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2023 HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL PREVIEW

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Prelude to the Preview

KENDALLVILLE — What a great day to unveil the KPC Media/IN All Sports Basketball Preview special section. The high school boys basketball season begins statewide tonight.

Three weeks have been completed on the girls' side. It's filled with parity area-wide and several freshmen have given our area a boost.

I don't need to tell you who those ninth graders are. You may know some of them already. They are making names for themselves in their first couple games or so at the high school level. I welcome their arrival and look forward to seeing them grow.

At various levels, about half of the teams in the Northeast 8 Conference and the Northeast Corner Conference will really compete for conference championships for both the girls and the boys.

My oh my, that top of the NE8 on the girls' side is loaded with Columbia City and Norwell leading the way. Huntington North is working to not go away after losing a great player. Don't sleep on Belmont. Leo and East Noble are better, and DeKalb is working to make that claim, too.

For the boys in the NECC, you automatically look at Westview and Central Noble because of the experience coming back. Can defending champion West Noble hang around with a new supporting cast under development around leading forward Bradyn Barth? Can Lakeland and its quality young core enter that discussion after making big improvements last season?

And a shoutout to Lakewood Park's girls.

The Panthers started 5-0 as of last Tuesday night. What a duo Ava McGrade and Jade Carnahan have become. They are getting some help, too, from other teammates in different ways.

You will see all 28 basketball teams previewed in this section from our 14 area high schools: East Noble, DeKalb, Angola, West Noble, Lakeland, Garrett, Central Noble, Prairie Heights, Westview, Churubusco, Eastside, Fremont, Hamilton and Lakewood Park Christian.

Wrapping up one sports season while starting another is always tough. But our love of sport and community allow us to embrace the grind and try to do what is best for you, the readers.

Special thanks for staff sports reporters Mark Murdock and David Vantress for their tireless efforts. I appreciate a couple of our daily editors, Matt Getts and Jeff Jones, for pitching in on the sports side, too.

I want to acknowledge a couple of our neighbors for extraordinary 2022-23 seasons. Hats and visors off to the Fairfield girls and the NorthWood boys for winning Class 3A state championships and to the Bethany Christian girls for being the Class 1A state runner-up.

We're excited about this basketball season. We encourage you to visit our website, kpcnews.com, to follow our coverage on game nights.



MAKING PLAYS

Ken Fillmore

Ken Fillmore
Sports Director of KPC Media

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Angola4-7
- Central Noble 8-11
- Churubusco..... 12-15
- DeKalb 16-19
- East Noble..... 20-23
- Eastside 24-27
- Fremont 28-31
- Garrett 32-35
- Hamilton 36-37
- Lakeland 38-41
- Lakewood Park..... 42-43
- Prairie Heights..... 44-47
- West Noble 48-51
- Westview 52-55



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IN All Sports Basketball Preview is a special supplement to The Star, The News Sun and The Herald Republican, which are publications of KPC Media.

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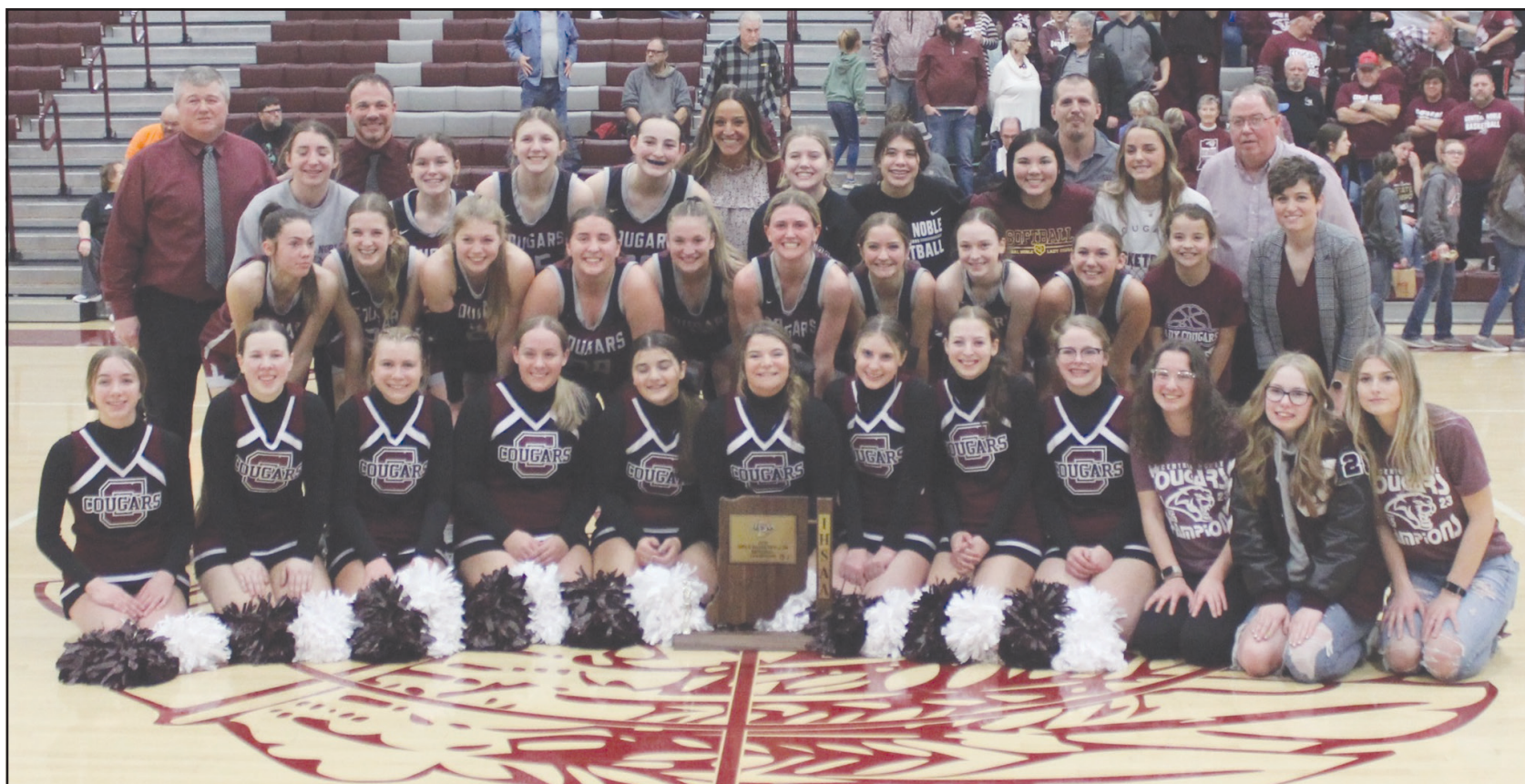
All schedules are subject to change.





MATT GETTS


Westview was the only boys basketball team in the area last season to win a sectional championship. In coach Chandler Prible's first season, the Warriors defeated Central Noble, coached by Prible's father-in-law John Bodey, 78-65 in the Class 2A Westview Sectional final. It was Westview's first sectional title since 2019.




MATT GETTS

Central Noble made the deepest tournament run in the area in girls basketball last season. The Cougars finished 26-3 in coach Sam Malcolm's first season at the helm and won the Winamac Regional and the Central Noble Sectional in Class 2A. CN eked past Lafayette Central Catholic 43-42 in a semifinal game of the 2A North Semi-state at Logansport, but lost to Lapel 51-38 in the semi-state final.

ANGOLA HORNETS



Angola High School
755 S. 100E, Angola
Colors: Purple and Gold
Class: 3A



BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 25	A	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 16	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 1	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 19	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 2	H	Concord	3:30 p.m.	Jan. 27	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 1	H	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 8	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 6	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9	H	Northridge	7:45 p.m.	Feb. 10	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 16	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 16	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 17	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	H	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 20	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 23	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Northeast Corner Conference Tournament	TBA				



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Angola boys look to improve

BY DAVID VANTRESS

dvantress@kpcmedia.com

ANGOLA — As the 2023-24 Indiana high school boys basketball season approaches, fourth-year Angola head coach Brandon Appleton has reason to be optimistic.

The Hornets lost just one key player to graduation in Tyler Call and return a solid core, along with some talented newcomers.

Angola was 8-15 in 2023-24, including 6-4 in the Northeast Corner Conference. The Hornets fell to Bishop Dwenger 64-54 in the first round of the Class 3A sectional tournament.

Proof of the Hornets' potential was their comeback win over a very good West Noble team late last season.

Key returning players for the Hornets include Dane Lantz, Kyler Huscher and Cameron McGee.

Lantz, a senior point guard, averaged 12.5 points, 2.7 rebounds and 1.8 assists per game last season. Huscher saw action in 18 games and averaged 3.8 points per game, while McGee appeared in 17 games and averaged 6.8 points per game.

A quintet of Hornet newcomers includes Tommy Caswell, Ben Thomas, Landon Leach, Max Tynan and Ryan Stuckey.

Appleton has some specific expectations for his team.

"We are young, skilled and work hard," Appleton said. "We are going to surprise some people, but we are going to take some lumps, too."

The Hornets open the 2023-24 season Saturday on the road at Wawasee. Tipoff is scheduled for 7:30 p.m.



JEFF JONES

Angola's Dane Lantz blocks a shot attempt by Eastside's Loden Johnson during a first-half play last season in Butler. Lantz is one of the area's top scorers and his senior season begins this week.

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ANGOLA HORNETS



Angola High School
755 S. 100E, Angola
Colors: Purple and Gold
Class: 3A



GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 25	A	Norwell	12:30 p.m.
Nov. 28	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 1	A	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 6	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 18	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 19	H	Homestead	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 3	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.

Jan. 5	A	Prairie Heights	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 6	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Northeast Corner Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 16	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	H	Churubusco	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 20	A	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	A	Warsaw	7:30 p.m.



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New coach, new culture for Angola girls

BY DAVID VANTRESS

dvantress@kpcmedia.com

ANGOLA — The 2023-24 season that just got underway will be one of transition for the Angola High School girls basketball team.

New coach Dave Panning enters his first season as a varsity head coach, but brings nearly 30 years of basketball coaching experience to the table. As he takes over the reins for the Hornets, he has a good group of girls.

Panning was encouraged by what he saw in a Nov. 4 scrimmage against Bishop Dwenger. But the Hornets struggled in their season opener, a 55-27 home loss to Carroll Nov. 7.

“The girls have been working hard,” Panning said.

Angola (11-11 last season, including 7-3 in the Northeast Corner Conference) lost seniors Jaelyn Fee and Tyrah Stillman. Fee is playing basketball for the University of Saint Francis down in Fort Wayne.

Key returning players for the Hornet girls in 2023-24 include senior point guard Kylie Caswell, a two-time All-NECC selection, as well as senior forward-guard Macy Oberlin. Caswell averaged 10.9 points, 2.9 rebounds and 1.2 assists per game last season. Oberlin averaged 8.8 points and 4.8 rebounds per game in 2022-23.

Junior Lexi Stillman is back after rehabbing from a torn anterior cruciate ligament that limited her to playing in just one game last season.

Ava Rinard, a junior, is



EVAN WEAVER

Angola guard Kylie Caswell operates in a crowd of Eastside defenders during a game last season. Caswell will once again lead the Hornets this season.

back after seeing significant varsity playing time last season. So is her older sister Isabelle, a senior.

Bailey Holman, a 6-foot big, started on the junior varsity and saw significant minutes on the varsity late in the season.

A tough NECC race awaits the Hornets, Panning said. Fairfield is the Class 3A defending champions, but lost numerous key players and has a new coach.

“The expectation for us is that we take care of the small things that help you win,” Panning said. “John Wooden never talked about winning, just about doing those little things.”



