over we can have our whole roster committed, and I'm excited to see what this team will do with the expectations and goals.

"Even with some of the adversity we've dealt with, nothing changes. We still want to fulfill our goals. We still think we can compete for the conference and the sectional."

LAKELAND BOYS

FROM PAGE 23

role, but rather all players incrementally improving different aspects of their games. Our goal will be to make sure every player on the floor is equally dangerous and equipped to impact the game, and we think we have the players to make that happen."

Schneider said he has been heartened by the enthusiastic response he's gotten from the Lakers since taking over the program last spring.

"The guys have shown an 'ALL IN' commitment to get better over the summer and during the preseason," Schneider said.

The Lakers had enough guys come out this fall to field teams at all three levels: varsity, junior varsity and C-team.

On the agenda long-term will be revitalizing the Lakeland youth basketball program, Schneider said.

Schneider will be assisted by Jeremy Merrifield, another coach with longtime ties to Lakeland basketball.

EAST NOBLE GIRLS

FROM PAGE 13

"That's the biggest thing we're hoping for, seeing their growth in the basketball IQ and their growth in the speed of the game."

East Noble will still be young with only two seniors, but has several players back to were tossed into the fire as freshmen and sophomores for last season's 13-9 team.

The returning players include three players who received All-Northeast 8 Conference honors as freshmen: Averi Amstutz (second team) along with Rian David and Elli Will (honorable mention). Will, a force inside, will be out until the new year with a back injury.

"Those three are going to be huge for us," Isaacs said. "We have different people who can step up and fill that (Will's) spot. They've done really well so far.

"After the summer I was pretty confident in what we have. We competed with a lot of good teams. I can see that they've also worked on their game outside of basketball and are doing their own training. That really helps."

The Knights will have to survive on the glass until Will's return.

"Rebounding is just effort and grit," Isaacs said. "It comes down to our guards being disciplined and showing effort, and understanding that this year we have to really focus on boxing out and going after the ball rather than hoping that Elli gets it and gets it out for us.

"It might even help us play faster with the guard getting it."

Help in the post may come from 6-1 freshman Carys Shire, who will need time to develop.

When they're in the half court, the Knights hope to shoot better.

"We've really focused on our outside shooting," Isaacs said. "A lot of teams in the girls basketball world run zones. That forces you to shoot outside shots. A lot of focus has been on developing our shot and taking smart, high-IQ, open threes.

"I've seen a lot of improvement in our one through five, and some of the younger girls are shooting it better, too."

The Knights also want to show their quickness on defense and force the issue with enemy ball handlers.

"We'll be a very fast team that gets after it," Isaacs said. "We switched some things defensively this year to match a guard-heavy rotation. A lot of our defense is going to lean heavily toward pressure, and hopefully cause turnovers and get some steals."

Isaacs hopes that style will lead to improvement on the defensive end. The Knights put up 48 points a game last year, but gave up 46 on average.

"Defense is really the key to our season," Isaacs said. "We were playing tight games all the time. It's mentally and physically exhausting. If we're better defensively it allows us to be more relaxed and make deeper runs, and not be so tired when it comes to conference games."

ANGOLA GIRLS

FROM PAGE 5

of four games in seven days, including three NECC contests.

Seniors Lexi Stillman, Bailey Holman and Anna McClure; junior Aspen Sutton, and freshmen Kendall Holman and Ella Savick transitioned from volleyball to basketball.

"We're really excited to have them back," Panning said. "We couldn't really go five-on-five when they were gone, but we were able to keep the girls we had engaged. We were able to have fun and do some fundamental work.

"We'll be leaning on Lexi's motor. She's a likeable kid and a strong leader," the coach added. "Bailey and Kendall get along, but they can be fierce against each other in practice."

Stillman, a 6-foot guard-forward, can be a matchup problem and is looking to play basketball in college. She averaged seven points, 4.9 rebounds, 3.3 assists, 1.6 steals per game, and blocked 15 shots.

Stillman and athletic senior Karleigh Gillen will take on much of the ball-handling responsibilities.

"She's a lot better player than she thinks she is," Panning said of Gillen. "She has a good shot. She has good court vision. We want to use her speed at both ends.

Sutton, junior transfer Addison Weisenauer and freshmen Savick, Stella Stockamp and Hadley Pocock will also be in the backcourt mix for Angola.

