

2015 Basketball Preview

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Sidney boys return lots of veterans

Lady Jackets return all 5 starters from 22-2 team

Staff report

SIDNEY — Sidney head boys basketball coach Andy Slaughter lamented a lot last season his team's inability to finish.

In looking back, he said there were "plenty of games" where his team was ahead or at least in the game, and let it slip away.

But with a wealth of talent returning, along with the much-anticipated debut of a freshman, and the return of a big man, finishing might not be a problem.

Slaughter led a young team to nine victories last season and some great moments, like three one-point wins in the first six games of the season, and a pair of overtime wins over division foe Troy. But it was those games the Jackets let slip away that still haunt the head coach.

"It could have been from not being used to playing in that type of game," Slaughter said. "We came a long way with that this summer. We won multiple shoot-outs playing with different guys not there due to other things. But we still definitely need to work on a killer instinct."

The list of returning players is led by senior guard Cameron Gallimore, who tossed in 16.5 points per game last season and also led the Jackets in assists.

Also back are six-foot senior guard Darryl McNeal (7.3 per game last year), 6-3 junior Allec Gordon, who was the team's leading rebounder at 6.1 per game, sophomore Devan Rogers, who scored 9.5 and pulled down 5.4 rebounds last year as a freshman, and two more seniors in Damien Duff and Derek Brady. Duff played in 17 of the 22 regular-season games last year.

Grabbing a lot of attention going into the season is a freshman in Andre Gordon, who just completed a season as the football team's starting quarterback.

"I think Andre could be a very special player," said Slaughter of the youngster. "He has that ability, but we need to make sure we use him and the rest of the team in the right way. It takes five guys, so we're focusing on the team aspect. And that's the great thing about these kids. There is so much comradery. They get along, they hang out together, and they don't care whose name gets in the paper. All they want to do is win."

There is another player Slaughter welcomed to the squad this season. Lorenzo Taborn is a 6-4 senior who goes about 295 pounds and is coming off a stellar football

season. He did not play last season, but as a sophomore, he averaged 10.9 points and 4.3 rebounds per game.

"He's 295 pounds, but he moves well and is very agile," said Slaughter.

And there is one more — sophomore Isaiah Bowser, who rushed for nearly 1,000 yards in football, is back with the basketball team after having to sit out last year due to a knee injury. "He's back and basically healthy now," said Slaughter. "He actually played a little in our tournament game last season. He's really worked his tail off."

If there is one thing this team lacks, it's size. Taborn will be the tallest at 6-4. But Slaughter doesn't seem concerned about it.

"We will be a little bigger than last year," he said. "Taborn adds some size, and Rogers gained a lot of experience last year. And Allec is a strong inside player."

"We have a whole host of people who are really ready to go," he went on. "Kids that are excited to be around the program and have really put the time in. And the guys who didn't play football, we had a great fall workout time. It's a good atmosphere around the school right now. The football team won three times as many games as they did last year, and the soccer team finished well. That winning culture helps throughout the school and community."

Slaughter doesn't think he will have any trouble going eight or nine players deep.

"I feel like we have quite a few guys that are capable of getting 15 or 20 on any given night," said the coach. "We're going to play eight or nine, and really, we have a good core group of guys that could go for 20. That goes back to the good things we develop in our program, like getting the ball to the player that's hot."

Gallimore not only averaged 16.5 and led in assists, but he also shot 84 percent from the free throw line.

"Cameron has shown what he can do," said Slaughter. "And he'll be a key player again. And you have guys like McNeal, Rogers, Gordon and Duff, and then you add Andre Gordon, Taborn, Bowser, Brady, (Jacob) Cooper. Brady and Cooper are great teammates and great effort guys. We have a couple of sophomores who have picked up their game in Ryan Heins and Kelton Stockton, and some of the other freshmen like Josiah Hudgins and Ratez Roberts are hungry and want to prove that they can play at the high school level."

Slaughter said it will be key that the Jackets control the tempo.

"We need to do a good job of making sure the other team is playing at our tempo and playing the way we want them to play," Slaughter said. "So we have to be very prepared for whoever we're playing."

There is a new event

on the schedule this season for the Jackets. Over the holidays, they will travel to Columbus DeSales to participate in that school's holiday tournament. Sidney will face Logan in the first round, and De Sales will play Lakota East.

Girls basketball

Coming off a 22-2 season, it continues to look bright for the Sidney girls basketball team.

Back for her fifth season is head coach Megan Mummey along with all five of her starters, who won the Greater Western Ohio Conference North title last year, finishing 10-0 in league play.

This year the Lady Jackets are hoping to repeat their title, be one of the top teams in the Dayton area, and will compete at Classic in the Country.

There are six varsity players returning, including Kaitlyn Davis, Sylvia Hudson, Celena Taborn, Ashley Egan, Sadi Timmons and Jada Rowland.

Hudson, a 5-10 senior, was the GWOC North Athlete of the Year last season after averaging 19.2 points and 9.7 rebounds per game last season. And Mummey was the GWOC North Coach of the Year.

Davis, Hudson and Taborn were all first-team All-North selections.

The trio of scorers will continue to be strong for the Jackets. Davis, Hudson and Taborn combined for an average of 80 percent of the total scoring. This will continue to be a big factor this year, said the coach.

"I want the ball in their hands as much as possible," she said. "They all averaged double figures last year and I look for that same scoring this year. However, we are going to have to have other members of our team step up and hit shots when those girls are doubled-teamed."

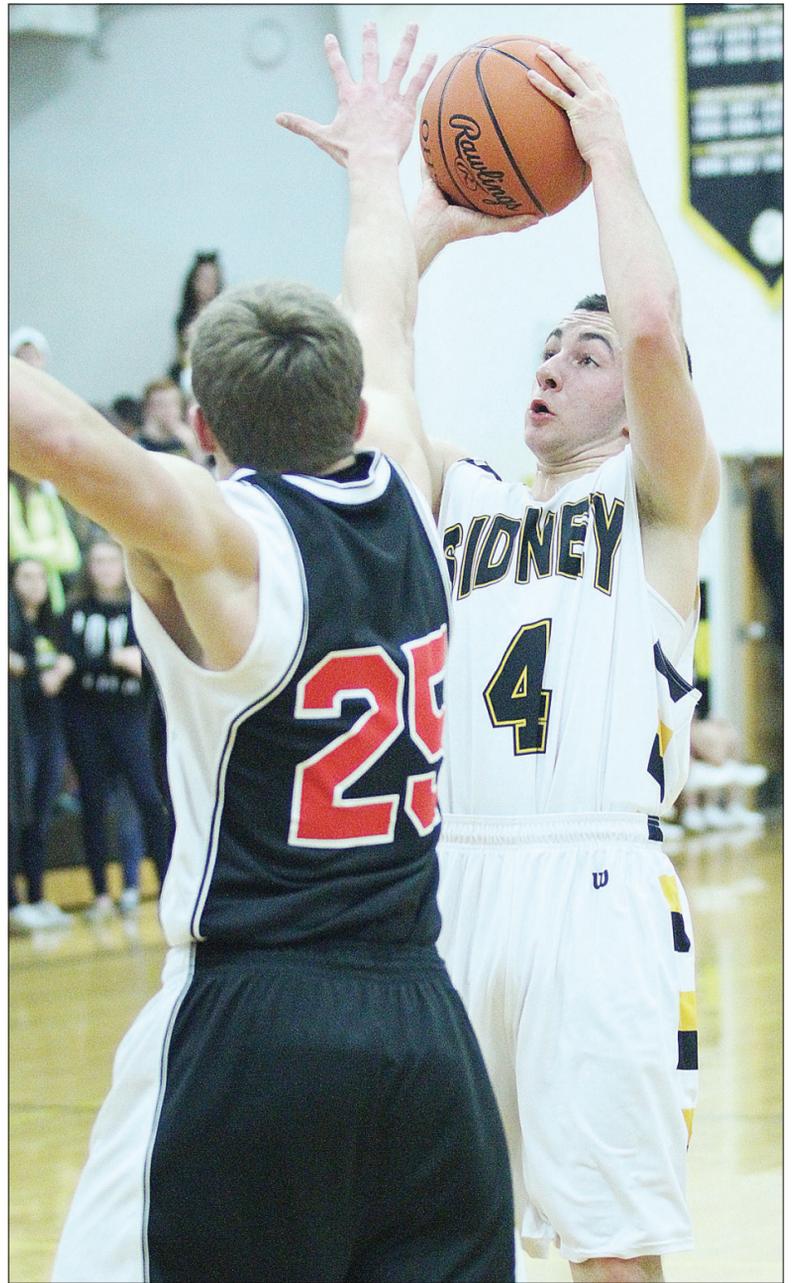
Taborn is a 6-foot-3 junior who averaged a double-double last year of 17.3 points and 12.3 rebounds per game. She also averaged 3.8 blocked shots per game.

Davis runs the show for the Lady Jackets, and last season averaged 10.4 points per game along with 5.2 rebounds and 4.6 assists. She's a 5-9 senior.

Hudson and Taborn will be the one two punch again inside.

"They have now played together for two years and know each other so well," said Mummey. "They are a big threat inside and are not selfish when it comes to each other. Hudson will be moving more to the outside this year, which should open up things for Taborn. Sylvia has worked on her shot in the offseason and with her strength and dribbling ability, she will be able to take many people off the dribble. She is very difficult to guard in that she can post a guard up, and blow by a post player."

"Taborn is an easy target for us," she continued. "Standing 6-3, we will have to be able to get her the ball when we need to. I want her to improve on making



Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

Cameron Gallimore led the Jackets in scoring last year and is back for his senior season.



Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

Sylvia Hudson shoots against Greenville last season. She was the GWOC North Athlete of the Year last year and returns this season.

a move with her back to the basket. We will take advantage of the lob inside, but I am looking for her to dominate the

paint. Taborn and Hudson both have the ability to shoot outside, which could be effective for us as well.

"Kaitlyn will run the point for us again this year," she went on. "With Taborn and Hudson

Gleason brings enthusiasm to LHS post

Staff report

New Lehman boys basketball coach Tim Gleason likes knowing that very few people think his first Cavalier team is going to be a good one. That's just fine with him.

Gleason stepped in and replaced John Tollefson as the head man after last season, and wasn't left with much in the way of experience. In fact, gone are most of the points from a year ago, including the 17.7 of Greg Spearman, the 16.8 of Jackson Frantz, and the 12.9 of Nick Rourke. And Frantz also left with a 7.1 rebounding average.

"We have little to no varsity experience," he said. "But the positive side of that is that people think we're going to be horrible. There are no expectations for us. But we're going to be real athletic because there are some hidden gems that just didn't get a shot last year because we had so many seniors."

One of the first things Gleason did when he became the head coach is "walk the halls." He was hoping to discover some kids also that could help his team.

"At a school like Lehman, you can't have kids walking the halls that should be playing ball," he said. "So I asked the coaches, who do we have walking the halls?"

And he found one. "Max Schutt is one of the best athletes in the entire school," Gleason said. "He hasn't played since junior high, and I said 'I want him.' We reached out to him and he came to one of our shootouts and loved it. And we think he can really help us. He's a Greg Spearman type of athlete and he's going to help me. I'll be shocked if he doesn't lead us in about everything."

He wasn't the only discovery either.

"Ian Smith is one of the best athletes in soccer and he hasn't played since junior high either," Gleason said. "My pitch was, you have to help me rebuild Lehman basketball. We want to change the culture and I need you to help me. And Ian said he would."

The fact remains, however, that the team's top six scorers from last season have all graduated, so Gleason knows he has his work cut out. And the season got off to a bit of a late start because of football, too, with 16 basketball players also playing that sport. But he maintains a positive attitude.

"People out there think we're only going to win four or five games," he said. "But I love this team. We're going to apply pressure, and going to play lots of transition basketball. And we're going to play great, intense defense, defense like Lehman hasn't seen in a long time."



Lehman's Allie Hall applies pressure to Fairlawn's Audrey Francis. Hall led the Lady Cavaliers in scoring and rebounding last season, and returns this year.

Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

"We're going to play a style that Lehman fans will be proud of," he continued. "They will feel good about this team. We will run, but we will also be able to execute in the half court. And we expected to get to the free throw line a lot because we're going to aggressively attack the rim."

Stephen Monnin, the football quarterback, is a senior that Gleason will be counting on. "I'm counting on him for big-time leadership," he said. "He's going to be a crucial player. Very smart and a great ball-handler."

Michael Bunker is a sophomore who is easily the tallest player on

the roster at around 6-4. "He's pretty raw, with only one year of organized basketball," Gleason said. "But he's a dominant athlete and very mobile for a big man. He'll be a force on the boards."

Ben Frantz is a junior guard who Gleason said is one of the top shooters on the team, and he wants him to take the ball to the rim more.

Dylan Arnold saw action last year as a freshman and Gleason likes his aggressiveness and hard-nosed defense.

Kameron Lee is another sophomore that Gleason is high on. "I think he was the MVP on the freshman team, and he's 6-1 with long arms. He's a phenomenal athlete."

Jared Rourke is a junior who will see a lot of varsity time. "He plays with a chip on his shoulder," Gleason said.

Jerry Curtis is a senior who is just 6-1 but will have to back up Bunker in the middle, and Tyler and Zach Scott are seniors that Gleason said will be role players that he hopes can get some garbage buckets this season.

"I'm excited about the season," he said. "I have a great staff and they

work hard. We're going to be ready."

And if they are like Gleason, there will be no shortage of enthusiasm.

Girls basketball

There weren't a lot of wins last season, but it was part of the building process for head coach Craig Hall and the Lehman Lady Cavaliers.

Not long ago, there weren't enough players to put a junior varsity team on the floor, but that has all changed under Hall.

"I'm really excited about this year," said the coach. "So far practices have been very upbeat and it's a whole different attitude than what we've had in the past. We've got numbers and people that can play, and that's meant competition for positions. And we're not going to have to cancel JV games."

"We've got a lot more numbers this year, which will allow us to change our style," he continued. "There are 24 kids out in the park, and we'll be able to do some different things knowing we have a bench to turn to. And the competition has been great. In the past, the girls knew they were going to play a lot

regardless of how they performed. And we have a nice incoming freshman class with a lot of good athletes. We've been trying to build this program the last three years, and things are starting to fall into place."

The Lady Cavs finished with a 5-18 record last season, but challenged for the Northwest Central Conference title, finishing 4-2 in league contests.

Hall has eight girls returning from that team, which is cause for his optimism. He has his top two scorers and top two rebounders returning, and can build from there. And he's excited about the return of Kassie Lee, who was unable to play at all last season because of a knee injury.

Heading the list of returning players is 5-foot-10 senior Allie Hall, who averaged 8.7 points and 6.2 rebounds per game last season, both team highs.

"Allie will still be a key player, but we're going to be able to have a lot more balance this year," said the coach. "We've struggled to put points on the board the last few years so we're concentrating a lot on that."

Hannah Fogt is a

junior who is also in the 5-11 range, and she was second to Hall in scoring at 6.5 and second in rebounding at 5.2 a year ago. "She gives us some mid-range jumpers, and does a good job of penetrating," said the coach.

Sophomore Brogan McIver played all varsity last year as a freshman, and Hall said she's improved her ball-handling, and has good quickness and good defensive abilities. And Alanna O'Leary is another sophomore who saw a lot of playing time as a freshman, and Hall is counting on her for her defense and ball-handling.

Emilee Rego is a six-foot senior who will be a welcome presence inside, and Abby Jones and Maddy McFarland are two sophomores that Hall is glad to have back. "They are both very smart players as far as being in the right place. And they see the floor very well," he said.

Allie is happy to have Lee back in the mix. "She will help us," he said. "She is all out, all the time, just a hustler. And she's really worked hard on her perimeter game. She's a good physical player down low."

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County Player of the Year returns

Staff photo

FORT LORAMIE — No girls program in the county or area is in better shape than the one at Fort Loramie, where longtime head coach Carla Siegel has taken her team to three consecutive Division 4 state tournaments, bringing home the championship twice, including last season.

A lot was lost off that team, but a lot is back, including County Player of the Year Jessica Boerger, who averaged 15 points and 7.5 rebounds per game, and also dished out 73 assists. She went on to have an outstanding state tournament, with a double-double of 10 points and 12 rebounds in the semifinals, and 25 points and seven rebounds in the championship game.

"She has verbaled with Ohio Dominican," said Siegel of Boerger, a 5-foot-10 senior. "She had a remarkable summer and she just continues to develop her own game and become a better player. What's great is she can be our point guard, shooting guard, post player... wherever we need her."

And also back is Holly Frey, who like Boerger really came up big in the state tournament, including a double-double in the championship of 10 points and 10 rebounds. "She's coming off an outstanding year," said Siegel. "Physical strength is her biggest asset. She loves the game and will play next year at Edison."

Olivia Quinter is back and will play at the point. "She has great intensity and desire," Siegel said. "Olivia, Jess and Holly work so well together. And Olivia has worked hard on her mid-range jumper."

There are three more seniors in Maddi Brandewie, Katy Hoying and Taylor Gasson. "Taylor helped us out a lot last year during our tournament run," the coach said. "I've got six solid seniors to build this team around."

There are four juniors, including two guards and two post players. Reyann Frey, Holly's sister, is expected to help on defense and is an excellent outside shooter that Siegel hopes will take a bit of the pressure off Boerger.

Kaitlyn Luebke is a cross country runner who Siegel says brings a lot of speed to the program, and Sara Stang and Hunter Barga are both post players that stand around 5-11. "They're going to add great depth to our inside game," Siegel said.

She said there are a couple sophomores who she's keeping her eye on

and might turn to as the season progresses.

The Lady Redskins added Maysville to the schedule this season, and will also play in the Classic in the Country again at Berlin Hiland, taking on Cincinnati Summit Country Day.

Boys basketball

Corey Britton's first team at Fort Loramie won 15 games last season, and with the losses to graduation, he may find it difficult to equal that this season.

The Redskins were 15-9 and had two of the County's top players in Devin Braun and Grant Olberding. Braun poured in 20.1 points per game last season and added 5.1 rebounds. Olberding went for 12.9 points per game and led the Redskins in rebounds at seven per game.

But they weren't the only graduation losses.

"We lost everybody but basically two," said Britton. "We're going to be young, but we think we have some talent. I really like our seniors, and the sophomore class has four or five kids that can really help us out. We're young but we're excited about what we can turn into down the stretch."

The two players he has back and will be counting a lot on are point guard Drew Wehrman and Tanner Rosengarten. Anyone who followed the football season knows the kind of athletic ability Wehrman has. He scored 4.2 points and grabbed three rebounds per game last season, and was second on the team by one in assists.

Rosengarten also saw plenty of playing time and chipped in 4.2 points and two rebounds per game.

"Tanner was our sixth man last season, and Drew started all 25 games last year," Britton said. "Drew will be on the point again, and it's nice to have our senior leader back. We're hoping he can take more of a scoring role. He definitely has the talent to do it."