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CENTRAL NOBLE COUGARS



**Central Noble
High School**

302 Cougar Court, Albion
Colors: Maroon and White
Class: 2A



BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 22	A	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 1	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 2	H	Fort Wayne South	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 22	A	Bremen	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 30	A	East Noble	1:30 p.m.
Jan. 3	A	Bluffton	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	H	Garrett	8:00 p.m.

Jan. 9	A	Northeast Corner Conference Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 20	A	Northrop	2:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	H	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 29	H	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 9	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 16	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 23	A	Fairfield	7:45 p.m.

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Cougar boys experienced for new coach

BY KEN FILLMORE

kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

ALBION — Ben Lemmon is very fortunate to have the experience and leadership he has in his first season as a varsity head basketball coach at Central Noble.

Six players return from a Cougar team that went 18-7 overall, 7-3 in the Northeast Corner Conference, and was a Class 2A sectional runner-up. Five of those returners are seniors in guards Jackson Andrews, Drew Pliett, Spencer Adams and Brayden Kirchner and forward Isaiah Gard.

The other returner is athletic junior guard Redick Zolman.

Central Noble graduated two players, Landen Vice and guard Conner Lemmon. Lemmon is playing college basketball at NCAA Division III Manchester.

Another key player from last year was forward Sam Essegian. He transferred to Whitko for his senior year.

Central Noble has won 15 games or more over the past five seasons and had winning seasons since previous coach John Bodey took over in the 2016-17 season. Lemmon wants to be able to continue that run and remain one of the top teams in the NECC.

“We’d love to do that,” Lemmon said. “But we have to figure out how to play together. How will we work together on the floor, and we have to find our advantages on the court.”

Andrews (5.8 points, 2.4 rebounds and 1.4 assists per game last season) will begin his fourth season as a varsity starter this week. The point guard can create matchup problems with his strength.

The 6-foot-4 Gard (10.5 ppg, 6 rpg, 60.3% shooting from 2-point range last season) has developed as a threat both inside and outside.

Pliett led the Cougars in scoring last season in his first season with the team after transferring from Churubusco. He averaged 10.7 points, 3.2 rebounds and 1.6 assists per game last season, shot nearly 55% from the field in 2-point range and shot nearly 40% from 3-point range.

“Drew is real quick downhill,” Coach Lemmon said. “He’s hard for defenders to keep in front of them.”

The 6-2 Zolman (8.3 ppg, 2.6 rpg, 57% from 2-point range, 37.7% from 3-point range last season) has shown growth physically and as a rebounder.

“Spencer is very smart and sees the game very well,” Ben Lemmon said. “He’s fun to play with and enjoys setting up other people.”

“Brayden plays hard and is one of our better defenders.”

Varsity newcomers moving up from the junior varsity squad are junior guard Jayden Tilley and sophomores Nick Freeman and Simeon Gard.

Tilley is a scorer who is learning as a defensive player. Gard is a 6-5 forward who is skilled. Freeman, the brother of former CN girls great Sydney Freeman, is coming back from an injury-riddled freshman season.

Todd Freeman, Nick and Sydney’s father is the new junior varsity coach on the boys’ side. Current CN boys tennis coach and former Cougars boys golf coach Joey Mawhorter will coach the C-team. Longtime varsity assistant coach Lynford Yoder is back to help Lemmon.



EVAN WEAVER

Central Noble’s Drew Pliett drives during a game at Angola last season. Pliett is part of experienced core for the Cougars and new coach Ben Lemmon this season.

CENTRAL NOBLE COUGARS



**Central Noble
High School**

302 Cougar Court, Albion
Colors: Maroon and White
Class: 2A



GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 28	A	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 1	H	Angola	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9	H	Westview	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 15	A	West Noble	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Wawasee	6:15 p.m.

Dec. 29	H	South Adams	2:00 p.m.
Jan. 2	A	Bremen	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	H	Garrett	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 9	A	Northeast Corner Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 16	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	A	Eastside	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 26	A	Churubusco	6:00 p.m.

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LORRIE GETTS

Central Noble's Kierra Bolen (24) puts pressure on Prairie Heights ballhandler Sarah Park during a Class 2A sectional quarterfinal game in Albion last season. Bolen will be a part of a younger core group of Cougars this season.

Cougar girls look to continue winning ways

BY KEN FILLMORE

kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

ALBION — Madison Vice and Meghan Kiebel are going to be hard to replace after leading the Central Noble girls basketball team to a special 26-3 season that included a semi-state final appearance in Class 2A. But that does not mean that the Cougars can't be a consistent winner.

Sam Malcolm will be looking to maintain winning ways and make them last in his second season at the helm with the Cougars.

"This year's team is building on last year's success by continuing to work hard while developing new roles," Malcolm said.

"This year's team has a deeper bench and everyone must understand that defense travels," he continued. "The team must embrace all challenges and battle every opponent from the tip to the final buzzer."

Vice and Kiebel are both participating athletically at NAIA colleges. Vice is playing basketball at Siena Heights (Mich.). Kiebel has been biding her time as the backup goalkeeper on the women's soccer team at Bethel College in Mishawaka.

Valuable role player Abby Hile also graduated at Central Noble (9-1 Northeast Corner Conference last season).

Sophomore center Grace Swank and senior guard-forward Makenna Malcolm are returning starters for the Cougars. Their top reserves from last season also return in junior guard Kierra Bolen and senior guard Kyleigh Egolf.

The 6-foot Swank adjusted to being a post player after being a guard throughout middle school. She averaged five points, 6.3 rebounds and about a block per game last season.

Malcolm is in her second year as a Cougar after moving from Garrett with her father Sam. She is a wing who can handle the basketball. She averaged five points, 2.8 rebounds, 2.1 assists and 1.6 steals per game

last season.


Bolen and Egolf were big in maintaining the intensity and the defensive effort off the bench. Bolen also made 35% of her three-point shots last season (28-81).

Junior guard Taylor Custer will take on a significant varsity role after playing primarily on the junior varsity.


Key newcomers include senior guard Melissa McCoy, junior guard Kennedy Vice, junior post Megan Carnahan and sophomore guard-forward Abby Pliett.

Central Noble still looks to compete in what appears to be a parity-filled NECC.

CHURUBUSCO EAGLES



Churubusco High School
1 Eagle Drive, Churubusco
Colors: Old Gold and Black
Class: 2A



BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 25	H	FW Luers	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 19	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 1	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 23	H	Manchester	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	A	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 26	H	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 8	H	South Adams	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 27	A	Argos	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 1	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 6	A	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 16	A	Woodlan	1:30 p.m.	Feb. 9	A	Hamilton	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	H	East Noble	2:30 p.m.	Feb. 13	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 16	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 9	A	Northeast Corner Conference Tournament	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 17	A	Whitko	7:30 p.m.
				Feb. 23	A	Eastside	6:00 p.m.



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New coach, new outlook for 'Busco boys

BY DAVID VANTRESS

dvantress@kpcmedia.com

CHURUBUSCO — After a 3-20 season in 2022-23 (1-10 Northeast Corner Conference), there's much room to get better for the Churubusco High School boys basketball team as the 2023-24 season beckons soon.

And the Eagles have a new coach to help them get to where they want to be.

Gabe Garman, a longtime Carroll assistant, takes over the Eagle reins this season. And with no seniors lost to graduation, the future looks bright.

Key returning players for the Eagles include senior guard Joey Taylor (20 points, 8 rebounds and 3 assists per game last season) and senior guard Caden Ummel (11.3 ppg, 2.7 rpg, 1.3 apg). Other returning Eagles who saw significant playing time last season include junior Brayden Bianski, junior guard Mason Mast, junior forward Ethan Hartsock and sophomore forward Weston Ott.

Key newcomers for Churubusco include junior guard Braylon McCoy and sophomore guard Carson Tonkel, a Carroll transfer who will split time between the junior varsity and varsity squads to start the season.

Garman is excited about his first head coaching position and looking forward to what his Eagles can do.

"We have some pieces to our team that could help us make some noise in the NECC this season," Garman said. "Every day, we will need to get one percent better than the day before."

Garman got a head start during the summer getting to know his guys, but with the limited contact allowed by the Indiana High School Athletic Association during the offseason, there's nothing like the first Monday in November when the guys



DAVID VANTRESS

Churubusco's Caden Ummel (4) drives against the tight defense of Eastside's Clayton Minnick during an Northeast Corner Conference Tournament first-round game at Eastside last season. Ummel will be one of the leading players for the Eagles this season.

lace up their sneakers for real to get ready for another four to five months of Indiana high school basketball.

The Eagles had 24 players

come out for tryouts and will run JV and varsity squads this season. The goal of having a freshman or C team down the road, Garman said.

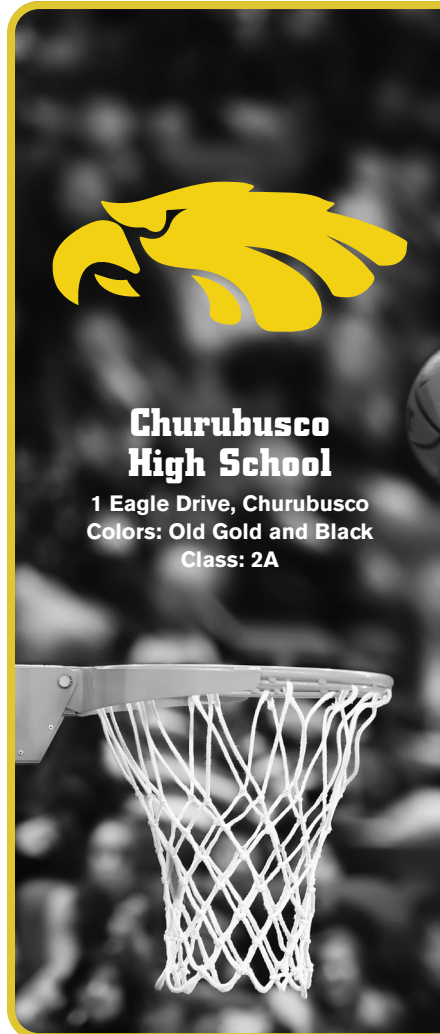
Measuring success, Garman said, will come down to a few intangibles.

"Our core values, and embracing the grit, process and togetherness it takes to

reach competitive greatness," Garman said.

The Eagles open the 2023-24 season Saturday night at home against Bishop Luers.

CHURUBUSCO EAGLES



GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	H	Lakeland Christian	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 3	A	Manchester	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 28	H	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 5	A	Fremont	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 2	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 9	A	Northeast Corner Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Eastside	7:00 p.m.	Jan. 16	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 8	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 19	A	Angola	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 26	H	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 15	A	Prairie Heights	6:00 p.m.	Jan. 27	H	Northfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 19	H	Bluffton	7:30 p.m.				

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DAVID VANTRESS

The Churubusco girls basketball team, wearing special uniforms to raise breast cancer awareness, gathers for a team photo after its game against Lakewood Park Christian on Nov. 2.

'Busco girls look to take steps forward

BY DAVID VANTRESS

dvantress@kpcmedia.com

CHURUBUSCO — As the 2023-24 season gets into high gear this month, there's much to improve upon for the Churubusco High School girls basketball team.

The Eagles finished 5-18 last season and 1-9 in the Northeast Corner Conference. They dropped a close 36-35 decision to Westview in the first round of the Class 2A sectional.

Scoring was a problem for the Eagles in

2022-23, as Churubusco averaged just 38.6 points per game while giving up 47.6 points per contest.

This season, the Eagles are off to a 1-3 start through their first four games.

They were averaging 33.5 points per game at the time, but were playing better defense, only giving up 37.5 points per game.

Churubusco head coach David Goodwell is in his fourth year guiding the Eagles.

Goodwell said more work will lead to better shooting and more scoring.

