



First team All-MAC again
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The PRESS Sports

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National leader
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Bekier sisters making their mark in NJCAA, NCAA

By Press Staff Writer
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Lake's Bekier sisters are leading their respective college volleyball teams to one national championship and the potential to another in the coming weeks.

Karly has helped Owens Community College to another NJCAA Division III national title while Kayla has led Wheeling University into the NCAA D-II regional tournament. Both led their teams to league championships.

Owens volleyball players Sydney Meinke (Clay), Carol Lutz (Genoa), Karly Bekier (Lake) and Taylor Momany (Lake) are already celebrating because No. 2 Owens (29-7) became the first NJCAA Division III volleyball team to capture three consecutive national championships.

Meinke is a freshman 5-foot-8 outside hitter/defensive specialist, Lutz a 5-8 freshman setter/DS, Bekier a 5-11 freshman setter/OH and Momany a 6-0 sophomore middle blocker.

Meinke, a first team Ohio Community College Athletic Conference honoree, exploded onto the scene in early October and has been a force for the Express since then. Through the season's first 20 matches, she totaled just 28 kills and had one match with 10-plus digs, which came on Sept. 3 against Rock Valley.

Up until the regional and national tournament, Meinke had three double-doubles, including six matches with 10-plus kills and five with 10-plus digs. On Oct. 12, she registered 10 kills and a season-high 20 digs. In total, she registered 103 kills over 12 matches. Meinke finished the season with 158 kills and 57 aces on the season and Momany had 164 kills and 15 aces.

In the national championship match, 5-9 freshman OH/MB Ashley Scott delivered the match-winning point on a kill from the right side with a thrilling 23-25, 25-23, 23-25, 25-20, 15-12 win over No. 1 Rock Valley (34-8) at the Regional Sports Center in Rochester, Minnesota.

Maddie White, a 5-10 freshman outside hitter, had team highs in kills (21) and digs (17) while adding five assists and three blocks in the championship. White was named the MVP of the national tournament.

Meinke and 5-5 freshman setter Emily Fallis each earned a spot on the all-tournament team. Owens head coach Sonny Lewis was also named the NJCAA Division III Coach of the Year for the third-consecutive season.

"I'm just so happy for the players,"



Wheeling University 5-foot-10 senior outside hitter Kayla University (Lake). (courtesy WU Athletics)



Karly Bekier



Carol Lutz



Taylor Momany



Sudney Meinke

Lewis said. "After not playing last year and having almost an entirely new team, they worked hard this whole year to get to this point. I'm proud of them."

The Express are now 40-3 in postseason play over the past six seasons with three national titles, a national runner-up finish, a third-place finish and a ninth-place finish. Since moving to the Division III level, the Red and White are 22-0 over the past three seasons, and they have dropped just five total sets over those 22 matches.

In addition to White's 21 kills, Scott added 11 kills, while Alexis Sarvo had nine more. Fallis (25) and Jessica Dohm (24) combined for 49 assists. Sydney Alford chipped in four assists and finished second on the team with 16 digs. Defensively, Meinke (15), McKenna Babcock (15) and Fallis (10)

chipped in double-digit digs. Momany added six kills and two blocks, and Sarvo had a team-high four blocks. (— includes contributions from Owens CC Sports Information Director Nicholas Huenefeld).

Bekier sister leads Wheeling into NCAA

One person who has already had success with Owens national championship volleyball teams is Karly Bekier's sister, Kayla (Lake), who has graduated from OCC and gone on to do bigger and better things.

Kayla played two seasons at Owens and was an NJCAA Division III All-American, first team All-OCCAC, ranked eighth in the NJCAA with 409 kills and a .358 attack percentage, and was on the NJCAA Division III All-Tournament Team.

Now at Wheeling University, the 5-foot-

10 senior outside hitter is a big reason that the Cardinals are hosting the NCAA Division II Regional Volleyball Tournament. She was first team All-Mountain East Conference.

Wheeling was named the No. 1 seed in the Atlantic Region, and will also serve as the host site for the Atlantic Regional Tournament, which runs from Dec. 2-4 inside the Alma Grace McDonough Center in Wheeling, West Virginia. Bekier is third on the team in kills (266).

The 2021 season will mark the ninth time that Wheeling has been the host school for the NCAA regional. Wheeling earned the top seed by going 27-5 overall and being crowned the MEC champions with a 3-1 win over West Virginia State. It is Wheeling's ninth straight MEC title.