Bailey Holman averaged 8.1 points, 7.6 rebounds and 2.2 blocked shots per game last season. Her sister Kendall is a little bigger at 6-2. Ava Rinard, a 5-10 senior, is a returning starter known more for her defense. McClure and fellow senior Alana Miller are also expected to contribute.

"Anna will have a role. She's a good fundamental kid," Panning said. "Kendall has the desire and work ethic to be good.

"We hope to be much better defensively than we were last year with a better ability to put pressure on the ball and defend the rim," the coach added. "Offensively, we have several weapons we hope to use in a more efficient style of play."

The Hornets will not have junior Isabella Robertson this season due to a torn anterior cruciate ligament in one of her knees.

WN BOYS

FROM PAGE 29

the West Noble roster this season. Seniors Jordan Eash, Isaac Mast and Drew Burns are joined by juniors Nolan Kelly and Trevor Steele, and sophomores Aiden Replogle and Caleb Saggars to form an experienced core for the Chargers.

The West Noble roster also includes freshman Cameron Eash, junior Brayden Ritchie and senior Logan Short.

Key newcomers for West Noble include freshman Ryan Glick, Burns and Saggars.

Key losses to graduation included Bradyn Barth and David Slone. Barth is now at Grace College.

Marsh is excited to see what this Charger squad can accomplish.

"This is a fun group to coach and they still have room to grow," Marsh said. "We have strong senior leadership and quality underclassmen that want to get better.

DAVID VANTRESS

West Noble guard Aiden Replogle looks to pass the ball inside to a teammate during a game against Prairie Heights last season. Replogle will be in a Chargers' varsity mix this season.

The Chargers gave up 46.5 points per game in 2023-24 and averaged 44.6 points per game on the offensive end, so Marsh would like to see that number head in the other direction in 2024-25.

Marsh is assisted by Gary Goshert, Cordell England, Kevin Hunter and Elijah Andrews.

WV GIRLS

FROM PAGE 31

Olivia Bontrager (3.3 ppg).

Also on the Westview roster this season are juniors Janissa Lehman, JJ Whetstone and Maddie Grossman. Freshman Morgan Grossman is a key newcomer for the Warriors.

Yoder is hoping a good summer set the stage for a good 2024-25 season.

"We have good experience returning this season," Yoder said. "We lost one starter to graduation and have girls ready to step up to fill that hole. This summer showed our team what areas we need to work on to take the next step this season."

Better play on defense will be key for Westview this season, as the Warriors gave up 47.9 points per game last season. That was 11.5 points per contest more than they scored (35.9 ppg).

Yoder is assisted by fellow Westview graduates Adam Christner and Ashya Klopfenstein.

Christner, also an assistant coach for the Warrior baseball team, was a standout guard on the Warrior boys team that won a Class 2A regional championship in 2008 before falling to DeShaun Thomas-led Bishop Luers at the Warsaw Semi-State.

Klopfenstein recently played NCAA Division I basketball at Utah State and Robert Morris (Pa.) after two solid seasons at the junior college level at Dawson Community College in Glendive, Montana.

Westview is off to a 2-1 start so far this season, with wins over Hamilton and Prairie Heights. The Warriors' lone loss came to East Noble 67-32 on Nov. 9 in Kendallville.

Last season, the Warriors did not win their first game until Dec. 5 at Garrett. They got their second win on Dec. 16 at home against Sturgis, Mich.

BUSCO BOYS

FROM PAGE 9

The Eagles lost guards Joey Taylor and Caden Ummel to graduation. The pair accounted for much of Churubusco's scoring the past few seasons. Taylor is playing basketball at Kuyper College in Grand Rapids, Mich.

But the Eagles are buoyed by the return of a talented core, including senior guards Brayden Bianski, Braylon McCoy and Mason Mast, all returning letterwinners.

Also in the mix are junior forwards Brody Lawrence and Weston Ott, a returning letterwinner. The roster also includes junior guard Christian Behling and junior forward Manny Serrano.

A talented group of sophomores includes forwards Miles Pommer and Lucas Hartsock, along with guard/forward Anthony Nicolet and forward Colt Singleton.

Garman likes what he sees from his team so far.

"We will have a mix of five returning lettermen and some young juniors and sophomores playing major roles this season," Garman said.