"That's something we just have to stay in the gym and keep working on," he said. "I told the girls, of course we want to win. We want to improve each game and be ready for sectional time."

Speeding up the tempo while being more fundamentally sound will be areas for the Eagles to work on as the season progresses.


The Eagles are led by junior guards Brooklyn Sinclair and Bridget Timbrook and senior forward Jorja DeBolt.

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DEKALB BARONS



DeKalb High School
C.R. 427, Waterloo
Colors: Red, Black and White
Class: 4A



BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	A	Northrop	7:45 p.m.	Jan. 16	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 25	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 20	H	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 1	H	Fort Wayne North	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 24	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Snider	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 27	H	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 1	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 3	H	Luers	1:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	A	Norwell	7:45 p.m.	Feb. 8	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 22	H	Homestead	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 13	A	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 6	H	New Haven	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 16	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 9	H	Carroll	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 20	A	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 12	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 23	H	Northridge	7:30 p.m.



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MARK MURDOCK

Braiden Boyd, right, is one of the top returning players for DeKalb this season.



MARK MURDOCK

Caden Pettis, left, is one of the key returning players for DeKalb this season.

Barons aim to play tougher longer

BY MARK MURDOCK

mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

WATERLOO — The edict for the DeKalb boys basketball team is the same as in recent years.

Play tougher longer.

The Barons several times have been within range of a big win, but lacked the big shot or the big stop to seal the deal.

“They have to learn to compete harder and longer,” third-year coach Marty Beasley said. “They’ve done a fairly decent job of putting more time and effort into the game and into the weights. As a group they’ve done a much better job.”

“We’ve got a lot of excuses on why they’re not as good as they should be in terms of strength or skill level. Players and parents have to get rid of those excuses. If they give more effort and be relentless about it they could be successful.”

The Barons were 6-16 last year. They went 6-6 after losing their

first 10 games.

DeKalb figures to build around two starters from last year, Caden Pettis and Braiden Boyd. Pettis was second-team All-Northeast 8 Conference. Another returning senior, Kiefer Nagel, was a regular contributor last year and started part of the time.

Christian Stenger, a 6-3 senior who transferred into the DeKalb Central district, also figures to contribute.

Juniors Caiden Hinkle and Will Weber saw limited varsity time last year.

Several younger players will likely split time between the junior varsity and varsity.

“I like the sophomores a lot. I’d like to see them have success as a group,” Beasley said.

DeKalb will likely be building depth as it goes as the younger players gain experience.

The Barons again won’t have a lot of size, and will have to work hard on the glass.

“We’re going to need other guys to contribute on the boards,” Beasley said. “Rebounding is going to be huge for us at both ends of the floor.”

Scoring will be the same with hopefully several players contributing.

“We’ve got four or five guys capable of being right around high single digits or low double digits,” Beasley said. “If we get five guys in that category we’ll be very solid.”

“We can’t have the mentality that we have to have a guy go out and get 20 points a night. That’s not going to happen.”

The point is having everyone working unselfishly for the main goal.

“The best teams I’ve coached would give up a good shot for a great shot,” Beasley said. “You’re hard to guard that way. Hopefully we can get that balance.”

“It’s very possible we can get that if the guys buy in to sharing the ball and being a team.”

The Barons need to continue to improve their shooting.

“Hopefully our shooting is going to be better,” Beasley said. “We improved last year from the year before but we’ve still got to be more consistent. When you lose seven games by a combined 20 points that tells you you probably aren’t shooting the ball very well.”

“You win five of those seven and you’ve got a .500 year.”

The size factor will also play into the defense.


“Defensively we’re not very big,” Beasley said. “We’ve got to figure out how we’re going to compete with our lack of size.”

“You do that by being aggressive, having great effort, being tough and not backing down.”


The Barons have the potential of being a competitive team.

“We’ve got to find a way. One day at a time, one game at a time we’ve got to find a way to get better,” Beasley said.

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Dec. 2	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 8	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 16	H	Norwell	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 19	A	Blackhawk	7:30 p.m.

Dec. 21	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 29	N	Goshen Classic	TBA
Jan. 2	N	Eastside at Trine University	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	A	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 13	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	A	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	H	Snider	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	A	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.



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Baron girls ready to compete with new lineup

BY MARK MURDOCK

mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

WATERLOO — DeKalb girls basketball fans will need to be sure to pick up a roster on their way into games this season.

A core group of four seniors made up the Baron lineup for the last three years. This year's team will have some new names and faces.

"This will be my first year not having them around," coach Noah Stuckey said. "It's a little different at the beginning of the year. We're going to be all right."

Stuckey and his staff saw good progress in the first few weeks of practice. The different group should fit together well in time.

"Last year we had so many returning players," Stuckey said. "This year it was a little slower in practice. We can't assume things anymore. We have to make sure everybody understands what's expected of them."

"They're picking up on everything very well. They just have to continue growing."

Stuckey is looking to upperclassmen for leadership.

"We've got a great group of seniors who've been around for four years and it's their time to step up and be the leaders of the team," Stuckey said.

That group includes Natalie Fordyce, a good defensive player.

"Her ability to put pressure on the basketball is going to be helpful," Stuckey said.

Baylee Doster is an outside scoring threat.

"If she gets an open look she's probably going to knock it down," Stuckey said.

Sam Slavin is in just her third year of basketball, and will be a contributor off the bench.



MARK MURDOCK

Baylee Doster is one of several seniors who will look to step up for the Lady Barons this season.

Sienna Abbott plays bigger than her physical size and will provide ball handling.

"She's pretty feisty, works hard, and she's a smart basketball player," Stuckey said.

DeKalb returns junior Ashley Cox, a first-team All-Northeast 8 Conference and KPC Media Group All-Area selection for last season's 12-12 team.

Cox is a proven scorer and also has the ability to distribute the ball.

"The good thing about Ashley is how unselfish she is offensively," Stuckey said. "Everybody else has to be ready to play. They can't put their head down. If they do they're going to take a ball to the face."

"Ashley finds everybody in the right spot with a



MARK MURDOCK

Ashley Cox, right, returns as a top scoring threat for DeKalb this season.

good pass so they can score easily."

Junior Bree Fordyce will be able to use her length to give the Barons an inside presence. Freshman Abbie Harris figures to be the first player off the bench.

The Barons will need

time to put the pieces together.

"We had a real successful summer and competed with some really good teams," Stuckey said.

"It's just them getting up to speed, getting into the right spots. We understand

mistakes are going to happen. We have to fight through those mistakes.

"We're figuring out roles and they're starting to understand what they need to do for the whole team to be successful," Stuckey added.

EAST NOBLE KNIGHTS



East Noble High School

901 S. Garden St., Kendallville
Colors: Royal Blue and Gold
Class: 4A



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Nov. 21	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 25	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 28	A	Snider	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 2	A	Carroll	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	H	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 16	N	Concord at Grace College	1:00 p.m.
Dec. 19	H	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 27	H	East Noble Tournament	TBA
Dec. 28	A	Churubusco	2:30 p.m.
Dec. 30	H	Central Noble	1:30 p.m.

Jan. 2	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	A	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 12	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 20	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 27	H	Norwell	1:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 7	H	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 9	A	New Haven	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 13	H	Homestead	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 20	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 23	H	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.

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MARK MURDOCK

Carter VanGessel, right, is a returning starter for the East Noble boys basketball team.



MARK MURDOCK

Kobe Ritchie, left, is one of the returning players for East Noble this season.

Better defense focus for East Noble boys

BY MARK MURDOCK

mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

KENDALLVILLE — East Noble lost its top two scorers from last year's boys basketball team, but has others who could step up.

Stopping other teams from scoring is more critical as the Knights begin their third season under coach Brandon Durnell.

The Knights allowed a shade more than 62 points a game in their 4-20 season a year ago and are working hard to shore that up.

"Defensively has been a huge concern for us," Durnell said. "We've averaged around 60 points (allowed) in my first two years here.

"We are implementing new defensive philosophies just to try

something different. As much as we've been scoring the basketball well, you've got to be able to stop people."

Durnell feels his team has to have the right mindset to improve defensively.

"It's more of a want-to," Durnell said. "Can we get down in a stance and guard people and want to guard people? We have to develop that identity. As much as I want to score and I'm an offensive guy, we have to find that identity on the defensive end."

The Knights will also have a smaller lineup this season.

"We will have to rebound," Durnell said. "We will have to work on it every day. We'll have to be super physical and play a lot bigger

than our size."

East Noble has experience. Senior Owen VanGessel and juniors Nathan Bowker and Kobe Ritchie are all returning starters for the Knights.

Senior Mason Hankins and juniors Ryker Quake and Landon Swogger hope to step into bigger roles after getting varsity minutes a year ago.

"They all work on their games on their own. They're all playing AAU. I do feel a lot of excitement in the gym this year.

"We have a lot of guys who were role players last year who will now have to step into bigger roles. They've put in the time and the work to be able to do those things."

Durnell feels the Knights have the offense they need.

"We're confident we have guys who can shoot the ball," He said. "It's going to be by committee. We're going to have different scorers every game."

Despite its record, East Noble competed very well last season.

Out of the six Northeast 8 Conference losses for the Knights, three were in overtime and two were by a one-possession difference.

"We're one possession away in those games from being 6-1 in the conference," Durnell said.

"There's a belief that we can win those games if we do one more thing better. We return a lot of guys and seeing all these close scores, we have to keep reiterating that if we do a couple things better, we win these games."

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Dec. 6	H	Northrop	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 8	H	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 16	A	Columbia City	2:30 p.m.
Dec. 29	N	Goshen Classic	TBA
Jan. 3	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.

Jan. 5	H	Huntington North	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 13	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 16	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 22	A	Wayne	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	A	Norwell	7:45 p.m.



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Young EN girls move forward with new coach

BY MARK MURDOCK

mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

KENDALLVILLE — Britain Isaacs and his players will be new together.

The new East Noble girls basketball coach is making the jump from the school's boys basketball program and has plenty of young players with whom to work.

That's made the adjustment of taking over as a new coach go more smoothly.

"With half of the program being freshmen, it's helped because we are all doing something new," Isaacs said.

Most recently Isaacs coached the East Noble boys junior varsity and also served as the boys JV coach at Lakeland.

Especially early in the season, the Knights will depend on their players coming back with varsity experience. Payton Quake and Bailea Bortner will be the team's lone seniors.

Quake earned All-Northeast 8 Conference and KPC Media Group All-Area honorable mention last season.

"It helps that the upperclassmen are very hard-working and have set a good example for the younger group," Isaacs said. "The two seniors have both been gym rats and worked hard in the weight room.

"They're both great



EVAN WEAVER

East Noble's Kate David attempts an off-balance shot as Prairie Heights' Emily McCrea guards her last season in Brushy Prairie. David and McCrea both are valuable players for their respective teams this season.

resources for me, helping to create a good team environment."

Sophomores Kate David and Addison Deming also saw regular varsity playing time on last year's team, which went 5-18 and lost in the first round of the Class 4A sectional to Carroll.

"These four (returning

players) played a lot of minutes last year, so we're expecting them to lead and push the program forward," Isaacs said.

As he takes over a program that last had a winning season in 2016-17, Isaacs has installed a new team motto: Do more, say less.

"We're looking for girls to attack and push the tempo with a focus on next play mentality," Isaacs said. "A big focus is body language and making sure we're representing our program and our community well."

With their youth and a new coach, the Knights made need time to put



MARK MURDOCK

Senior Payton Quake figures to be a leader for the East Noble girls basketball team this season.

things together.

"We're very young, so learning a new offense and defensive philosophy will be difficult right way," Isaacs said. "It might take some time for them to become comfortable."