There are two other seniors in Logan Brackman and Darren Seger. Brackman played some varsity last year, and Seger mostly junior varsity. Both will play in the post.

Dylan Eilerman is 6-3 and a "great leader," said Britton.

The lone junior will be Cody Gasson, who is up off the JV team. "He's really athletic and strong, and plays extremely hard. He will challenge for a starting job," the coach said.

Tyler Siegel is a 6-7 sophomore who lettered on the varsity last season and averaged 4.6 points

and 4.8 rebounds in 16 games. "Defensively, we got better when he was in the game," Britton said. "He averaged about five rebounds a game, and against the competition we play, that's pretty good for a freshman."

Nate Pleiman is a 6-3 post player and Brad Pleiman a 6-1 senior who Britton said can play any position on the floor.

And there's a pair of six-foot guards in Evan Berning and Dillon Braun. "Evan works at his game and has turned into a good offensive player," Britton said. "Dillon is a real good shooter and is starting to develop other parts of his game. He'll play a lot."

"We set a good foundation last year in what we want to try to accomplish," said Britton. "We want to get up and down when the opportunity is there. Defensively, we have to keep working. We were not as good as I wanted last year. We're going to play three or four sophomores, and we're going to have to outplay and outbattle people. It might not be the prettiest, but we'll get there. I think at some point we're going to be a very good team."



Fort Loramie's Jessica Boerger shoots at the Division 4 state championship in Columbus last season. Boerger, the County Player of the Year last year, returns this season.



Fort Loramie's Tyler Siegel is back for his sophomore season after seeing action as a freshman last year.



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Jackson boys return key players



Nicole Fogt (right) returns for Jackson Center after leading the Lady Tigers in scoring and rebounding last season.

Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

Staff report

JACKSON CENTER — Longtime Jackson Center coach Scott Elchert says he feels good about the nucleus he has coming back, and rightfully so.

The Tigers boys basketball team put together another excellent season, finishing 21-6 overall, and 10-2 and in second place in the final County standings. They went on to add another district championship before falling to Marion Local in the regional semifinals.

The biggest hole left by graduation was Gavin Wildermuth, who was first-team All-County last season and set a County record by playing in an amazing 106 varsity games.

But he has three key players returning from that team, which means the Tigers will be experienced, right? Not so fast, Elchert said.

"This is a weird thing," he said. "If I talk about experience, it's definitely

a two-headed coin. Some people are going to project and say we have a lot of experience, but when I look past those three guys, I'm trying to find four other guys to blend in with them who have basically zero experience. You're talking about one junior and the rest sophomores and freshmen."

The three back include 6-foot-6 junior Brady Wildermuth, six-foot senior guard Drew Sosby and 6-2 wing Ethan Zorn.

Wildermuth and Sosby were both second-team All-County picks last season. Wildermuth averaged 11.9 points and a team-high 5.8 rebounds per game while shooting 62 percent from the field. Sosby led the Tigers in scoring a year ago with a 15.5 average and was second in assists. And he bordered on amazing from three-point range, hitting 47 percent on 47-for-101. Zorn averaged 3.6 points and also six rebounds per game.

"Drew is a complete offensive player," Elchert said of Sosby. "He runs the point for us, and he's a long-range threat. He also has a knack for getting to the bucket. He's very similar to the best offensive players we've had here the last seven or eight years.

"Brady continues to develop and get better," he added. "He's 6-6 and he's gotten stronger, and we've worked on his outside shooting ability. He's just one of those kids who has a knack for putting the ball in the hole.

"Ethan is a legitimate scoring threat," he went on about Zorn. "When he locks in from three-point range, he's as dangerous as anybody on the team. And he does a lot of the little things for us."

Elchert thinks Bryce Sosby, Drew's 5-10 sophomore cousin, is a good bet to take one of the two remaining spots. "Based on what I saw over the summer, and individual workouts, I feel pretty good that Bryce will step into one of those spots," Elchert said. "He'll run the one or two."

After that, however, he says it's up for grabs.

There is one junior on the list in 6-3 Chayce Hickman, primarily an inside player. There are five more sophomores vying for playing time in Gavon Booser, Fred Bunke, Jeremy Burch, Braden Heitkamp and James Gambrell, and one freshman in Trent Platfoot.

"It could be by committee based on our needs," said Elchert of the open spots. "We'll just have to see how things play out."

There's one other thing Elchert is concerned about. In the past, he's always had that lockdown defender, players like Andy Hoying and Gavin Wildermuth.

"For the first time in the last seven years, we have to figure out who our defensive stopper will be," he said. "We haven't had to worry about that for awhile. I think I've got very legitimate candidates, and now they have to take that next step. It's impor-

tant. It's one of the things we've built our program on."

Girls basketball

Scott Doseck went from a longtime assistant coach — 20 years or so — to a head coach for the first time last season when he took over the tradition-rich Lady Tiger program, and though he said about last season, "you always like to do better," he added, "but you can always do worse too."

The Lady Tigers finished with a 13-11 record overall, and were 6-6 in the final County standings. And off that team, there are seven key players returning this season.

"I'm looking for good things," said Doseck, who had slow start to practice because the volleyball team played in the state tournament. "We have seven of our top nine back, and a couple of sophomores that played a lot this summer and have really stepped up. We're going to struggle early because the girls will be a little rusty. But I have high hopes for them. You always look to do better than last year when you have as much back as we do."

He returns Nicole Fogt, who is a three-year letter-winner and led the Lady Tigers in scoring last season at 11.2 per game, and in rebounding at 6.6 per game.

"We'll be counting on Nicole a lot," said Doseck. "She's two-time All-County and will probably play in the post or out on a wing. She's not a bad three-point shooter (hit 24 threes last season)."

He has point guard Peyton Esser returning along with Pauline Meyer on a wing. Esser scored 6.6 points per game a year ago and led the Lady Tigers in assists with 78. Meyer averaged around five points per game.

Cassie Meyer is a 5-10 junior who Doseck says can play anywhere. She was the second-leading scorer last year at 8.1 per game and the second-leading rebounder at 5.1. She will probably see action at the point as well.

Olivia Clark is expected to be one of the starters, and she stands at 6-foot-2. Kennedie Reese saw brief action on the varsity last season. They are the two sophomores Doseck is counting on. "They will contribute," he said. "Over the summer, they put their time in."

The rest are all juniors, and there is plenty of talent among them. They include Kameron Elchert, Vanessa Winner, Christin Ware, Camryn Hoehne and Miranda Hickey.

"Kameron will be a shooting guard, and Camryn and Miranda are both around 5-10 and can play anywhere. And I expect good things from Vanessa and Christen," Doseck said.

He's pleased that he has 23 girls out for basketball this season, so there won't be any struggle with numbers.



Jackson Center's Drew Sosby makes his way past Russia's Jordan Gariety in action last season. Sosby led the Tigers in scoring and returns this season.

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Botkins boys team senior-dominated

Staff report

BOTKINS — Long-time Botkins head coach Brett Meyer had to wait a little while to get all his players at the start of the season, thanks to success in soccer and cross country. But despite the slow start, he's looking forward to a good season for the Trojans.

Botkins was 9-14 last season and returns a good nucleus of players. And he will have seven seniors to build around.

"I think our key this season will be at the defensive end," said Meyer. "We have to get some people stopped. Last year we gave up too many points. If we can stop people, that will help our offense."

Meyer has another big key, he says. And "big" is the operative word.

Chad Bergman is a 6-foot-7 senior back for his final season with the Trojans. He averaged 11.5 points and 5.5 rebounds per game, and shot 53 percent from the field.

"He will definitely be one of our keys," said Meyer. "He's a good rebounder, and we're still working on catching and moving in the post. But his rebounding and his presence in the post defensively are big pluses. And for a big man, he jumps pretty well."

Cameron Flora is a 5-11 senior who Meyer says got a lot of his points on the offensive boards last year. He averaged just over seven points per game and was the team's second-leading rebounder at five per game. "He's a very good offensive rebounder. He just knows how to use his body inside," said Meyer. "And he's a strong defender. He will usually end up on the opposing team's best player."

Aaron Fullenkamp is a 5-9 senior who gets the nod at the point guard for Meyer this season. He did not have a lot of varsity playing time last season.

Erik Greve is another senior who got some substantial varsity playing time last season, and he will be in the three spot for the Trojans.

Another senior is Nolan Greve, who be a four-man. "We're hoping he can use his quickness and help with our rebounding," Meyer said.

Ryan Egbert is a senior shooting guard who Meyer expects to be a good outside threat, and Jacob Roberts is a senior who Meyer says will come off the bench and give quality minutes. "He's a good leader, one of those guys that likes to talk it up in practice," the coach said.

There are also four juniors in Luke Bergman, Chad's six-foot brother; Alex Bergman, a cousin to the other two who stands 5-11; Josh Coe and Josh Miller.

L. Bergman is a shooting guard, A. Bergman will be in the post, Coe will see action at point guard and Miller, who was a state qualifier last spring in the shot put, will use his bulk to play



Kayla Heuker of Botkins takes a look at the basket in action last season. She is the Lady Trojans' leading returning scorer this season.

Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

inside. The Trojan offense will go through Chad Bergman, Meyer said.

"We're not really looking to get out and run," he said. "We're probably going to run a lot of our offense through Chad. He's our leading returning scorer and we think he'll be tough to handle in the post. We'll have to improve on our outside shooting, and we need to be strong with the ball. We have some guys that are capable and they have to get into that role."

Meyer is bracing for a tough early-season run. The Trojans have a

double weekend to start the season, then play nine games in the month of December.