"It will be crucial to carry over the foundation that was established last year and hit the ground running with the process it takes to compete at a high level," Garman added.

The Eagles ended the 2023-24 season on a high note, beating Prairie Heights, 49-46 in the first round of the sectional and getting a convincing 57-48 win over Eastside to advance to the finals against Westview, where the Warriors ended the Eagles' season 51-39.

Better defense and offense will be keys for 'Busco in 2024-25: The Eagles gave up 55.2 points per game and averaged 48.2 points per contest on offense.

Garman is assisted by Dave Oyer, Brad Martin and Doug Riegel.

FREMONT GIRLS

FROM PAGE 17

said. "She brings a calming presence and I know she will leave it all on the court.

"We are looking for Grace to create her own shot and be more vocal," the coach added. "Mya is versatile and can play every position."

Fremont wants to get better at its transition offense and get tougher on the defensive end. New Eagle assistant coach Alyssa Argyle will especially help on the defensive end.

Argyle graduated from Trine University in 2023 and played on the Thunder's NCAA Division III Final Four team in 2022. Along with joining assistants Hannah Atha and Melissa Beer on the high school sidelines, Argyle is also coaching Fremont Middle School's eighth grade girls basketball team.

The high school varsity Eagles took a step in the right direction defensively at Lakewood Park on Nov. 12 in a 62-44 victory. The Panthers will compete with Fremont for the 1A Bethany Christian Sectional crown. However, the Eagles held star Panther guard to only 10 points.

LAKELAND GIRLS

FROM PAGE 23

from last year and we had a terrific summer; something we didn't get last year. Most importantly, there is a newfound enthusiasm that is surrounding our program. I believe with all of these factors, we will be able to improve on last season and climb up the NECC standings."

Better defense will be a key for the Lakers this season, Benson added.

"Defensively, I think we will be able to be more aggressive on that end, with fantastic athletes who can guard multiple positions," Benson said. "We are very confident we are going to be able to apply pressure more on the perimeter and hopefully create more opportunities for us on the other end. Offensively, there is an unselfishness with this group. Nobody cares who is getting the most points, they just look to make the right basketball play and win."

Benson is assisted by junior varsity coach Erica Fair, and varsity assistants Ben Brown and Melissa Mishler.

The Lakers are off to a 1-2 start so far this season. Their win came at home against Goshen 36-22 on Nov. 12.

ANGOLA BOYS

FROM PAGE 5

interim coach Josh Sheets.

The Hornets bring back senior forward Kyler Huscher (8 points and 3.6 rebounds per game last seaon), 6-foot-3 junior swingman Ben Thomas (2.1 ppg, 1.8 rpg), junior guard Tommy Caswell (6.5 ppg, and junior forwards and Ryan Stuckey (5.7 points, 4.2 rebounds and 2.3 assists per game), Max Tynan (2.1 ppg, 1.6 rpg) and Landon Leach.

"Ben is a great athlete and a good leader," Weber said. "Landon has come on after having a strong summer.

"We're not trying to be average at a few things. We want to get everything out of you. We want nobody to play harder than us."

Weber knows the intensity and the physicality have to come during a pretty tough non-conference schedule. The Hornets will reconnect with longtime rivals DeKalb and East Noble in the Class 3A Garrett Sectional. The sectional will also have traditionally strong programs in Concordia, Leo and Bishop Dwenger. Recent small school state power Blackhawk Christian will also be in the sectional because of the Indiana High School Athletic Association's Success Factor.

Weber will have some tried-and-true Angola guys with him as assistant coaches in James Woodworth, Ross Kinsey and former Hornet girls basketball coach John Berger.

DEKALB BOYS

FROM PAGE 11

The Barons also hope not to get pushed around as much. Beasley said seven players are benching more than 200 pounds.

"We are getting stronger," he said. "We have to continue to get mentally tougher, have some grit, have that expectation that we're not going to quit. Play through the bad times by competing."

The Barons' record belies how well they've played against quality opponents. They've had chances to win in many of those games.

"We're had plenty of those where we're right there but we just can't get that one play to get us over the hump," Beasley said. "We're hoping we can get a little bit of a lead where that one offensive rebound or one three doesn't give them the momentum where they now have the lead.