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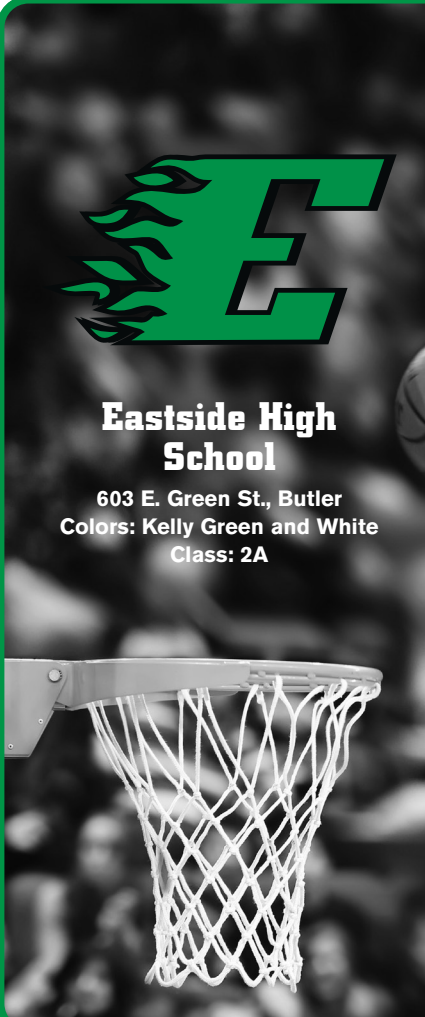


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Class: 2A

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Nov. 25	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 29	H	Smith Academy	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 19	A	Edon (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 30	A	West Noble	2:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 6	A	Edgerton (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 9	A	Northeast Corner Conference Tournament	7:30 p.m.

Jan. 19	H	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 27	A	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	A	Hamilton	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 9	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 10	H	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 13	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 16	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 23	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.



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50 YEARS & 3 GENERATIONS STRONG!

New Eastside boys coach eager to start season

BY JEFF JONES

jjones@kpcmedia.com

BUTLER — It's a new season and Eastside's boys basketball program has a new head coach.

David Prokop comes to DeKalb Eastern from Valparaiso High School, where he was an assistant boys basketball coach and also coached unified track and field. He is a Fort Wayne native.

The Blazers finished 9-14 in the 2022-2023 season, falling to eventual sectional champion Westview by a 50-26 score in the post-season.

Eastside had been coached the past two seasons by Ed Bentley, who compiled a 34-16.

Prokop inherits three experienced varsity players in seniors Loden Johnson, Clayton Minnick and Ryder Reed.

Minnick is the top returning scorer, averaging 8.6 points per game last season. He made 36 three-point field goals.

Reed averaged 3.1 points per game with nine threes and Johnson scored nearly two points per game.

Prokop said Minnick and Reed will lead the way when the Blazers have the ball as the team implements a new-look offense in trying to put points on the scoreboard.

"Defensively, things will remain the same in terms of being a tough-nosed, physical team," Prokop said.

The past three seasons, the Blazers have been particularly stingy on the defensive end, giving up 44.3, 39.7 and 44.7 points per contest.

At the other end, Eastside has scored 49.3, 54.4, 53.9 and 39.1 points per game the past four seasons.

The Blazers will have to overcome the losses of three experienced players from last season's team.

Leading scorer Santino Brewer (13 points per game, 22 three-pointers) and Caeden Moughler (6.1 points per game, 12 three-pointers) graduated. Brady Lehman, who scored nearly six points per contest, has transferred.

Seniors Connor Abplanalp and Noah Acquiviva, juniors Blake Lesser and E.J. Miller and sophomore Nolan Baker will seek varsity action this season.

Abplanalp, Baker, Lesser and Miller all saw limited varsity minutes a year ago.

Assistant coaches joining the varsity program this season are Austen Brow, Kadis Renier, Kris Tadsen and Logan Morton.

"The Eastside Blazers boys basketball program is undergoing many different changes this season which will make for an exciting year," Prokop said.

"We have five seniors as part of this year's squad, which helps the transition of a new head coach."



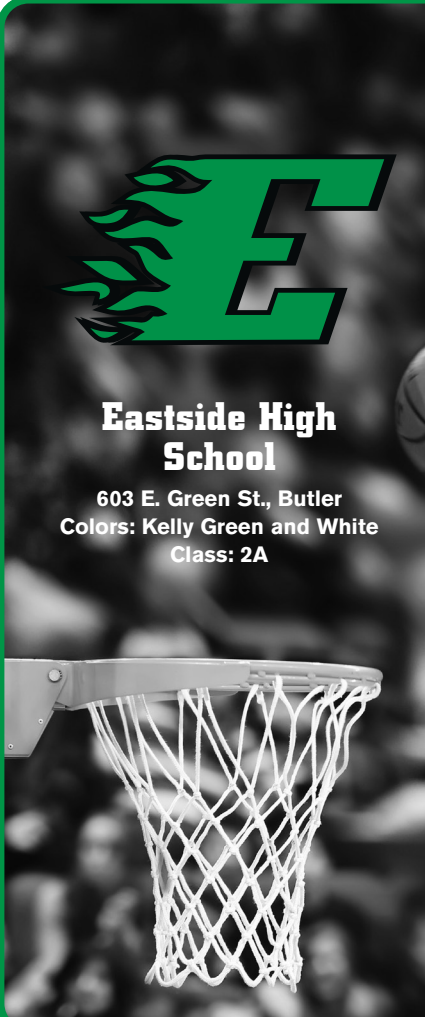
LORRIE GETTS

Eastside's Ryder Reed (22) makes a wraparound pass to a teammate during a boys basketball game at Central Noble last season. Reed is back for his senior season to lead the Blazers.

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Jan. 5	A	Fairfield	6:00 p.m.
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Jan. 16	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	H	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 25	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.



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Blazer girls built on speed, defense

BY JEFF JONES

jjones@kpcmedia.com

BUTLER — You would be hard pressed to find much size on Eastside's girls basketball roster.

That's OK. The 2023-2024 Blazers have an abundance of speed.

"With our program, it all starts with defense," head coach Mike Lortie said. "We must defend to slow opponents down offensively, which will then lead to transition baskets.

"We took 25 charges last year. We will need more of that this year."

Eastside graduated just two players from last season, but they represented the team's tallest players.

Grace Kreisler averaged 12.3 points per game last year, including 16 three-pointers. She now ranks 13th in all-time scoring with 661 points.

Kaylie Hertig collected just over six points per contest.

"We lost some height to graduation, so we will need to rebound the basketball well to compete in games," Lortie said.

"With that said, we will be a quicker team that teams will have to deal with," he added. "We fully expect to compete for an NECC championship and a sectional championship this year."

Key returning players are juniors Paige Traxler (10.2 points per game), Sydnee Kessler (7 ppg) and Lily Kreisler (4.6 ppg), and seniors Jayci Kitchen (3.4 ppg) and Haley Wies (2.6 ppg). Senior Alysha Baker is another returning letterwinner.

Traxler tickled the twine for a team-best 39 three-point field goals while Kessler added 24 bombs. Lily Kreisler was one of five players to reach 100 points for the season.

Looking to make contributions are junior Avery Wilson and freshmen Lucy Kitchen and Taylor Mack.

In her first varsity game, Nov. 2 against Concordia, Mack picked up seven points. Lucy Kitchen led the Blazers with 13 points in a 51-49 win over Blackhawk Christian on Nov. 7.

In Lortie's four seasons, the Blazers have won 62 games, including a 15-9 finish last season.

The Blazers lost in the sectional championship in Lortie's second season, then cut down the nets the next season.

Last season, Eastside finished 8-2 in conference play, with its only losses coming to a Central Noble team that advanced to the Class 2A North semi-state championship game and a Fairfield team that won the Class 3A state championship.



JEFF JONES

Eastside's Sydnee Kessler defends Prairie Heights guard Olivia Boots as Boots looks for a way out last season in Butler. Kessler is one of the leading players returning for the Blazers this season.

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FREMONT EAGLES



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BOYS SCHEDULE

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Jan. 9	A	Northeast Corner Conference Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	A	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 3	A	Canterbury	1:30 p.m.
Feb. 9	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 16	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 20	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 23	H	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.



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Fremont looks to regain sectional title form

BY DAVID VANTRESS

dvantress@kpcmedia.com

FREMONT — After winning Class 1A sectional titles in 2021 and 2022, the Fremont High School boys basketball team dropped its opening round sectional tilt in Class 2A last season and finished 12-11.

As practice for the 2023-24 season opened on Nov. 6, fourth-year coach Josh Stuckey is optimistic that his Eagles can return to that form.

“There was a lot of energy in the gym today,” Stuckey said after the Eagles got their first practice of the season in the books on Nov. 6. “We had a great first practice. We’ve got a lot of veteran guys, juniors and seniors who have been around me long enough to know what I expect.”

Before taking the Fremont varsity job, Stuckey was the seventh grade coach at Fremont, so this year’s crop of seniors have been with him for six seasons.

Experience will be a strength for Fremont this season, Stuckey said. But right now, the Eagles need to get healthy.

“We want to continue to grow as a team. We’ve got a lot of skill,” Stuckey said.

With a tight group of guys who have played together for awhile, Stuckey said, the competitiveness makes

the team feel like a band of brothers.

“They know how to push each others’ buttons,” Stuckey said. “They really do love each other, though. But they can get on each others’ nerves.”

Six returning letterwinners make for a strong core for Fremont. Those include seniors Conner Slee and Corbin Beeman. Juniors Bryce Parnin, Colten Guthrie and Cayden Hufnagle make up the rest of the returning Eagles.

Senior guard Brody Foulk is out for the season after suffering a knee injury during football season, but will provide leadership from the bench, Stuckey said.

“He’ll still be a big part of the team,” Stuckey said.

The experienced core should help the Eagles play with poise, Stuckey said. And that trait will be crucial in an always tough Northeast Corner Conference.

“There’s always teams that are up and teams that are down,” Stuckey said. “There’s an upset every year. Whoever keeps their focus the best is the team that will win the conference.”

The Eagles tip off the 2023-24 campaign Saturday night at home against Lakewood Park. They were scheduled to scrimmage Heritage on Nov. 18.



EVAN WEAVER

Fremont’s Conner Slee shoots a 3-pointer in a Northeast Corner Conference Tournament first-round game at Garrett last season. Slee is back to lead the Eagles for his senior season.

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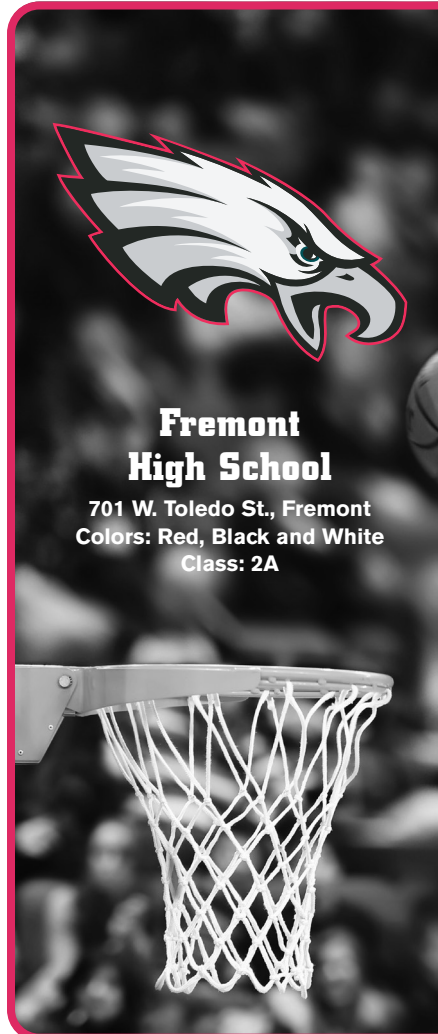


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FREMONT EAGLES



GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	H	Wayne	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 5	H	Churubusco	6:00 p.m.
Nov. 24	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 6	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 29	A	Heritage	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 9	A	Northeast Corner Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 2	H	Fort Wayne North	5:00 p.m.	Jan. 17	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	H	Edon (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 20	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 23	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 25	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 28	H	Fremont Tournament	TBA				

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Fremont buoyed by quartet of newcomers

BY DAVID VANTRESS

dvantress@kpcmedia.com

FREMONT — As Fremont head girls basketball coach Shae Thomas gets into her second season at the Eagle helm, she can look forward to an experienced squad back with a quartet of exciting newcomers, including a trio of freshmen.