Girls basketball

The Trojans managed just four wins against 19 losses last season in coach Mike Maurer's first year as the head coach. But with a lot coming back from that team, and plenty of size, the Lady Trojans are looking at a much-improved squad for the coming year.

Maurer and the Lady Trojans had to deal with a key setback before the season even started when Natalia Ambros, who was

a record-setter in soccer, suffered a knee injury and will not be able to play basketball. With her goes 9.5 points and 6.0 rebounds per game from last season, both tops on the squad.

"She was on the verge of being an all-County player," said Maurer. "It's tough to swallow, and you feel so bad for her. But we have to move forward."

Even without Ambros, Maurer has six players returning for the coming season, led by Kayla Heuker, who in Ambros' absence is the top returning scorer at 8.1 per game last season.

Kassidy Esser is a senior returnee who played in all the games last season, and Casey Woodall is a six-foot junior lefthander who averaged 4.3 last season along with 5.5 rebounds per game.

Jenna Pitts is back and Maurer says she's worked hard on her shooting, and Paige Lane and Sarah Bergman are sophomores who Maurer is looking for big contributions from.

"Both played a lot of varsity last year," Maurer said. "I really look for big things from them. They're both more mature and I think will

contribute a lot. Ppaige will play at a guard and Sara is more of a small forward and is about 5-11 and athletic."

He said there are three other sophomores and six freshmen in the program.

"They have some talent, but they're young," he said, "Last year we played two freshmen and a couple of sophomores, and with only six players with any experience, we're going to need some of those other kids to step in and play some varsity. We have a couple we think can contribute, especially toward the end of the season."

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High school basketball schedules

High School basketball 2015-16 schedules

ANNA

BOYS

November
27 Botkins

December
4 Fairlawn
8 at Russia
12 New Knoxville
18 Fort Loramie
19 at New Bremen
22 at Houston
26 at Marion Local
29, 30 at Versailles Holiday Tournament

January
2 Jackson Center
8 at Botkins
9 St. Henry
15 at Fairlawn
16 Minster
19 Russia
23 Lehman
29 at Fort Loramie

February
5 Houston
6 at Greeneview
12 at Jackson Center
13 at Covington

GIRLS

November
21 at New Bremen
24 Botkins

December
1 Fairlawn
5 at Russia
7 Lima Bath
12 Fort Loramie
17 at Houston
19 at Marion Local
26 at Miami East

January
2 at Bellefontaine
5 Minster
7 Jackson Center
9 at Botkins
12 Lehman
14 at Fairlawn
21 Russia
23 Madison
26 at New Knoxville
28 Graham
30 at Fort Loramie

February
2 Houston
6 at Jackson Center

BOTKINS

BOYS

November
27 at Anna
28 Parkway

December
4 at Fort Loramie
5 Allen East
8 Houston
11 at Jackson Center
12 at Ridgmont
15 at New Knoxville
19 at Newton
22 Fairlawn
28 at Minster

January
2 at Russia
8 Anna
12 Riverside
15 Fort Loramie
19 at Houston
22 Jackson Center

February
5 at Fairlawn
6 at Waynesfield
12 Russia
13 Lima Perry
16 New Bremen

GIRLS

November
21 at Parkway

24 at Anna
December
1 at Fort Loramie
3 Ridgmont
5 Houston
7 at Waynesfield
10 at Jackson Center
12 Allen East
17 Fairlawn
19 at Riverside

January
2 New Bremen
4 at Mechanicsburg
7 at Russia
9 Anna
14 Fort Loramie
18 at Indian Lake
21 at Houston
23 New Knoxville
26 Jackson Center
30 at Lima Perry

February
2 at Fairlawn
4 Russia

FAIRLAWN

BOYS

November
27 at Russia
28 at Triad

December
4 at Anna
5 Bradford
8 Fort Loramie
11 Houston
12 Newton
18 Jackson Center
22 at Botkins
29, 30 at Parkway Holiday Tournament

January
4 at Anna
8 Russia
12 at Mechanicsburg
15 Anna
16 Riverside
19 at Fort Loramie
22 at Houston
29 at Jackson Center
30 at Waynesfield

February
5 Botkins
12 Lehman
13 Miami East

GIRLS

November
21 at Covington
24 at Russia
28 Lehman

December
1 at Anna
5 Fort Loramie
10 at Houston
12 Jackson Center
15 at Ridgmont
17 at Botkins
21 Mechanicsburg
28 Bethel

January
5 at New Bremen
9 Russia
14 Anna
16 at Newton
21 at Fort Loramie
23 at Riverside
26 Houston
28 at Mississinawa
30 at Jackson Center

February
2 Botkins
6 Ansonia

MINSTER

BOYS

November
27 Lehman
28 at Spencerville

December
4 at Russia
5 at Van Wert
11 St. Henry

12 at Wapak
18 at Marion Local
19 Houston
28 Botkins

January
2 Ottoville
8 Delphos St. John's
9 at Fort Loramie
15 at New Bremen
16 at Anna
22 Parkway
23 Franklin-Monroe
29 at Fort Recovery
30 at Jackson Center

February
5 Coldwater
6 St. Marys
12 at Versailles
19 at New Knoxville

GIRLS

November
20 at Kalida

December
1 Versailles
3 New Knoxville
10 at St. Henry
17 Marion Local
19 at Van Wert
22 St. Marys
29, 30 at Lima Bath Holiday Tournament

January
2 at Celina
4 Jackson Center
5 at Anna
7 at Delphos St. John's
12 Fort Loramie
14 New Bremen
16 Ottoville
21 at Parkway
23 at Russia
28 Fort Recovery
30 Arlington

February
4 at Coldwater
9 at Wapak

JACKSON CENTER

BOYS

November
27 at Fort Loramie

December
4 at Houston
5 at Indian Lake
11 Botkins
18 at Fairlawn
19 Waynesfield
2 Russia
29 Columbus Grove

January
2 at Anna
5 at Lehman
8 Fort Loramie
9 at New Knoxville
15 Houston
16 at Marion Local
22 at Botkins
23 New Bremen
29 Fairlawn
30 Minster

GIRLS

December
1 at Houston
3 at Lima Perry
8 Riverside
10 Botkins
12 at Fairlawn
15 Indian Lake
17 Russia
19 at New Bremen
30 Lehman

January
4 at Minster
7 at Anna
9 Fort Loramie

14 Houston
16 New Knoxville
19 Waynesfield
23 at Versailles
26 at Botkins
30 Fairlawn

February
2 at Russia
4 at Fort Loramie
6 Anna
8 at Covington

HOUSTON

BOYS

November
28 at Newton

December
4 Jackson Center
5 Franklin Monroe
8 at Botkins
11 at Fairlawn
15 Ansonia
18 at Russia
19 at Minster
22 Anna

January
2 at Fort Loramie
9 Lehman
15 at Jackson Center
16 at Covington
19 Botkins
22 Fairlawn
29 Russia
30 at Troy Christian

February
5 at Anna
6 at Mississinawa
9 Riverside
12 Fort Loramie
13 at Bradford

GIRLS

November
20 Covington
21 at Newton
24 at New Knoxville

December
1 Jackson Center
3 Riverside
5 at Botkins
7 Tri-Village
10 Fairlawn
12 Russia
17 Anna
19 at Lehman
28 at New Bremen

January
4 at Sidney
7 at Fort Loramie
14 at Jackson Center
16 Bradford
21 Botkins
26 at Fairlawn
30 at Russia

February
1 Mississinawa
2 at Anna
6 Fort Loramie

RUSSIA

BOYS

November
27 Fairlawn
28 at St. Henry

December
4 Minster
8 Anna
11 at Fort Loramie
12 at Arcanum
18 Houston
22 at Jackson Center
29, 30 at Piqua Holiday Tournament

GIRLS

November
20 at Sidney
21 at Bradford
24 Fairlawn

December
5 Anna
10 at Fort Loramie
12 at Houston
17 at Jackson Center
19 Versailles

21 at Marion Local
28 New Knoxville

January
2 at Arcanum
4 at Newton
7 Botkins
9 at Fairlawn
11 Covington
16 Miami East
21 at Anna
23 Minster
26 Fort Loramie
30 Houston

February
2 Jackson Center
4 at Botkins

SIDNEY

BOYS

November
27 at West Carrollton

December
1 Bellefontaine
4 at Xenia
5 at Lebanon
11 Vandalia
12 Miamisburg
15 at Wapakoneta
18 at Piqua
22, 23 at Columbus St. Francis DeSales Holiday Classic
30 at Urbana

January
8 at Trotwood
15 Troy
16 at Lehman
22 at Greenville
26 Springfield
29 at Vandalia
30 St. Marys

February
2 Piqua
5 Trotwood
9 at Troy
12 Greenville

GIRLS

November
20 Russia
21 at Lehman

December
2 Xenia
9 Centerville
12 Miamisburg
14 at St. Marys
16 at Springfield
19 Vandalia
21 at Tecumseh
29 Bellefontaine

January
4 Houston
6 Piqua
9 Trotwood
11 at St. Henry
13 at Troy
18 vs. North Royalton at Classic in the Country, Berlin
20 Greenville
23 at Vandalia
27 at Piqua
30 at Trotwood

February
3 Troy
6 at Greenville

FORT LORAMIE

BOYS

November
27 Jackson Center
28 New Knoxville

December
4 Botkins
8 at Fairlawn
11 Russia
12 New Bremen
15 at Lehman
18 at Anna
19 at St. Henry
29 at Fort Recovery

January
5 at Versailles
8 at Jackson Center
9 Minster
15 at Botkins
19 Fairlawn
22 at Russia
29 Anna
30 Marion Local