"When it comes down to crunch time if you have a little margin of error, it's going to be a lot easier. We've been playing the last three years where our margin of error has been very small. We lost a lot of close games against some good teams that we battled to the end."

The Barons have Caiden Hinkle and Will Weber back for their senior seasons. Hinkle and juniors Zeke Penrod and Caden Rice will be counted on inside. Another junior, Bo Minehart, was hurt in football and would have been in that mix.

The rest of the of team is made up of guards. Juniors Brady Culler, Myles Dobson, Graden People, Kayden Palumbo and Connor Schmidt will join Weber in the backcourt.

Also back are sophomores Brady Vince and Dalton Cox, who started last season on the freshman team and wound up on the varsity.

Beasley feels this group has the toughness it takes to prevail in some games decided in the fourth quarter.

"The harder you work at it, the harder it is to surrender," Beasley said. "We've had a number of guys who were great kids but their consistency of working all the time wasn't there. It's easy for them to surrender.

"We have guys now, they want it. It's going to be harder to surrender. The effort and the consistency every single day, they understand it matters. It's going to make them mentally tougher and bring them together."

CENTRAL NOBLE BOYS

FROM PAGE 7

Lemmon said. "He picks up things really quickly. He sees the game really well. He's a decent shooter, but the big thing about him will be moving the ball and setting up the right people.

"Colt and Marek are new to our system and will learn how we run our defense."

Junior guard Nick Freeman will also get an opportunity to play with this new group.

"Nick has really grown from last year," Lemmon said. "He didn't get a chance to play last year because there were so many skilled guys ahead of him. Now he should really blossom."

Senior Brody Morgan will also play high school basketball for the first time. He was the starting quarterback on the Cougar football team the past couple of seasons, so he will be able to at least provide some leadership to the basketball team.

LAKEWOOD PARK GIRLS

FROM PAGE 25

keep going.

"The expectation here is to win basketball games."

The Panthers may need time to reach the level for which they're aiming.

"There's a lot of learning curves searching for our main leader or two," Estep said. "We lost Jade Carnahan and Grace Kamleiter (along with Grace Merkel and Sullivan Nolot). Somebody's got to take those roles.

"We have some good stuff to build on. There will be some growing pains."

The Panthers figure to build around three seniors, led by 1,000-point scorer Ava McGrade. She averaged 19.8 points a game and set school season records for points and three-pointers. She'll draw her share of attention from enemy defenses.

"Other than Ava we have four other girls who've lettered for us at least once," Step said. "It might rotate on different nights. None of them has been in that position before, but they're all capable. It might rotate between those four."

Lilia West and Campbell Warner are the other returning seniors. Junior Riah Johnson will be back to start for a third year, and sophomore Gracelyn Martin was a starter last season. Freshman Luca Bontrager hopes to provide needed ball handling.

"Gracelyn can rebound. She can't shoot as well right now but she can score around the rim," Estep said. "I'm hoping she takes some of that load after we lost Jade."

The Panthers may not have the firepower they had last year, when they averaged more than 51 points per game.

"It's going to look a lot different," Estep said. "We don't have last year's seniors to help us score the ball. We could just go out and outscore people last year. This year I'm not sure we're going to do that every night."

Effort and grit will be needed for success.

"We're going to have nights where we're going to have to win games ugly," Estep said. "We've got to know that going in. We just have to battle through it.

"We're going to have a high ceiling but we could have a low floor. They're going to have to come in and play hard every night."

That could lead to another good season for the Panthers.

"Every night giving it everything we got. It's going to be defense, rebounding and limiting turnovers," Estep said.

"Win the rebound battle, you have under 12 turnovers and you hold teams under 40, you're not losing a lot of games. If you do, hats off to the other team."

CENTRAL NOBLE GIRLS

FROM PAGE 7

would come out 5-5 or 6-4."

With the experience comes a familiarity that will help that process.

"The senior leadership has been very good," Malcolm said. "It's been different each year, but in this third year the expectations are set. The girls know what those expectations are. They've set goals and we're working toward those goals as a team.

"The coolest thing for us is that we should be able to defend and score in multiple ways. I foresee us having a different leading scorer potentially every game."

The players will have to accept that and put team success first.

"That's going to be the challenge," Malcolm said. "If we can do that this team could be special. Obviously that's our message to them.