Thomas said a good summer for her girls has the Eagles primed for success in 2023-24.

The Eagles finished 8-15 last season, including 3-7 in the Northeast Corner Conference.

Fremont struggled to score last season, averaging just 34.2 points per game, so creating more scoring opportunities is a key goal in 2023-24.

The three incoming freshmen are Grace Scharlach, Mya Turner and Chloe Verdin. They're joined by 5-foot-10 junior forward Claire Foulk, a first-year high school basketball player and one of Fremont's top female athletes.

Juniors Addy Parr (13.5 points, 4 rebounds and 2.6 steals per game last season) and Brayleigh Moss are back for the Eagles. They lost Natalie Gochenour to graduation. Mackenzie Parnin will not play this season due to graduating early this school year. She played three years of varsity basketball for Fremont.

"This group loves to play together and they have fun! I'm excited to see their hard work from this summer pay off," Thomas said. "We have to handle the ball better and keep turnovers down."

More shooting from beyond the arc is also on Thomas' wish list for this season.

"We look forward to continuing to improve and fight for a sectional title this year," Thomas added.

The Fremont roster also includes sophomore Willow Whittaker, seniors Chloe Hilvers and Rhiannon Gebhart and junior Rylee Goetz. Hilvers' leadership has proven valuable over the past year with Fremont's volleyball and girls tennis teams.

Thomas is assisted by Gary Baker, Hannah (Siders) Atha and Melissa Beer.



DAVID VANTRESS

Fremont's Addy Parr speeds to the basket as she is pursued by Westview's Kamryn Miller Thursday night in a Northeast Corner Conference game last season. Parr is one of the Eagles' leading players this season.

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GARRETT RAILROADERS



Garrett High School
801 E. Houston St., Garrett
Colors: Maroon and Navy Blue
Class: 3A



BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 22	H	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 25	H	Prairie Heights	8:00 p.m.
Nov. 28	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 1	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 8	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 16	H	Bluffton	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 27	A	East Noble Tournament	TBA
Jan. 2	A	Hamilton	7:30 p.m.

Jan. 5	A	Central Noble	8:00 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Northeast Corner Conference Tournament	TBA
Jan. 20	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	A	Lakeland	8:00 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 3	H	Whitko	2:30 p.m.
Feb. 9	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 13	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 16	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 23	A	West Noble	7:30 p.m.

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Garrett boys excited about returning talent

BY JEFF JONES

jjones@kpcmedia.com

GARRETT — It's year three and coach Andrew Evertts said there's plenty to be excited about in the Garrett Railroaders' camp.

The Railroaders have finished 5-18 in both of Evertts' seasons. But this year, he has five returning seniors and four players who averaged nearly five points or better back in the fold.

"We are incredibly excited for the 2023-2024 season," Evertts said. "This is definitely the most talented team we have had since my arrival at Garrett.

"These guys have worked very hard in the offseason and will look a lot different this year," he said. "We have great young men and I cannot wait to see what they accomplish."

Senior Luke Coffman is in his fourth varsity season, and picked up just under five points per game to go with two rebounds, two assists and a steal per contest.

Classmate Drayton Myers and junior Parker Reed each scored more than seven points per contest, and senior Jaxon Robinson added 5.5 points per game.

Reed is the team's leading returning rebounder and assist man, collecting just over four boards per game a year ago while finishing with 53 assists. He added a team-best 32 steals last season.

Myers connected for a team-best 33 three-point field goals. Robinson had 21 threes and Reed made 15.

Robinson grabbed 52 rebounds and added 21 assists and 11 steals.

Returning letterwinners from last year's team include senior Dave Westropp, juniors Jakob Hoover and Royce Fuentes and sophomore Jacob Gonya.

Lost to graduation were Kyle Smith (10 points per game, 15 three-pointers, 52 assists), Tyler Gater (6 ppg, 44 rebounds, 20 three-pointers) and Konner DeWitt (5 ppg, 4.4 rpg).

Assisting Evertts this season are Kyle Dekoninck, Matt DeWitt and Drake Lucarelli.



FILE PHOTO BY JEFF JONES

Garrett's Drayton Myers lays the ball up during a sectional game with Woodlan during the 2022-2023 season.



GARRETT RAILROADERS



Garrett High School
801 E. Houston St., Garrett
Colors: Maroon and Navy Blue
Class: 3A



GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 25	H	Prairie Heights	6:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	A	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 2	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Concordia	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 19	H	Dwenger	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	H	Blackhawk	7:30 p.m.

Dec. 22	A	Southern Wells	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 2	H	Fairfield	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 5	A	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Northeast Corner Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 16	A	Bellmont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	A	Lakeland	6:00 p.m.

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Bodey returns to lead Garrett girls program

BY JEFF JONES

jjones@kpcmedia.com

GARRETT — There will be a familiar face patrolling the sidelines at Garrett's Paul Bateman Gymnasium this season.

John Bodey is back in Railroader maroon and blue, now leading the girls basketball program.

He inherits a team that finished 14-12 last season, winning a sectional championship.

Graduation, however, hit the Railroaders hard, with all-everything talent Bailey Kelham departing. She now plays for Huntington University.

Garrett's all-time leading scorer for both boys and girls, Kelham scored nearly 20 points per contest last year while compiling team bests in rebounds (9.2) and steals (2.4).

Also lost to graduation were Maddy Schenkel and Aida Haynes.

Schenkel, now playing at the University of Saint Francis, averaged nearly seven points per contest to go with four rebounds and nearly three assists per game.

Haynes scored about five points per game while contributing 1.6 rebounds and an assist and a steal each per contest.

Senior Kelsey Bergman is the leading returning scorer, picking up 5.6 points per game to go with 8.4 rebounds per contest and two blocked shots per game.

Seniors Brooklyn Jacobs and Emma LaPato, junior Delaeni Hixson and sophomore Sarah DePew all made contributions a year ago.

Bergman and Hixson, both at 6-0, give Garrett some height, while DePew, Jacobs and LaPato will fill guard roles.

Hixson netted a team-best 13 points in Garrett's 55-33 season-opening win over Heritage on Nov. 7. Bergman and DePew chipped in with 12 points each in that contest.

Bodey also expects Madison Freeze and Rilyn Flotow to make contributions.

Kaitlyn Wisel will coach Garrett's reserve team with Shannon Beard and Kayleigh Treesh as assistant coaches.

"Our success depends on how we handle our new roles," Bodey said. "Everyone on our team is in a different role than they were in last season."

Success follows Bodey wherever



FILE PHOTO BY LORRIE GETTS

Garrett's Kelsey Bergman goes up for a shot during a game during the 2022-2023 season.

he goes.

He most recently coached the Central Noble boys basketball team for seven seasons, leading the Cougars to 134 wins against just 49 losses. He guided the Cougars

to great heights, playing in the Class 2A state championship game in the 2021-2022 season.

Before that, Bodey had success at his alma mater, leading the boys program to a sectional crown in his

first season, 2008-2009, and 68 wins. In high school, he surpassed the 1,000-point mark as a Railroader and was a member of the school's sectional championship team in 1983-1984.

HAMILTON MARINES



Boys

901 S. Wayne St., Hamilton
Colors: Royal Blue and White
Class: 1A

Girls

901 S. Wayne St., Hamilton
Colors: Royal Blue and White
Class: 1A



BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	A	Lakewood Park	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 1	A	Elkhart Christian	6:30 p.m.
Dec. 2	H	Lakeland Christian	3:00 p.m.
Dec. 8	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 11	A	Hilltop (Ohio)	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 18	H	Edon (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 2	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.

Jan. 9	H	Northeast Corner Conference Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 20	A	Bethany Christian	3:00 p.m.
Jan. 23	A	Clinton Christian	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 27	A	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	A	Smith Academy	6:00 p.m.
Feb. 9	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 23	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 25	A	Anderson Prep	1:00 p.m.
Dec. 2	H	Lakeland Christian	1:00 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Pansophia Academy (Michigan)	6:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	A	Lakewood Park	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 29	N	Lakeland Christian Tournament	TBA

Jan. 6	H	Trinity Greenlawn	12:00 p.m.
Jan. 9	H	Northeast Corner Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 19	A	Lakeland	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 20	A	Elkhart Christian	12:00 p.m.
Jan. 23	A	Clinton Christian	6:15 p.m.
Jan. 26	A	South Bend Clay	7:00 p.m.



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New coach Holden hopes Marines can compete

BY MARK MURDOCK

HAMILTON — Chase Holden is returning to the place he experienced basketball glory.

A member of Hamilton's 2001 Class 1A regional championship team, Holden has taken over as coach of the Marines boys program for this season.

"It's exciting for me coming back to Hamilton," Holden said. "It was a job I thought I'd like to have someday. Everything came together this year.

"I've really enjoyed the boys so far. They've been putting in some work. We have a lot to work on."

The Marines have labored through two winless seasons. Holden hopes his experiences will carry over even though Hamilton hasn't had a winning season since his senior year.

"I've told them my story, what we got to accomplish when I was in school," he said. "Most of them

weren't even born yet."

Regardless of how much history they know, Holden wants to restore pride in the program.

"Hamilton hasn't gotten to enjoy the wins or sectional championships like I got to," Holden said. "I'd like to get it back where we can compete. That's my main goal.

"I just want Hamilton to compete again. I don't want everybody to think they can just walk all over us. I'm not saying we're going to win a bunch of games, but I want to be able to be in the game so it's a fun game."

Holden remembers how the program progressed in his years with the Marines. He was part of a sectional championship as a sophomore with a team that had just five regular-season wins.

Hamilton won 11 games the next year before the glory season of 2000-01 which featured 21 victories.

"It takes time," Holden said. "It's

not going to come to us overnight. We've got to put in the work and the effort, and come to the gym every day with a great attitude."

Reducing turnovers is job one, Holden believes.

"The games I watched last year, they play good defense, they get a stop, then they turn the ball over," Holden said. "Us taking care of the basketball is going to be one of the biggest steps for us.

"We need to figure out who can score for us. That's another key."

Until that question is solved, the Marines have to rebound and limit opponents' second and third chances on the offensive glass.

"When I played, I didn't feel I was the most talented player on the court but I was one that was going to work my tail off and try to help our team win no matter what," Holden said.

"I didn't feel I could jump. I had to block out better and then go get

the basketball. It's all about want. You can do everything right and not want to go get the rebound and somebody else is going to beat you to it."

Offensively, the Marines will have players who have not been in scoring roles before. Holden is hopeful scoring will be a team effort for Hamilton.

"We're going to have to find people who can score. We're going to have to find people who can defend. It's not going to be just one person it's going to have to be a team effort to improve," Holden said.

Building confidence will also be important with players who have not experienced winning.

"It's just giving them confidence every day, telling them when they do things right," Holden said. "When they get their first one it's going to be a big confidence booster. We're improving."

Hamilton girls to work hard, stick together

BY MARK MURDOCK

mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

HAMILTON — Having lost five seniors, members of the Hamilton girls basketball team must stick together.