GIRLS

November
21 Tipp City

December
1 Botkins
5 at Fairlawn
10 Russia
12 at Anna
15 Marion Local
19 Lima Bath
22 at New Knoxville
29 Maysville

January
2 at Versailles
7 Houston
9 at Jackson Center
12 at Minster
14 at Botkins
21 Fairlawn
23 Miami East
26 at Russia
30 Anna

February
2 at St. Henry
6 at Houston
9 Marion Local

LEHMAN

BOYS

November
27 at Minster
28 Miami East

December
4 Hardin Northern
5 Newton
12 at Springfield Catholic
15 Fort Loramie
18 Waynesfield
29, 30 at Piqua Holiday Tournament

January
5 Jackson Center
8 at Riverside
9 at Houston
15 Lima Perry
16 Sidney
22 at Upper Scioto Valley
23 at Anna
29 Lima Temple
30 Bradford

February
5 at Ridgmont
12 at Fairlawn
13 at Bluffton
16 Triad

GIRLS

November
20 Xenia Christian
21 Sidney
24 Springfield Catholic
28 at Fairlawn

December
3 at Hardin Northern
5 New Knoxville
17 at Waynesfield
19 Houston
2 at New Bremen
30 at Jackson Center

January
7 Riverside
9 at St. Marys
12 at Anna
14 at Lima Perry
16 at Mississinawa
21 Upper Scioto Valley
23 at St. Henry
25 Piqua
30 Arcanum

February
4 Ridgmont
6 Bradford
8 at Troy Christian

NEW BREMEN

BOYS

November
27 at Allen East
28 at Troy Christian

December
4 Versailles
5 at St. Marys
11 at Parkway
12 at Fort Loramie
18 Fort Recovery
19 Anna
29 Indian Lake

January
2 at Celina
8 at Coldwater
9 Covington
15 Minster
16 at Wapakoneta
22 at New Knoxville
23 at Jackson Center
29 St. Henry

February
5 at Marion Local
6 Fort Jennings
12 Delphos St. John's

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Schedules

From page 6

13 Spencerville
16 at Botkins
GIRLS
November
20 Indian Lake
21 Anna
28 at Celina
December
3 at Versailles
5 Tri-Village
10 Parkway
12 Delphos Jefferson
17 at Fort Recovery
19 Jackson Center
22 Lehman
28 Houston
January
2 at Botkins
5 Fairlawn
7 Coldwater
14 at Minster
16 at St. Marys
21 New Knoxville
23 at Upper Scioto Valley
28 at St. Henry
February
2 at Spencerville
4 Marion Local
11 at Delphos SJ
RIVERSIDE
BOYS
November
27, 28 at Ben Logan Tip-Off
December
11 Lima Temple
12 Ansonia
15 Indian Lake
18 Lima Perry
19 Emmanuel Christian
January
5 at Triad
8 Lehman
9 Vanlue
12 at Botkins
15 at Waynesfield
16 at Fairlawn
19 at WL-Salem
22 Ridgmont
23 at Southeastern
29 at Hardin Northern
30 Greenon
February
5 at Upper Scioto Valley
9 at Houston
13 Jackson Center
16 at Bradford
GIRLS
November
21 Northeastern
23 at Indian Lake
30 at Springfield Catholic
December
3 at Houston
8 at Jackson Center
10 at Dayton Christian
12 Ansonia
14 at Triad
17 at Lima Perry
19 Botkins
22 at Ben Logan
January
4 Yellow Springs
7 at Lehman
9 Troy Christian
14 Waynesfield
16 Bethel
21 at Ridgmont
23 Fairlawn
25 Cedarville
28 Hardin Northern
February
1 at Bradford
4 Upper Scioto Valley
NEW KNOXVILLE
BOYS
November
28 at Fort Loramie
December
4 Waynesfield
11 at Versailles
12 at Anna
15 Botkins
18 at St. Henry
19 at Spencerville
29 St. Marys

January
2 at Ada
8 Marion Local
9 Jackson Center
12 at Wapakoneta
15 at Delphos St. John's
22 New Bremen
23 at Fort Jennings
29 at Parkway
February
5 Fort Recovery
6 Lima Shawnee
12 at Coldwater
19 Minster
GIRLS
November
24 Houston
28 Anna
December
3 at Minster
5 at Lehman
10 Versailles
17 At. Henry
19 Spencerville
22 Fort Loramie
28 at Russia
January
7 at Marion Local
14 Delphos St. John's
16 at Jackson Center
19 at Wapakoneta
21 New Bremen
23 at Botkins
26 Anna
28 Parkway
30 St. Marys
February
4 at Fort Recovery
11 Coldwater
5 Waynesfield
VERSAILLES
BOYS
November
28 Celina
December
4 at New Bremen
5 at Covington
8 Ansonia
11 New Knoxville
18 at Parkway
23 Urbana
29, 30 Versailles Holiday Tournament
January
5 Fort Loramie
8 St. Henry
12 Tipp City
15 at Fort Recovery
16 at Lima Catholic
22 Marion Local
23 at Russia
29 at Coldwater
30 at Franklin-Monroe
February
5 at Delphos St. John's
12 Minster
13 Greenville
GIRLS
November
20, 21 at Greenville Shootout
24 Tipp City
28 Covington
December
1 at Minster
3 New Bremen
5 Miami Valley
10 at New Knoxville
12 at Miami East
15 at Lima Bath
17 Parkway
19 at Russia
21 at Arcanum
January
2 Fort Loramie
7 at St. Henry
14 Fort Recovery
16 Celina
21 at Marion Local
23 Jackson Center
28 Coldwater
February
2 at Tri-Village
4 Delphos St. John's

Small-school titles prove tough to defend

Girls basketball reigns supreme in Shelby County, Ohio.

The Fort Loramie Lady Redskins brought home the top prize from Columbus again in 2015. Can this year's experienced squad go back to

The Bob Wise files
Name naming

Columbus and defend their title?

It rarely happens to small schools. Anna three times tried to defend their state titles (1981, 2011, 2013) and couldn't. Jackson Center never got back to Columbus to defend its two titles (1995, 2001). Fort Loramie couldn't defend after winning a state title in 2013, or after winning a forfeit in the 2011 championship game.

Let's look at a brief history of Fort Loramie girls basketball, which started in September 1971 (yes they played in fall). Coach Jane Poepelman played five other county schools that year. Russia wasn't in the league until 1975. It took seven years for her teams to win a league title and they did it in style (12-0, 18-2), the losses were to Minster in December and Lehman in the sectional in Bellefontaine.

In 1979, coach Poepelman had another 12-0 season, won district and regional titles, but lost in the state semifinals. Four years later the Lady Redskins returned to Columbus and lost to Newark Catholic, but they had a four-year stretch of 20-win seasons (85-10 season, 46-2 SCL).

Present Coach Carla Siegel came on the scene during those years when Poepelman won her 200th game. In 1988 and 1989, Janet Meyer and Siegel led the Lady Redskins to 24 league wins. In 1991 a trip to Columbus left them with a loss to McDonald in the state semifinals. Poepelman stepped down after the 1994 season.

Dave McFeely led the Redskins to a state runner-up finish in 1997, losing to Kalida in the championship game. Coach Carla Siegel starts her 17th year as the personable head coach of the defending champions. Her teams won five straight league titles 2002-2006. Since then her biggest obstacle has been neighboring Anna, who won two state championships (2011, 2013). They were state runner-up in 2012.

Now for a look at Anna's success in recent years. The Lady Rockets started a year before Fort Loramie



Chris Schwer | Sidney Daily News
Houston boys basketball coach John Willoughby gets his point across to an official in a game against New Knoxville. Willoughby is the dean of County coaches, beginning his 30th season as head coach of the Wildcats.

and struggled until Jane Jones took over the coaching duties in 1976. She built a state championship team around Amy Anderson, who led the team in scoring four straight years.

The Lady Rockets won league titles in 1980, 1981, 1982, district titles 1981, 1982, the state championship 1981, and were state semifinalists in 1982. Then the Anna girls fell on hard times and didn't win another league title until 2007.

They repeated in 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013. They won 40 consecutive league games during a five-year span, 50 consecutive total wins 2011-2012 in a 2 year span. They also won 30 consecutive home games during 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014. Anna, led by second year coach Doug Martin, chief assistant to Jack Billing during their championship runs, will challenge Fort Loramie. Since 2007 Anna leads the head to head competition vs. Fort Loramie 11-7.

Maybe Russia and Fairlawn can challenge, Jackson Center might be a dark horse, Houston is getting a new coach and Botkins is likely to finish in the 2nd division.

Today's Trivia Question: Who is the last girls team to win an outright SCAL Title, other than Fort Loramie or Anna? The answer after the boys report.

Paul Bremigan, the longest tenured coach in Shelby County history, decided to step down as Russia's boys coach after last season's district championship. In his place, Spencer Cordonnier, last year's assistant coach, will take over the duties of continuing the winnings ways at Russia.

Paul labored for 14 years before securing a league championship. The last 17 years have produced eight County first place finishes. His

teams won five district titles (1995, 2002, 2006, 2014, 2015), was state runner-up in 2002, had five 20-win seasons, 437 wins in the 711 games he coached.

He did miss three games in the 2000-01 season while on medical leave, but gets credit for winning those games, which Brad Francis coached.

Of the top 10 all-time scorers for Russia, seven played for Bremigan, including Cordonnier, who is fourth on the list. Eighteen of his former players have hit 70 percent of their career free throws (100 attempts), led by brothers Jesse and Jace Grogan. Another brother, Jordan Grogan, once hit a Russia record 19 consecutive free throws.