"If they will buy into putting forth their best effort and doing the things they do well, and we can be a team and defend as a team and score as a team, we could have a special season."

Another key will be how well the Cougars defend.

"We want to defend better than we did last year," Malcolm said. "We were concerned because we had lost almost 70% of our scoring from the year before. We found out we could score but we gave up more points than we did the year before."

Central Noble hopes to send out its seniors the right way.

"We don't have a (Meghan) Kiebel or a (Madison) Vice, but we've got girls if they'll just play ball, especially the seniors, to get everybody on board and go out with a great senior season, then our team is going to have success," Malcolm said.

FREMONT BOYS

FROM PAGE 17

of opening some eyes."

Guthrie will run the point.

With the seniors in mind, Stuckey got the Eagles into the LaPorte Tournament Dec. 27 and 28. It will start play against the host Slicers. Other big schools are in the field, including Goshen, McCutcheon, Northridge, Lowell, Munster and Logansport.

Fremont will also travel to Goshen on Feb. 18.

"We're not going to roll over. We'll focus on what we need to focus on," Stuckey said.

HAMILTON GIRLS

FROM PAGE 21

was excited she tried to go left instead of constantly going right.

"It's going to take some time but I'm really excited that the girls seem like they're willing to learn."

More progress was seen in a season-opening 41-11 loss to Westview. The Marines had 22 turnovers in the first half but just three after intermission.

Tadsen is helped by Justin McKnight and Taylor Brown. The assistant coaches work at the high school and maintain contact with the players.

"Our practices have been extremely fun," Tadsen said. "They've been welcoming. It was kind of nerve-wracking being a first-year head coach. I knew what I was getting into at Hamilton, just being a smaller 1A school.

"It's a great community to work in. We're trying to change the culture in athletics at Hamilton. It's going to be a challenge but we're up for it. We have to go in with the mindset that we're not going to lose every game. We have to have the mindset we can beat teams. The school as a whole, we struggle with that."

HAMILTON BOYS

FROM PAGE 21

after him this summer to keep his head up. If he misses a couple of shots he's got to be ready to shoot when he gets the ball."

Lane Ritter will be the top threat inside for the Marines.

"He's got to rebound and do good post moves when he gets the ball inside," Holden said. "He was starting to figure it out the last few games of the season. Hopefully he can keep that going."

Sophomore Xavier Schemer also figures to get playing time.

"We've got to start to get these sophomores a little bit acquainted with the varsity level so there's not that big a jump for next year," Holden said.

The coach hopes to see his team play primarily man-to-man defense.

"I want to get after it man-to-man. That suits what we have. If we get playing zone, we get a little lazy," Holden said.

Some success early could give Hamilton a boost.

"If we could get a couple wins, even if we don't win and we're in the game, it will bring confidence to these boys," Holden said.

Holden feels this season is up to the seniors.

"We have six seniors," he said. "They've seen a lot of stuff. I'm hoping we can put it all together for this year.

"If they come ready to compete, we're going to be in some games. If they don't, it's going to be another long year for them."

DEKALB GIRLS

FROM PAGE 11

getting out quick," Stuckey said. "Sometimes our best offense last year was Ashley taking it to the rim. We want to be more diverse. We don't want it to be so much on Ashley's shoulders.

"If we hit some outside shots it's going to open everything up for her, which means she'll be more efficient. We'll score more points. We don't have to be perfect defensively."

That doesn't mean Stuckey will lower his standard on defense.

"We're going to put pressure on the ball and force people to make tough shots," Stuckey said. "We're still going to be in our 2-3 zone primarily. We did a good job of that, forcing everything to the outside."

Have the Barons bought into the defensive concepts?

"Some days yes, some days no," Stuckey said. "They're getting better and better every day and more consistent. Over the summer we tried a few things and it worked out well.

"When we get to games and teams are prepared for us instead of just showing up and playing, it's a lot different."

At least early on, the Barons will count heavily on Cox, Harris and Fordyce, the players with the most experience. Stuckey believes the experience with DeKalb's state-qualifying girls golf team will be a plus for Pfister and Sparkman.

For now, it's working to get back to a defense that gave up just more than 42 points a game last year.

"Can we get our defense to the point where we can stop teams from scoring consistently? I think we can score the basketball," Stuckey said.

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