The Marines still have some solid contributors back from last year's 2-12 squad and they hope to continue the program's growth by learning to play together.

"We keep improving," fourth-year coach Andrew Baker said. "These girls are doing great. We're going to have to work together as a team and not count on individual performers to see that growth.

"The girls have to trust each other and do their jobs on the floor. That would get us a long way."

The Marines will lean on a strong senior group. Jasmine Schiek returns as the team's top scorer and ball handler.

"She's very tenacious and works hard," Baker said.

Another senior, Maddi Dager, is back with the team after not playing last year.

"She's long and able to defensively help us inside. She's getting stronger and smoother around the blocks," Baker said.

Senior Britney Heffern also

returns.

"She's a great leader for us," Baker said. "She'll probably have more inside work this year. She's really aggressive and a hard worker."

Junior Abbi Dager, Maddi's sister, can play inside or out. Junior Taryn Kintz and sophomore TieGAnn Freed return in the backcourt.

"We're quicker this year. I'm hoping we can put a little more pressure defense on," Baker said. "They're going to be instrumental in that.

"If we can use our defense to create some offense that will be good for us."

Baker hopes this team will have more ability to score.

"Finishing shots will be a key," he said. "We've had a lot of opportunities but we don't always finish."


There's been no quit in the Marines.

"These girls have always worked hard. They don't give up," Baker said. "They keep battling. That's what they've got to continue to do.


"We talked about what the identity of the team is. The girls want to be a family. That's a beautiful place to be. We win together, we lose together, but no matter what we're a family."



LAKELAND LAKERS



Lakeland High School
805 E. C.R. 75N, LaGrange
Colors: Columbia Blue, Red and White
Class: 3A



BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 22	A	NorthWood	postponed to TBA
Nov. 25	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 1	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9	H	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 19	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 23	N	Northrop at Trine University	9:30 a.m.
Dec. 23	N	Michigan City at Trine University	3:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	A	South Bend Career	7:30 p.m.

Jan. 5	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Northeast Corner Conference Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	H	Elkhart Christian	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	H	Garrett	8:00 p.m.
Jan. 27	A	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	A	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 9	H	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 13	A	Northridge	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 16	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 23	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.



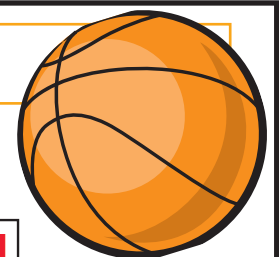
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Excitement high for Lakeland boys

BY KEN FILLMORE

kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

LAGRANGE — It's tough to let go of a class that keyed a program turnaround, especially when the best player happens to be your child.

But excitement has not wavered for coach Chris Keil on the Lakeland boys basketball team he will put on the floor this season.

The Lakers went 16-8 last season, and tied for second place in the Northeast Corner Conference at 7-3. They won 11 more games than they did the previous season and enjoyed their best season since the 2017-18 campaign, when they went 16-10 and was a Class 3A sectional runner-up.

Ben Keil, Tommy Curtis, Christian Troyer and Zeke Wachtman. Keil, one of the area's top basketball players last season, is golfing for NCAA Division II University of Indianapolis.

Senior wing Nate Keil and four sophomores who saw regular varsity minutes as freshmen return. Those 10th graders are forward Keegan Merrifield and guards Keyan Arroyo, Kyle Hartsough and Levi Cook.

"We lost four seniors who outworked everyone every single day and set the tone

for this group of outstanding youngsters," Chris Keil said. "After a great summer, we have the potential to equal or exceed our win totals from last year."

Keil feels he has a deep team that is highly skilled on offense and will also be tough on the defensive end. He thinks the Lakers should go 10 deep.

Lakeland will be led by the 6-foot-3 Nate Keil, who his father feels is one of the most athletic wings in all of northeast Indiana. Nate averaged 11.4 points, 3.7 rebounds, two assists and about a steal per game last season. He shot 46% from the field (108-234).

According to Coach Keil, the Lakers have quick, athletic guards in Arroyo and Hartsough, a great defender and rebounder in Cook, and a terrific 6-foot-4 big in Merrifield who is highly skilled and gained strength over the offseason through football.

Also expected to contribute in varsity roles for Lakeland are juniors Chuck Schackow, Justin Carlson, Anthony Khanchareun, Landon Jaeger and Myles Edwards. Schackow is a skilled frontcourt player, and Carlson can shoot it.

Keil believes Khanchareun is one of the most improved guards in the area.




EVAN WEAVER

Lakeland's Nate Keil (30) looks for a teammate to pass to as West Noble's Nevin Phares (14) defends him in a Class 3A NorthWood Sectional semifinal game last season. Keil will lead an potentially exciting Laker boys basketball team this season in his senior campaign.


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Lakeland High School
805 E. C.R. 75N, LaGrange
Colors: Columbia Blue, Red and White
Class: 3A



GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 28	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 8	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9	H	Bethany Christian	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 12	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 16	A	Eastside	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 19	A	Westview	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 23	N	Fort Wayne South at Trine University	8:00 a.m.

Dec. 23	N	Fort Wayne North at Trine University	12:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	H	West Noble	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 10	A	Northeast Corner Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 16	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	H	Hamilton	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 25	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	H	Garrett	6:00 p.m.



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KEN FILLMORE

Sophomore guard Dulce Canedo (10) will be a key player on a young Lakeland girls basketball team this season.

Laker girls rebuilding under new coach

BY KEN FILLMORE

kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

LAGRANGE — New Lakeland girls basketball coach James Benson understands what he has got himself into and is rolling up his sleeves and enthusiastically getting to work.

“Overall, we are going to go through some growing pains,” said Benson, a former assistant coach for the Garrett girls and the Central Noble boys. “They are in a brand new system, and we are trying to get girls excited about basketball.”

“I love what we are building, and this group is going to lay down a fantastic foundation for where we want to be in the future.”

The recent numbers issues within the Lakeland girls basketball program have reached the point that

it will not field a junior varsity team this season.

There are 11 girls playing basketball for the Lakers (13-11 last season, including 5-5 in the Northeast Corner Conference), according to a roster Benson provided in late October. They lost senior forward Takya Wallace after she played a full volleyball season for Lakeland because of a torn anterior cruciate ligament in one of her knees.

Lakeland took a big hit in graduation with guards Peyton Hartsough and Alivia Rasler. Hartsough is playing basketball at Huntington University. The team also graduated a post presence in Grace Iddings.

The Lakers' most experienced varsity players returning are senior

guard Olivia Oman, junior post Cara Schackow (2.6 points and 2 rebounds per game last season) and sophomore guard Dulce Canedo (2.7 points, 2.8 rebounds and 1 steal per game last season).

Oman is the only proven scorer on the roster and will have to get used to being treated like it by opposing teams. She averaged 10.5 points and 3.2 rebounds per game last season. She shot 33% from three-point range (49-147).

“Having a scorer like Olivia is always a plus, and I believe that Dulce is going to take a huge jump this year,” Benson said. “Cara started at times last year, and is a tough player, but also has a high IQ that translates onto the court.”

Growth in talent and skill up and down the roster will

be important for the Lakers throughout this season.

Senior Jaden Moore and juniors Briana Poe and Arlene Thompson will move up into important varsity roles. Benson is also excited about the potential of freshmen Zoey Bowman and McKenzie Carlson. Bowman grew into a regular role on Lakeland's varsity volleyball team as the season went on.

“They will be major contributors early and often with their athleticism,” Benson said of Bowman and Carlson.

“I believe that the NECC is as balanced as it has been in a long time, with eight or nine teams who can compete on any given night. We're going to work to be one of those teams.”

LAKEWOOD PARK PANTHERS



Boys

5555 C.R. 29, Auburn
Colors: Columbia Blue,
Black and White
Class: 1A

Girls

5555 C.R. 29, Auburn
Colors: Columbia Blue,
Black and White
Class: 1A



BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	H	Hamilton	6:00 p.m.	Jan. 6	H	Whitko	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 25	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 12	A	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 28	H	Manchester	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 16	A	South Adams	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 1	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 20	H	Blackhawk	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Heritage	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 25	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9	H	Edon (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 1	A	Lakeland Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 6	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 16	H	Elkhart Christian	2:30 p.m.	Feb. 9	A	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 2	A	Montpelier (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 13	H	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	A	Smith Academy	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 16	A	Clinton Christian	7:30 p.m.
				Feb. 23	H	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.

GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	H	Fort Wayne North	6:00 p.m.	Jan. 4	H	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 28	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 6	H	Elkhart Christian	2:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	Luers	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 9	A	Clinton Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 11	A	Whitko	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	Eastside	6:00 p.m.	Jan. 16	H	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	Hamilton	7:00 p.m.	Jan. 20	H	Blackhawk	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 19	A	New Haven	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 23	A	Fort Wayne Wayne	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 26	H	Lakeland Christian	7:30 p.m.

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Young Lakewood Park boys squad has potential

BY MARK MURDOCK

mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

AUBURN — While several seniors from last year are gone, size and skill are still there.

Lakewood Park Christian's boys basketball team has potential with a less-experienced group this season. The Panthers were 9-14 last season.

Third-year coach Tim Voss likes the hand he has been dealt.

"It's nice to see some new guys get some varsity minutes," Voss said. "As a coach you want to play everybody but it doesn't always work that way.

"We're excited about everybody that's going to get an opportunity. There's a good team dynamic with everybody. You've got to like your teammates outside of Xs and Os, and these guys like each other."

The Panthers will have size. Senior Mason Joloff will be the

lone starter returning at 6-foot-7. Sophomore Avery MacFarlane has grown to 6-6.

Voss feels they'll give Lakewood Park some options with good ball movement.

"We saw good things in the summer as far as running the floor," Voss said. "They played some two-man games, pick-and-roll basketball.

"We want to encourage ball movement and create some driving lanes, and have dump-off passes to our bigs. We're going to post them up for any mismatches, but we want to get back to a dribble-drive offense."

Both also figure to be a big part of the team's defense.

"We want to be able to play man," Voss said. "We work a lot on man-to-man defense.

"Just naturally with zone, we've got some big guys and it's nice to

keep them in the paint. We'll be playing some 3-2 and 2-3 with man principles. That will be a scouting-report thing."

The team will also have an international flavor with Rentaro Kondo from Japan and Davi Freitas from Brazil. Kondo will be a starter right away at point guard, while Freitas will become eligible around sectional time. Until then he'll play on the junior varsity.

"(Kondo is) incredibly gifted. We're excited to see him out there," Voss said.

"He sees the court well, he's not a selfish player and he makes the right choices."

Both are excellent additions to the team, Voss believes.

"They have so much outside of basketball, their love and knowledge of the game but also their attitudes," Voss said. "They're great kids who fit right into our culture."

The Panthers and their fans will have to live with some question marks as the season begins. Until the team gets game action it will have some unknowns.

"There's stuff you can't really teach the kids," Voss said. "You just have to go through those things. That's our biggest hurdle.

"The guys have to get thrown into the fire. They're going to grow and learn from that. They have to push themselves. From JV to varsity is a big jump."

Voss hopes the Panthers can be a factor in the Class 1A sectional.

"I'm excited to see from the start of the season to the end the progress, and these guys are going to put themselves into a position to compete in the sectional," Voss said.

"There is potential with this team. When you play as a group you can hide a lot of sins. These guys like each other and they're unselfish."

Veteran Panthers look to limit turnovers

BY MARK MURDOCK

mmurdock@kpcmedia.com

AUBURN — The opponents on the Lakewood Park Christian girls basketball schedule are tough enough.

The Panthers don't need to give them any help. Coach Jared Estep would like to see his team give them less help.

"We have to limit turnovers," said Estep, 19-27 in his first two years at Lakewood Park. "We've done a good job erasing bad habits over these last two seasons but now they need to stay away.