This means Houston coach John Willoughby, with 334 wins, is now the dean of the Shelby County coaches. As he prepares for his 30th year, he has several returning letterman, who avoided a winless season by winning the last game of the regular season. Coach Willoughby had only one senior on the squad last year and if the juniors, who played last year can blend with the two sophomores and freshman who played the last half of the season, Houston may be able to have a respectable season.

Willoughby certainly has the credentials for his 29 years at Houston, six district championships (2011, 2008, 2007, 2006, 1999, 1990), five 20-win seasons, and state runner-up (by forfeit) in 2011. The Wildcat mentor must stress foul shooting this year. No one shot higher than 54

percent and the team average was 50 percent, lowest for a Houston team since the 1950's.

Fairlawn lost only one senior from last year's team. Two-year starter Nathan Lessing is back for his junior year. His name already appears in several Fairlawn school records, leading scorer freshman and sophomore seasons, 14th all-time scorer, most points (35) in a tournament game, third in career free throw percentage and fourth in single-season points scored.

Jackson Center coach Scott Elchert has three veteran players returning led by Drew Sosby and Brady Wildermuth. Gone is Gavin Wildermuth, who set a County record by playing in 106 varsity games. Coach Elchert starts his 16th year as the head coach with 210 wins and four district championships (2015, 2013, 2012, 1998), and a state runner-up 2012. The 2014-15 team set school records with the best free throw percentage at 73.4 and best defensive average of 41.1 points per game.

Fort Loramie looks to underclassmen with experience to blend with others to equal or better the back-to-back 15-win seasons by Karl Ratermann and Corey Britton, who is back for his second year as coach of the Redskins.

Anna has some size coming back but may have trouble in the back court. A lot of their fire power has graduated.

Botkins is struggling to build a winning team, but this might be their year.

Trivia answer: my alma mater - Jackson Center 2000-01 state champs.

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Cordonnier steps in to some big shoes

Staff report

RUSSIA — Former Russia standout Spencer Cordonnier thinks he'll have to wait until opening night for it to really sink in that he's the head coach of the Raider boys basketball team. And that he steps in for a legend.

Paul Bremigan resigned after 31 years as the head coach to become the head coach at Troy. And in his wake, Cordonnier took over a program that has been the best in the County in recent memory, and eight league titles in the past 17 seasons.

"I'm sure when we get to the first game, opening night, I think it will kinda sink in a little bit," said Cordonnier. "That I'm not just throwing ideas out there, that I'm the one in charge. But it's not like it's new to me, and whoever followed Paul was going to have a little bit of pressure on them. But somebody has to do it."

The Raiders won 22 games last season and lost in the regional semifinals to eventual state champion Tri-Village. And when that season was over, so were the high school careers of nine seniors. But that's not all bad news, Cordonnier said.

"These seniors this year have been waiting two years for this, so they're excited," he said. "They're chomping at the bit and you can see it in practice. They're working as hard as they can. Three or four of those kids could have seen some varsity playing time at other schools, but not here with so many seniors. Now they're anxious. Even a little over-anxious. I had to talk to one about calming down."

Still, Cordonnier was blunt when he said "nobody saw any meaningful varsity time last year, at all."

"Josh York, Jonah Counts, Trevor Monnin, Jake Gariety... they all played varsity a little last year, but as far as meaningful minutes, nobody got any," he said. "But now it's their turn, and a lot of those kids played JV together the last two years, so they know each other. It's not a situation where it's a whole new group of kids trying to mesh together. And they won 21 games last year and were 22-0 the year before. So they know how to win. They just out-worked people with how hard they played, and I don't expect anything different."

York is 6-foot-5 and will be counted on inside, and both Cole Tebbe and Clay Borchers are around 6-3. Cross country standout Caleb Ball will also be looking for playing time in the post. "Cole (Tebbe) is not the most gifted but he will outmuscle and outwork you for the rebound," Cordonnier said.

He said the Raiders have a whole slew of guards, including Counts, Trevor Monnin, Dylan



Tiffany Hatcher looks to shoot against Southeastern in tournament play last season. She is back for the Lady Raiders.

Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

Cordonnier, Drew Poling, Drew Sherman, and Connor Monnin.

"We're going to push it and I probably have eight or nine guards I can put on the floor at any time," he said. "Trevor will be counted on to guard the opposing team's best. He works hard and is such a good, all-around kid. I can put him out there on anybody and he will be the hardest working kid on any floor he steps on."

"It's going to be a learning process for all of us," he added. "The problem will be finding the right combination, figuring out what the best combination is. I don't like to play 10 guys, but I will if I have to."

Girls basketball

It's going to be a different kind of girls basketball season at Russia this time around.

A tradition-rich program that has won 15, 16 and 18 games the past three seasons, suddenly has a severe numbers problem, so much so that head coach Tim Hatcher had to call in graduates so he could scrimmage. Needless to say, there will not be a junior varsity team this season.

"It's been something I didn't expect," said Hatcher, his third year as head coach. "It was the proverbial deer in the headlights look on my face when I saw the turn-

out, especially after the summer, when we had 19 or 20 kids."

It's quite a dropoff from last season, when the Lady Raiders won 18 games and came within a basket of taking the lead on Fort Loramie with under 30 seconds remaining in a tournament game. And Fort Loramie went on to win the state championship.

He has just two players back from last season in his daughter Tiffany and Maria Herron. Several others were expected back, but it seemed like when one decided not to play, it had a domino effect, and others chose to sit out.

In Herron, however,

Hatcher has his second-leading scorer back. She was at an even 11 points per game. Hatcher, meanwhile, was at 4.3 per game.

After those two, it will be four sophomores and three freshmen filling out the roster, and all of them will see ample playing time.

"We have the kids that want to be here," Hatcher said. "And they're excited. There will be a lot on Maria's and Tiffany's shoulders, and everybody will know that and gang up on them. So we may take our lumps early, but the second half of the season will be totally different."

The sophomores are

six-foot post Cameo Wilson, guard Whitney Pleiman, post Lauren Monnin and guard Kylee Sherman, and the freshmen are guard Jenna Cordonnier, guard Katie Heuing and six-foot Larissa Poling.

"We have some talent in the freshman and sophomore classes," Hatcher said. "And there's some height, so that will help. And we have Maria and Tiff, and they've been playing AAU ball since the fifth grade. They will be teachers on the floor."

"Right now, my plan is to teach what I know, and that means pushing the ball, and hard-nosed defense," he added. "Hopefully, we can stay out of foul trouble."

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'Everybody back except one' at Houston

Staff Report

HOUSTON — The good news at Houston this season in boys basketball is that the Wildcats have virtually their entire team back from a season ago.

The bad news is that those players experienced victory just once last year, so there is still a lot of work to do.

But longtime head coach John Willoughby, about to begin his 30th season as the leader of the Wildcats, liked what he saw over the summer and so far this preseason.

"We have everybody back except one, and there's a little bit of growth and a little bit of experience there," he said. "Last season was a tough year basketball-wise, but I didn't feel miserable, and that's probably a credit to the kids. We were trying as hard at the end of the year as we were at the beginning, and that's good. We kept on working. It's just that feeling you have when you feel you haven't done a good job."

He has his leading scorer back in Domyneik Phipps, who was at 12.1 points per game last season, and his second-leading scorer returning in 6-foot-4 Zach Fretyag, who scored 9.5 points per game. Also back is the leading rebounder in Zack Jolly, a 6-2 senior who averaged 5.6 off the boards.

"Domyneik added some more to his game over the summer," said Willoughby. "He's able to take the ball to the hole, or pull up and shoot the jumper.

"Zach needs to be more selfish," he continued. "He's in position to score, but doesn't yet have that attitude to be the threat of trying to score. And being a senior, I think he'll take it upon himself to be more of a scorer. We tell him, we threw you the ball, so you must have been open, and you need to shoot it.

"Zach was our leading rebounder and one of our better defenders," he added. "We're looking for him to score more. He's got the ability, and we're trying to get him to be close to a double-double threat. He and Zach both. We're trying to push them there."

He said he wants to find a third and fourth scoring threat, and he pointed to Caleb Sluss as one of the candidates. Sluss is a 6-2 versatile sophomore who started at the end of last season. Willoughby says he could be an outside threat, or post up inside.

Cameron Arnold is a junior who started at point guard for the Wildcats last season and returns again. Willoughby says his presence frees up Phipps more, but he wants Arnold to be a little better distributor and "make better choices."

Also expected to see



Domyneik Phipps led the Houston Wildcats in scoring last season and returns this year.

Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

plenty of playing time is 5-11 Zach McKee. "Zach put in a lot of time, and we're hoping his shooting is more consistent this year," said Willoughby. "We're going to need some perimeter scoring."

Isaiah Beaver is a returning junior letterman who started some games last season, and Mark Schaffer is a six-foot senior who Willoughby says may be the team's top standstill shooter, which he says the team lacks. "He's put the time in," said the coach. "He was always waiting for me to get there this summer to open the gym. You always want the time put in to pay off so it would be nice to see things go Mark's way."

Willoughby thinks it will be a good defensive

team, with Jolly, McKee and Beaver leading the way. So offense is the key.

"It sounds simple, but we have to make more shots," he said. "We need to improve our offensive percentages dramatically. If you put the ball in the hole, you feel a lot better about yourself. If you don't, it carries over to other areas."

Girls basketball

The Lady Wildcats are under new leadership this season, with Brad Allen taking over for longtime coach Greg Ward.

He inherits a team that finished with a 10-12 record a year ago, and he has quite a bit of talent returning from that squad, including co-leading scorer Macey Stang, who along with Nicole Maier averaged

just under 11 points per game.