"We must take care of the ball on every possession and play at a great pace. We can't get too sped up and throw it away."

The Panthers return all of their scoring from last year's team, which went 10-14 and reached a Class 1A sectional final before falling to Bethany Christian (Lakewood Park defeated Hamilton and Elkhart Christian to reach the title game).

Senior Jade Carnahan and junior Ava McGrade are expected to lead the Panthers again. Both were KPC Media Group All-Area selections a year ago.

Senior Grace Kamleiter is expected to take a big step up, Estep said.

Grace Merkel returns to the team

after a year away.

"I'm glad to have Grace back on board," Estep said. "She's strong, physical and can move the ball well."

Senior Sullivan Nolot and sophomore Riah Johnson showed improvement over the summer, Estep said.

Freshman Gracelyn Martin has the potential to contribute as the season moves on. Junior Lilia West should have an impact defensively, Estep believes.

"It's just a great group of girls who put in the time this summer," Estep said. "They have been extremely committed."

A reduction in turnovers could boost the Panthers' offensive output. They averaged just more than 37 points a game last year.

Defensively, Lakewood Park limited opponents to just less than 42 points per game.

"We have to have a couple of people step up and score the basketball for us," Estep said. "The biggest things are we must take care of the ball and fly around on defense.

"If we can take care of the ball every night and defend like crazy, we will be a really solid group. I love this group and how much they have bought into what we are doing here."



MARK MURDOCK

Jade Carnahan, right, figures to play a big role for Lakewood Park's girls basketball team this season.

PRAIRIE HEIGHTS PANTHERS



**Prairie Heights
High School**

305 S. C.R. 1150E, LaGrange
Colors: Red, White and Black
Class: 2A



BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 22	H	Concord	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 16	H	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 25	A	Garrett	8:00 p.m.	Jan. 20	A	Whitko	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 1	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 24	H	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	H	Elkhart Christian	7:30 p.m.	Jan. 26	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 1	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 13	A	South Bend Career	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 6	A	Canterbury	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 9	H	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 22	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 13	A	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 16	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 9	H	Northeast Corner Conference Tournament	7:30 p.m.	Feb. 20	H	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.
				Feb. 23	A	Hamilton	7:30 p.m.

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Panther boys look to build on successful year

BY DAVID VANTRESS

dvantress@kpcmedia.com

BRUSHY PRAIRIE — All things considered, as the late Frank Sinatra might say, 2022-23 was a very good year for the Prairie Heights High School boys basketball team.

The Panthers finished 16-9, falling to West Noble 39-33 in a semifinal game of the Northeast Corner Conference Tournament.

They also won their Class 2A sectional opener, dispatching Fremont 63-47 before bowing out in the semifinals with a 51-45 loss to Central Noble.

Prairie Heights returns three letterwinners: senior Messiah Solis, junior Lance Speck and sophomore Cade Bachelor.

The Panthers had several key losses to graduation: Isaiah Malone, Chase Bachelor, Leyton Byler, Logan Swygart and Kam Leedy. Malone and Bachelor

are playing collegiately at the University of Saint Francis.

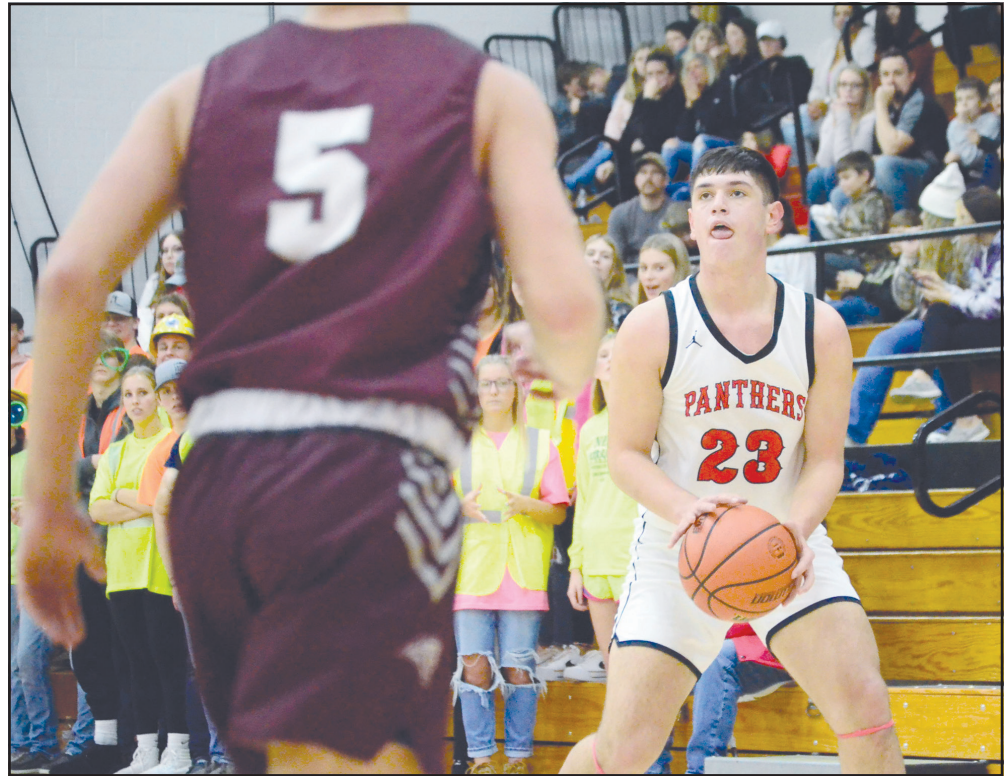
Other key returners include seniors Hayden Culler and Gabe Katich and junior Caleb Freed.

Newcomers in 2023-24 for the Panthers include sophomores Caston Day, Leo Hare, Lane Yoder, Keegan German and Brady Strater, junior Carter Justice and freshman Jake Stoy.

All those younger guys are hungry, Prairie Heights coach Delmar Bontrager said.

“We have a relatively young core ready to challenge for spots,” Bontrager said. “They have been very competitive during the offseason. Although we lost a lot of great players to graduation, this group is ready to make their own name.”

The Panthers open the season Wednesday night with a pre-Thanksgiving home contest against Class 4A Concord.



EVAN WEAVER

Prairie Heights' Cade Bachelor steps into a 3-pointer in a Northeast Corner Conference game against Central Noble last season. Bachelor will be a key player for the Panthers this season as a sophomore.

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Colors: Red, White and Black
Class: 2A



GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 25	A	Garrett	6:30 p.m.
Nov. 28	H	Lakewood Park	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	A	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 2	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	A	Lakeland Christian	6:30 p.m.
Dec. 8	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	DeKalb	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	H	Churubusco	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 19	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.

Dec. 22	H	Whitko	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 2	H	Leo	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	H	Angola	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 9	H	Northeast Corner Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 16	A	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 20	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	H	Concord	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	A	Woodlan	7:30 p.m.

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Panther girls more experienced for 2023-24

BY DAVID VANTRESS
dvantress@kpcmedia.com

BRUSHY PRAIRIE — As Prairie Heights girls basketball coach Bill Morr opened his fourth year guiding the Panthers, he can count on an experienced squad to tackle a tough Northeast Corner Conference race.

Prairie Heights has much room for improvement this year after going 1-22 a year ago. But Morr can count on six returning letterwinners: seniors Ava Boots, Breonna Glasgo, McKinlee Kain, Sarah Park and juniors Olivia Boots and Emily McCrea.

The Panther roster also includes senior Britney Hostetler and sophomore Avery Wagler.

Key Losses to graduation for Prairie Heights included Lilli Howe and Kylee Leland.

“Last season we gained a lot of varsity experience,” Morr said. “Six of our eight players from last year that had significant minutes return, led by our leading

scorers Ava Boots and Emily McCrea along with our point guard Olivia Boots.”

A more fast-paced brand of basketball is on the agenda in Brushy Prairie for 2023-24, Morr said.

“We want to use our quickness on defense to produce offensive opportunities,” Morr said.

Morr is expecting big things from Glasgo, Kain and Park, who will all be asked to fill bigger roles this season.

Hostetler will be a factor as she returns for her senior year, and Morr is excited about adding Wagler to the rotation.

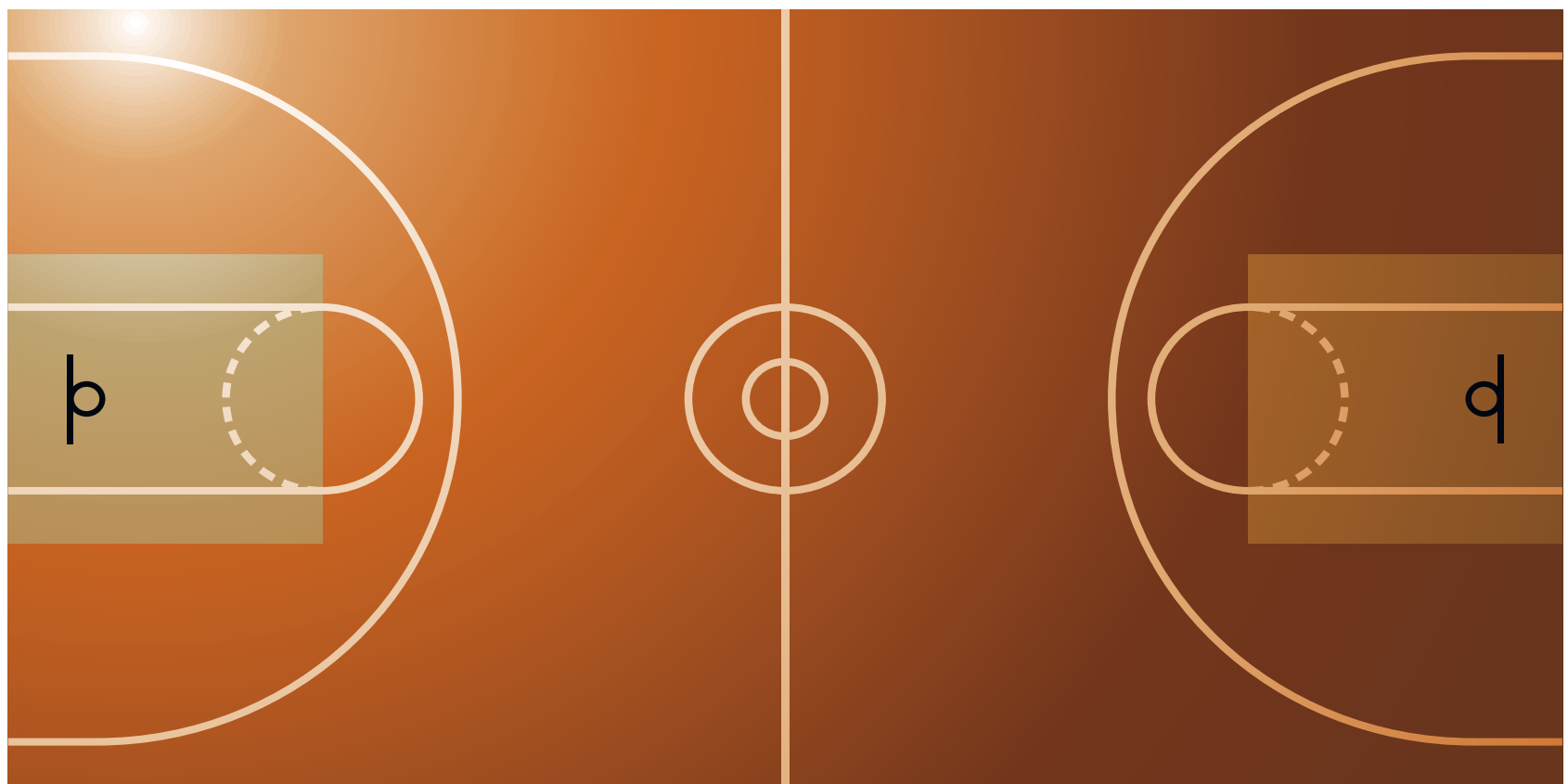
“At any point this season, I feel that any of these players can have a breakout game,” Morr said.

The Panthers are off to a 1-1 start through Nov. 11. They dropped their season opener at Wawasee on Nov. 4, 67-35, rebounded for a 55-37 win over Westview Nov. 9 in the NECC opener, then lost at home 61-40 to Central Noble on Nov. 11.



KEN FILLMORE

Prairie Heights senior guard McKinlee Kain delivers a pass to a teammate at Wawasee during the Panthers’ season-opening contest on Nov. 4 in Syracuse.



WEST NOBLE CHARGERS



**West Noble
High School**

5094 N. U.S. Hwy. 33, Ligonier
Colors: Red, White and Blue
Class: 3A



BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 25	H	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 2	H	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	A	Concord	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 9	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	H	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 22	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 23	N	Wayne Trace (Ohio) at Trine University	6:30 p.m.
Dec. 30	H	Eastside	2:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	A	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.


Jan. 9	H	Northeast Corner Conference Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	H	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 3	H	LaVille	2:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	A	NorthWood	7:45 p.m.
Feb.10	A	Columbia City	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 16	A	Adams Central	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 17	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 20	H	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 23	H	Garrett	7:30 p.m.



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Charger boys ready to answer questions

BY KEN FILLMORE

kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

LIGONIER — West Noble's boys basketball team took a big graduation hit after a very solid season. But fifth-year Charger coach Ethan Marsh will be looking forward to sorting things out around one of the area's top players in senior forward Bradyn Barth.

"Anytime you lose six seniors, there will be question marks," Marsh said. "We are confident in our young guys that they will be able to step up alongside Bradyn."

The group of last year's seniors was led by guard Austin Cripe, the 2023 KPC Media Group Prep of the Year who is now playing basketball at Bethel College. That group also had some

nice role players like Nevin Phares, Ayden Zavala, Luke Schermerhorn and guard Derek Slone.

It will no doubt be Barth's team this winter. He averaged 16.5 points, 6.3 rebounds and one blocked shot per game last season. He shot 62% from the field (165-266) and made 66% of his free throws (65-98).

"This year will give him (Barth) an opportunity to show his versatility," Marsh said.

Three other letterwinners also return in senior guard David Slone, junior guard Jordan Eash and sophomore guard Trevor Steele.

Other key newcomers on the varsity along with Eash and Steele are junior Isaac Mast, sophomores Mason Taylor and Nolan Kelly, and freshman Aiden Replogle.



EVAN WEAVER

West Noble's Bradyn Barth attempts a jump shot in last season's season-opening game at East Noble. Barth will have a lot of new varsity players around him this season as the Chargers attempt to defend their Northeast Corner Conference regular season and tournament championships.



WEST NOBLE CHARGERS



**West Noble
High School**


5094 N. U.S. Hwy. 33, Ligonier
Colors: Red, White and Blue
Class: 3A



GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 24	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 28	H	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 30	A	Westview	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	A	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 8	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	Whitko	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	H	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 19	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.



Dec. 23	N	Elkhart at Trine University	5:00 p.m.
Jan. 2	H	Concord	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	A	Lakeland	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 9	H	Northeast Corner Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 16	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	H	Fairfield	6:00 p.m.



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Former great eager to build up Charger girls

BY KEN FILLMORE

kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

LIGONIER — Haley (Richardson) Holliday wanted to come back home to her alma mater West Noble to help build up the Charger girls basketball program when she learned of previous coach Jeff Burns stepping down.

“I needed to come back and be a Charger again,” Holliday said after West Noble’s 63-15 loss at Class 1A state-ranked Blackhawk Christian on Nov. 4 in Fort Wayne. “I have that need to rebuild this.

“We have to be patient, do what we do, and put the ball on the rim.”

Holliday, a 2013 West Noble graduate, has helped the Charger volleyball and girls basketball programs around giving birth to both of her children. She helped the girls cagers for three seasons after graduating from Grace College in 2017. She was on Dale Marano’s coaching staff at West Noble when his girls won a 3A sectional championship in 2019, ending a 31-year sectional drought for the program.

Now, Marano is Holliday’s top assistant. Marano essentially wanted to help before he was even asked.

“I couldn’t think of a better person to help me,” Holliday said. “He’s my old coach. I thought it was important to have a male on the staff. He’s somebody I trust and will help us build a tight-knit family here.”

West Noble was 3-20 last season, including 2-8 in the Northeast Corner Conference. An inexperienced varsity team took some lumps.

Do-it-all guard Mackensy Mabie, the Chargers’ most seasoned player last year, graduated.

A lot of skill development and morale lifting will be done. That was especially the case at the start of the year. The Chargers opened with last year’s Class 1A state runner-up Bethany Christian, then Blackhawk Christian and one of the best teams in the state regardless of class in Columbia City in their first three games.

“We have to keep the confidence high,” Holliday said.

“We have a really good group of girls that are working hard and improving every day. They have really bought into the process and in what we do as a team.”

The most experienced players back for West Noble are senior center Alayna DeLong (4.5 points and 7.1 rebounds per game last season) and senior point guard Alexia Mast (6.5 points, 3.2 rebounds, 2.2 assists and 1.5 steals per game last season).

Other players to watch are sophomore forward Kayle Jordan (3.8 points and 5.4 rebounds per game last season) and freshmen guards Marley Mast and Allison Recendiz.

The 5-foot-8 Jordan threw the shot and discus in the Indiana High School Athletic Association Girls Track & Field State Finals last spring. She was the KPC Media Group Girls Track & Field Prep of the Year.

“Kayle is undersized, but she is very strong and she has quick feet,” Holliday said.

Marley Mast, Alexia’s sister, gives the Chargers another quality ball handler.



KEN FILLMORE

West Noble senior Alayna DeLong tries to dribble around Blackhawk Christian center Allie Boyer in Fort Wayne on Nov. 4. DeLong will be a leading player for a young Charger team this season.

WESTVIEW WARRIORS



BOYS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	A	Bethany Christian	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 25	A	Northridge	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 1	H	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	H	NorthWood	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9	A	Central Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	H	Elkhart Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	H	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 19	H	Lakeland	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 2	H	East Noble	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	A	LaVille	7:30 p.m.

Jan. 10	H	Northeast Corner Conference Tournament	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	A	Fairfield	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 20	A	Garrett	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 26	A	Eastside	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 1	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 3	H	Plymouth	2:30 p.m.
Feb. 9	A	Prairie Heights	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 13	H	Wawasee	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 16	A	Goshen	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 20	A	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 23	H	Concord	7:30 p.m.

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EVAN WEAVER

Westview's Luke Helmuth tries to keep the ball away from Churubusco's Joey Taylor during a Class 2A Westview Sectional first-round game last season. Helmuth is part of a solid leading core for the Warriors this season as they try to defend their sectional title.

Warrior boys reloading in Prible's second season

BY KEN FILLMORE

kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

EMMA — Westview's boys basketball team want to pick up from where it left off last season, which included winning a Class 2A sectional championship.

The Warriors were 17-9, and 7-3 in the Northeast Corner Conference, in Chandler Prible's first season as coach. Despite the graduation of 1,000-point career scorer Brady Yoder, Westview is loading with much of its leading core returning.

"We are hoping that all of our experience returning helps lead us to more championships this season,"

Prible said. "This is a very coachable group that puts in a lot of time on their own to get better."

Seniors Wade Springer and Micah Miller and junior Owen Brill also return and add to a quality group of guards.

Junior Kamden Yoder is also back for the Warriors. Key newcomers include senior Wyatt Zepp, freshman Austin Schlabach and sophomore Kaden Grau.

"It's a group that made big strides in the offseason," Prible said. "Kamden and Owen took the weight room seriously and look like they fit into a varsity game."

"All those guys are in the gym all

the time."

The 6-foot-6 Zepp is a transfer from Northridge. The 6-3 Grau is a move-in from Bluffton, where he averaged 9.6 points, 2.5 rebounds and 2.3 assists per game running the point for his father Karl on a Tiger team that only won two games.

Grau first stood out at Westview earlier this fall, helping the boys tennis team win a sectional championship and winning the NECC title at No. 1 doubles in the league tournament with partner Gavin Engle.

Schlabach was middle school state champion in the 110-meter hurdles last spring.

"Austin is skilled. He communicates well and is a good shooter," Prible said. "Zepp has good footwork and shoots the ball well inside and out. Kaden is a guy I see showing a lot of growth from the start of the season until the end."

"The good news for them is they are coming into a situation with a group of returning guys who are unselfish and likeable."

"It is hard to play more than eight guys, but we may play nine. And what we are shooting for is balance."

Karl Grau is the new Warrior junior varsity coach. He was the boys basketball coach at Bluffton the past three seasons.

WESTVIEW WARRIORS



Westview High School
 1635 S. 600W, Topeka
 Colors: Scarlet Red and Old Gold
 Class: 2A



GIRLS SCHEDULE

Nov. 21	A	Bethany Christian	4:45 p.m.
Nov. 28	A	Northridge	7:45 p.m.
Nov. 30	H	West Noble	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 2	A	Churubusco	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 5	A	Garrett	5:00 p.m.
Dec. 9	A	Central Noble	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 12	A	Elkhart Christian	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14	H	Fremont	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 16	H	Sturgis (Michigan)	1:30 p.m.

Dec. 19	H	Lakeland	6:00 p.m.
Dec. 20	A	Mishawaka	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 2	A	Heritage	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	A	South Bend Career	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 10	H	Northeast Corner Tournament	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 16	A	Angola	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 19	A	Fairfield	6:00 p.m.
Jan. 25	H	Eastside	7:30 p.m.



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EVAN WEAVER

Westview's Hope Bortner prepares to fire a 3-pointer in the Warriors' season-opening game at East Noble last November. Bortner will be a leading player for the Warriors this season.

Westview girls look to be bigger factor area-wide

BY KEN FILLMORE

kfillmore@kpcmedia.com

EMMA — There could be several girls basketball teams competing for supremacy in the parity-laden Northeast Corner Conference. Westview could be one of those teams.

“We have a lot of experience coming back this season and we are looking to pick up where we left off at the end of last season,” fourth-year Warrior coach Ryan Yoder said. “The quicker the girls fall into their roles on the team, the more

successful our season will be.”

The Warriors went 10-15 (4-6 NECC) and were the Class 2A Central Noble Sectional runner-up last season. The win total was the most since with 2018-19 season, when Westview won 14 games.

The Warriors have one of the area's best long-range shooters in senior guard Hope Bortner (8.6 points and 3.3 rebounds per game last season, also 34% from three-point range, 52-151). Bortner earned All-NECC honors last season.

However, Westview has to

replace three-year starting point guard Andrea Miller. Yoder said that will be the biggest challenge at the start of the season.

Sophomores Bre Cory and Maddie Grossman gives the Warriors size they have not had in awhile. Grossman is 6-foot-1 and the 5-9 Cory was Westview's best junior varsity player last year.

“We will have more height than we've had in years past and that will allow our offense to play through the post,” Yoder said.

“Defense will be at the foremost of this team's identity and we

continue to improve on our offensive output.”

The Warriors return six letterwinners, and that includes junior forward Morgan Riegsecker (3.6 points, 4 rebounds and 2 assists per game last season).

Junior guard Karis Weinberg and sophomore guard JJ Whetstone will also be key newcomers along with Cory. Weinberg and Whetstone are also returning letterwinners.

Sara Lapp also graduated for Westview after averaging eight points per game last season.

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