Allen was the boys assistant coach for the last five years before stepping over to the girls program. He has 17 players in his program, and only three of them are seniors in Stang, Jenna Winner and Micayla Hensley.

"Things have gone pretty well," said Allen. "We have some key players back and we had some good things take place over the summer. I would like to have more depth, but I think we'll be balanced in our scoring. So I'm excited for the season to start."

Stang was the second-leading rebounder last season in addition to leading in scoring, and Winner led the team on the boards at 7.4 rebounds per game and

also averaged 7.5 points.

"Macey and Jenna can score in double figures and are capable of the same on the boards," Allen said. "Jenna is about six foot and will be playing in the post, and Macey can play any of the guard spots and is a good, all-around player."

Hensley averaged 2.5 points and 3.0 rebounds per game last season and will be playing at a wing and looking to up those figures.

There are three juniors on the team in Kara Maier, Nicole's sister, along with Jenna Jarrett and Brittany Timmerman. Maier will be running the point or playing the two-guard spot. Jarrett will be playing inside, and Timmerman on the wing.

There are also two

sophomores who will see plenty of action in Sarah Monnier and Rebekah New. "Sarah has some versatility and can play inside or outside," said Allen. "Rebekah is the same way. She can play some post and some wing, and she actually ran the point on the JV team last year. She'll be able to provide some good minutes inside and out."

Those are the top eight, and Allen said there are a couple more sophomores that will split time.

"I like the ability Macey has," he said. "Our three guards, Micayla, Kara and Macey, I like how they get the ball up the floor. I think Macey and Jenna will draw a lot of attention, so we need to develop other girls in our scoring."

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Fairlawn's Lessing 'still just a junior'

Staff report

SIDNEY — Fairlawn boys basketball coach Justin Tidwell loves saying the words, but he knows it probably doesn't make the rest of the County coaches too happy.

Those words are "Nathan is still just a junior."

"Nathan" is Nathan Lessing, arguably the top returning player in the County this season, and quite a player for Tidwell and the Jets to build their hopes around. He averaged an even 21 points per game last season as a sophomore, and also led the Jets in rebounding at 6.5 per game. And it was no surprise when he was a first-team All-County selection.

"He had a very good summer," said Tidwell, whose Jets finished with a 12-11 record last season. "He really took his game to the next level, and improved his shooting."

His return is reason enough for optimism, but there's plenty more reasons in the names of other returning players, and one interesting transfer.

Luke Hickman is a 6-foot-4 sophomore who played a few quarters of varsity and junior varsity last year while at Miami East. He's the son of former Fairlawn head coach Rick Hickman, who returns to the school as an assistant to Tidwell.

"Luke has great ball-handling skills and can hit the open shot," Tidwell said. "The biggest thing is transitioning from the 1-2-2 to man-to-man on defense. But he will help us handle the ball and we see some big things from him."

Also returning are Aaron Hammond, Logan DeMarcus, and Nick and Drew Brautigam, all of whom got a lot of varsity playing time last season.

"We're hoping for a big year out of Aaron," said Tidwell. "He came into his own as a shooter last season and he'll be a big part of our game."

"Logan is in his third year of varsity and at 6-3, he can play inside, but also step out and shoot threes. He proved last year that he can knock down big shots when we need him to," the coach added.

"Drew Brautigam really developed his post play last year and I think he could be a dominant force inside at about 6-4, and Nick is another solid on-the-ball defender and will help us take care of

the ball offensively," he continued.

Keshawn Johnson transferred in from Sidney and will be ineligible for the first half of the season due to transfer rules. "He's lightning quick, and when that 12th game gets here, we expect him to give us quality minutes off the bench," Tidwell said.

Two other seniors add to the depth in James Skeens and Troy Fletcher. "James' motor is constantly running and he really pushes us," said Tidwell. "Troy is a solid defender and will give us good minutes."

There are two other juniors who are back out for the sport this year in Cody Kurtner and Josh Reck.

"We're hoping we can score more in transition this year," said Tidwell. "I think we'll be able to put points up in a hurry. But if we can't, I think we have the people where we can run an offense and get some points."

"I think we can go eight or nine deep," he went on. "If you want to be at the top of the County, you need a quality bench, and I don't think there will be a big dropoff when we go to ours."

Girls basketball

Fairlawn's girls program appears headed in the right direction.

There were a few seasons recently where there weren't enough Lady Jets to field a junior varsity team, but head coach Randy Tyler reports that there are 16 girls out for the sport this season, and there will be a junior varsity team.

As for the varsity squad, Tyler lost some players to graduation or transfer, but he has a lot of talent back, including one of the area's highest scorers in Audrey Francis, who is still just a junior.

The 5-foot-7 guard poured in 456 points during the regular season last year to finish with a 20.7 average, and she very nearly averaged a double-double, pulling down 9.2 rebounds per game. She handed out 83 assists and also had 69 steals to lead the team in all those categories.

"Audrey will be bringing the ball up the floor," said Tyler. "She will play her role and be a big scoring threat, but I think we have some other girls who will step up."

Mollie Roe is a 5-foot-10 senior, and the only senior on the squad this year. Tyler thinks the



Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

Fairlawn's Nathan Lessing is shown in action against Botkins. He is back for his junior season at Fairlawn.

Lady Jets will be a strong rebounding team this season, and Roe is at the center of that. "She will be able to score too," he said. "She's our team captain and she's a good role model. She works hard."

There are two other juniors in Whitney Tyler and Chelsie Brautigam. Tyler is itching to get back to the action after missing a lot of action with an injury. And Brautigam did not play last season, but Tyler says she's kept at it, and has picked up things pretty quickly.

Lauren Dudgeon is a 6-0 freshman who Tyler says rebounds the ball well. "She's pretty good around the rim. We need to get her a little stronger, and we hope she gets to the line a lot because she shoots free throws very well."

He's also high on sophomore Regan DeMotte, who is back from last season. She battled an ankle injury early that she suffered in volleyball. She's 5-10 and Tyler said she could work her way into the post.

"We have three solid post players and three solid guards," said Tyler. "And I think we have girls who can step in. We had a real good summer and tried a lot of different combinations, so we feel confident that we can go with different looks. Our bigs (Dudgeon and Roe) are very quick, and so are the guards, so we should have good speed."

"Defensively, we're going to lace them up tight and play some good defense," he added. "I'm excited about this team. Everybody seems to be excited about playing basketball, and with that attitude, good things can happen."

The Lady Jets were 11-14 last season and won two tournament games before losing to eventual state champion Fort Loramie.



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Fairlawn's Mollie Roe is the only senior on this year's Lady Jet squad.

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Five lettermen back for Minster boys

Staff Report

MINSTER — Long-time coach Mike Lee's recent Minster boys basketball teams haven't followed the design of a lot of Midwest Athletic Conference teams, who seem to send out towering players every year.

And the Wildcats will once again be without a lot of size, but Lee has five lettermen back and is optimistic that this year's team will better last year's 10-13 mark.

"We were relatively young but we got some good production out of kids that didn't have a whole lot of experience," said Lee. We have some experience this season, especially at the guard spot, and that's where you like to have it."

The list of returnees has to be led by Jacob

Stechschulte, who will be suiting up for varsity play for the fourth year in a row. Last season, he averaged 6.3 points per game and led the Wildcats with 43 assists.

"He'll be a four-year letterman when it's all said and done," said Lee. "We're looking for very good leadership from him and he's going to have to be a good scorer. We will try to get him in a position to score more. He's been on the point and will be again, but we'll try to get him on the wing more."

Josh Nixon, the prolific passing quarterback for the football team, is back. "Outstanding quickness," said Lee. "He'll be a leader just from what he's done in the fall. And he's another that's just a very good

athlete."

Connor Tumbusch is 6-2 and returns from last season. "He got better as the year went on and will be playing more of an inside role," said Lee.

Peter Falk returns after playing in 19 of the regular season games last season and averaging 4.5. "He's another player who we're hoping has a consistent year offensively," Lee said. "He has all the tools."

The final returning player is Bryce Schmiesing, another who is outstanding on the football field. Last season as a sophomore, he played in 21 games, starting eight of them. He scored 3.5 per game and was second on the team in assists with 41.

Senior Jared Thobe is back in the program after sitting out last

year. "He's a very good kid, athletic, and gets off the floor pretty well," said Lee. "From what we saw this summer, he's going to have to fill a role inside."

There are two more seniors on the squad in Alex Eiting and Brett Hoelscher, who spent most of their time on the junior varsity team last season. "They are two that have worked really hard, and both will be on the perimeter," Lee said.

Aaron Ernst is 5-11 and looking for playing time. "He had a good year at the JV level. He just lacks experience," Lee said.

Sophomore Andrew Broering is about 6-3, but also lacks experience.

"We can't be as inconsistent as we were last year offensively," said

Lee. "I think the level of the league overall won't be what it was a year ago, but it will still be good. This is by far the smallest team I've had since I've been here, but they are solid kids, hard workers, and know what it takes."

Girls basketball

Nann Stechschulte is back for another season as the head coach of the Minster Lady Wildcats, and she goes into this season with 447 career victories.

The Lady Wildcats ended the season with six wins in their last seven outings to finish with a 17-6 overall record. In the Midwest Athletic Conference, they were 7-2 to finish in a tie for the runner-up spot in the final standings. But that team was

senior-laden, and they have all graduated.

Desite all that, the Lady Wildcats do have their leading scorer back from a year ago in Rosie Westerbeck, who averaged 11.3 points per game, and was second on the team in rebounding with 4.3. She also finished second on the team in assists with 47, and led the team in steals with 47. So she's a good player to build around for this season.

Hannah Schmitmeyer and Ali Borgerding are two more players who saw plenty of varsity team last season. Schmitmeyer averaged 4.9 points per game and was the team's leading rebounder at 5.1 per game. Borgerding scored at 4.7 per game and averaged 3.3 rebounds per game.



Minster girls basketball Nann Stechschulte goes into this season with 447 career victories. She lost a lot to graduation from last year's 17-6 squad.

Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

Cardinals return three starters

Staff report

NEW BREMEN — The New Bremen Cardinals over the past several seasons have always had a wealth of size. So this year will be a little different for head coach Adam Dougherty.

The Cardinals are coming off a 14-11 record last season, including a 4-5 mark in the Midwest Athletic Conference. They made it to the district finals before falling to Marion Local.

Dougherty has three starters returning off that squad in seniors Kaelen Reed, Ben Schwieterman and Greg Parker, and six lettermen returning in all when you add in Deion Hoehne, Mitchell Kramer and Tate Meyers.

None of the three starters returning were big scorers last season, so they will be counted on to get more points this season. Schwieterman, a 5-foot-11 senior, averaged 1.9 ppoints. Parker, also 5-11, averaged 3.6, and Reed, another at 5-11, averaged 3.4.

Hoehne is the top returning scorer at 4.9 per game last season.

"We have a group of guards that have played a lot of varsity basketball but will be asked to fill different roles this season," Dougherty said. "Our post guys are talented but young and inexperienced. Early-season injuries could impact the start of the season. This group must play great team basketball to be successful. In order to play our best, this group has to truly invest in the defensive end of the floor. Our expectations will continue

to be high, to improve throughout the season, and play our best in March."

Dougherty has penciled in Hoehne as a probable starter, and a freshman gets the nod as the other starter in Brandon Heitkamp. Like Hoehne, Heitkamp is 6-2.

Off the bench will be players like Myers, who is 6-5, six-foot senior Mitchell Kramer, 6-1 junior Max Messick, 5-10 junior Jake Hemmelgarn, 5-10 junior Eric Bowers and 5-11 sophomore Avery Powers.

"I think we'll be very balanced with players like Schwieterman, Parker, Reed and Hoehne," said Dougherty. "Ben (Schwieterman) is super strong and a tough guard whose skill level has really improved. We're a good perimeter shooting team and do a good job pressuring the ball. We need to improve our team defense, rebounding and ball-handling."

Girls

The Lady Cardinals were 15-9 last season and return their top three scorers in sophomore Paige Jones, and seniors Alyce Clune and Debbie Paul.

Paul led the team last season at 10.5 points per game and in rebounding at 7.2 per game. Clune averaged 10 points per game and led the team in assists with 64, and Paul averaged 9.5 per game last season and was second on the team in rebounding.

Also back are 5-9 senior Sara Steineman, juniors Brianna Arling and Amanda Brown, and sophomores Ashley Bowers and Jane Homan.

Sidney

From page 1

being doubled inside I am looking for her to step up and score more than she did for us last year. Her presence on the court is vital and she will have to stay out of foul trouble. She is a great leader on the court and will continue her captain duties for the third year in a row.

Six-one sophomore Jada Rowland will be asked to do more things than just be in the scoring column this year, said the coach.

"She will be a threat outside shooting the ball, but will need to take advantage of her height inside when she is mismatched," Mummey said. "I am looking for her to step up and be in better shape and be solid for us on defense."

Egan and Timmons will round out the guard position.

"Ashley (Egan) has gotten her speed and agility back following a knee injury two seasons ago and I look for her to really help defensively and distribute the ball inside when needed," Mummey said. "Sadi (Timmons) will be our go-to girl on

defense. She has done this job since she was a sophomore. She had a great preseason and is more confident shooting the ball. I look for her to go into games and contribute early."

Incoming freshman Alina Kindle will see varsity playing time. "Her quickness and ability to see the court will give us that extra edge coming off the bench," Mummey said.

Carrie Nuss, Adrienne Miller and Kiara Miller will fill in the remainder of the Lady Jackets' roster. Nuss is a transfer from Fairlawn who Mummey says is very athletic and will help balance the floor when she is in. Miller and Miller will help fill

the positions in and out of the post. "They are disciplined kids who will help us in other areas not shown on a stat sheet," said the coach.

"I am very excited about this year," Mummey said. "This might be one of the overall best teams I have coached. We have a variety of everything including height, strength, quickness and girls who are athletic. We have never had good balance like we do this year. I look for us to be able to compete in every game that we play. Now that we have received the attention from other coaches and teams in the area, we need to back this up with our play and results."

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Size, athleticism have Anna optimistic

Staff Report

ANNA — Anna coach Nate Barhorst says it's possibly a "once in a lifetime" situation this season in boys basketball at the school.

The Rockets have the kind of size this season that most high school coaches only dream about, and Barhorst thinks that, coupled with the kind of athleticism his team has, will make for an interesting season.

"There's definitely excitement with this group, with the size and athleticism coming in," said the Anna coach. "We've been stressing that we need to take advantage of our height by getting in there and rebounding, getting more opportunities. We have the kind of size and athleticism we haven't seen in a while."

The Rockets have Nathan "Ozzie" Osborne, a junior who is 6-foot-8, and senior Cody Fleisher, who is 6-6. Two other seniors, Kain Luthman and Blake Stephens, are both 6-4.

None of them were big scorers last season, Luthman at 9.5, Stephens scoring 8.3 per game, Fleisher

4.5, and Osborne seeing action in 14 of the 22 regular-season games. Luthman also led the team in rebounding at 4.6.

"Ozzie continues to work on his skills," said Barhorst. "He will battle for playing time down low and we'll see where he ends up. Cody (Fleisher) is going to play some major minutes for us. He's improved in all aspects, including strength, shooting, and post moves. And he's very cerebral. He began to make some huge strides last year at the end of the season."

"I thought Kain (Luthman) had a breakout season last year after knee surgery as a sophomore," Barhorst continued. "He had a little bit of a nagging injury after football, but he can do a little bit of everything, shoot, drive, rebound... He's very athletic and very explosive."

"And Blake is in the same category as Kain," he added of Stephens. "He's athletic and explosive, and is aggressive on drives to the basket. He has good vision and can hit the open player, and he's become one of our best defensive players and rebounders."

He has two more seniors and both will be important players. Carter Huelskamp and Israel Adamson will both be guards. Adamson had to sit out last year because of the transfer rule.

"Israel really worked hard in the offseason," said Barhorst. "He'll play the point and a shooting guard. Carter works harder than anybody and really amps up the intensity of the team. And he's an effective communicator and a team leader. He's a point guard but can also play the three spot or small forward."

There are two juniors, with Osborne being joined by Nathan Frilling. "Nathan has really busted his tail and given it everything he's got," said Barhorst.

Two more players are sophomores in Wyatt Bensman and 6-3 Joel Cathcart. "Wyatt will be seeing a lot of playing time," said the coach. "And Joel continues to push himself and has a great knack for the game. And he finishes well."

There are some areas of concerns for Barhorst.

"We're looking for more consistency at the guards

after losing Evan Romie and Grant Glover," he said. "And controlling the boards will be our main emphasis. We need to establish an inside presence, and not just one pass and chuck it from three-land. We want to push for transition buckets, but we need to know when to pull it back out."

"With our size and athleticism, it makes our expectations high," he added. "So we're hoping to get to our goals."

Girls basketball

Coach Doug Martin will try to move on after losing some key players to graduation from a team that won 18 games last season.

"We have some big shoes to fill," said Martin. "But we had a pretty good summer. I told the girls going into this summer, we don't have Cayla Bensman to rely on anymore. Somebody has to step up and fill that 18 points."

Bensman was a four-year starter for the Lady Rockets and played a lot

of games in Columbus. Last season, she averaged 18.3 per game and also led the team in rebounds, assists and steals. But she has moved on to Ohio Dominican.

Despite losing her, Martin has his other four starters returning, including seniors Avery Bensman, Sarah Bettinger and Nicole Barhorst, and sophomore Macey Huelskamp.

"Those girls played pretty well last year," said Martin. "And we had three kids coming off the bench that played well."

That reference was to seniors Holly Boyd, Kristin Grimes and Mindy Schmittmeyer.

Schmittmeyer is a six-footer, Huelskamp is also six foot, and Barhorst stands 5-11, so Martin will have plenty of size.

"Nicole has looked pretty good in preseason. She can shoot the 3-ball pretty well. We have some good guards, but we have to put it all together," he said. "We're not going to change anything. We

are who we are and we're going to make the game fast for everybody and pressure 94 feet. And hopefully not run a lot of offense."

"I hope we can rebound better," he added. "That's something we didn't do a real good job at last year. We've worked on it a lot and expect to do a better job. We're probably as big as we've been in a long time."

Bensman averaged 6.9 last season and Barhorst 7.8. Huelskamp was at an even six per game, and Boyd at 5.7.

Juniors will be Clair Spicer, who is just shy of 6-1, Abby Gaydosh and Brooke Gaydosh. A. Gaydosh may see action at the point, enabling Bensman to move to the two or three spot and get more opportunities.

"One that will light it up is Macey (Huelskamp)," he added. "She plays on the Dayton Lady Hoopsters and she has really gotten better."



Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News
Sarah Bettinger, shown here in tournament play last season, is one of four returning starters for the Anna Lady Rockets this season.



Jason Alig | Sidney Daily News
Anna's Cody Fleisher shoots against Russia last season. He returns for the Rockets this year.

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