Their only conference loss of the season came against those Yellow Jackets during the regular season. Wheeling finished the year with a 24-5 record against in-region opponents, and a 26-5 record against Division II opponents. They held a first-place ranking in the Atlantic Regional Rankings for three weeks in a row and were able to maintain that as they get set to host the regional.

Two of Wheeling's top hitters, Bekier and 6-0 freshman middle blocker Mady Winters, were once again at the forefront of Wheeling's MEC championship, as they often were this season. Bekier led the way with 18 kills on the day, while Winters followed right behind her with 17 kills.

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Marissa Young leads Saints in scoring, game-winners



Marissa Young. (Courtesy SHU University Athletics)

Behind the scoring of 5-foot-7 junior forward Marissa Young (Genoa), the Siena Heights University women's soccer team finished the 2021 campaign fourth in the conference standings after winning eight games in league play.

Young led the Saints in points with 30, goals with 15, shots with 64, and shots on goal with 37. She finished the year with eight game-winning goals, which put her in a four-way tie at the top of the NAIA stat leaders in that category (as of 11/12/2021).

"Marissa had a scoring season for the record books," stated coach Scott Oliver. "She has an incredible work rate and has proven to be a big-time player. What we love most about her, though, is her humility and love for her team."

Young registered her eighth game-winning goal of the season to lead the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) in that category as she lifted the Saints past the University of Northwest Ohio 2-0 in the season finale. Young scored both goals for the Saints (12-4-2, 7-3-1 WHAC) as they locked up a home game for the first round of the Wolverine-Hoosier Athletic Conference (WHAC) Tournament.

Young was assisted on her game-winner by Kaleigh Mahaz. Isabel Herden had the assist on goal number two. Young led the Saints in scoring and with four shots on goal.

The Saints kept the ball on the offensive side of the field for much of the first half as they outshot the Racers 7-1 in the opening 45 minutes of play. However, despite the advantage in shots, SHU couldn't break the scoreless tie before both teams entered the locker room at halftime.

Young broke the tie in the 55th minute with a header off a corner kick from Mahaz that beat the goalkeeper to the right. Her second score of the game came in the 83rd minute when a great pass through the box from Herden allowed her to beat the keeper low to the right for the insurance goal.

The win wrapped up the regular season for the Saints, who finished with an overall record of 12-4-2 and a 7-3-1 record in WHAC play to claim fourth in the league standings.

The Siena Heights women's soccer team fell 4-1 to top-seed Aquinas in the



Wolverine-Hoosier Athletic Conference (WHAC) tournament. The Saints finish the season with a 13-5-2 overall record and an 8-3-2 mark in conference play.

Emily Broman was the lone goal scorer for SHU in the losing effort. Young tallied the other shot on goal for Siena Heights in the afternoon. Kara Bishop (L, 12-4-2) made five saves in net for the Saints.

Katelyn Meyer All-MAC

On the All-Mid-American Conference volleyball team, Bowling Green State University had five players recognized, including MAC Player of the Year Petra Indrova and MAC Defensive Player of the Year Julia Walz. Katelyn Meyer joined Indrova and Walz on the All-MAC First Team.

Five-foot-10 senior outside hitter Katelyn Meyer (Eastwood) was named to the All-MAC first team for the fourth time in her career, marking the first time a Falcon volleyball player has earned four first team honors.

Meyer ranked fifth in the MAC with 3.54 kills per set, recording 216 kills in conference play. On Oct. 11, she was named MAC East Offensive Player of the Week.

"Katelyn's impact on our team is known to anyone who has seen our team play. She is one of our go-to players who carries a big offensive load for our team. She has gotten better and better each year because of her commitment to excellence," BGSU coach Danijela Tomic said.

Bowling Green (21-8, 16-2) fell to Ball State in a five-set thriller in the 2021 MAC Championship. The Falcons won the second and fourth sets of the day, winning a tremendous second set, 31-29. As a team, the Falcons recorded season-bests in kills, digs, and assists.

Meyer tallied 21 kills, extending her

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Katelyn Meyer. (Photo by Mallory Hiser courtesy BGSU Athletics)

Meyer first team All-MAC, again

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career total to 1,442. That number places the senior fifth in program history.

The Falcons tallied 19 kills in the third set, their highest-scoring set of the season. Bowling Green's total of 31 points in the third set is their highest in the MAC

Tournament since 2004. BGSU recorded team season-bests in kills (76), assists (73), and digs (99)

In addition, the Falcons had a 10-0 record in home games, the program's first perfect home season since 1979. This also marks BGSU's third consecutive season with 20 or more wins.

Harris has been here before

By J. Patrick Eaken
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First-year Cardinal Stritch boys basketball coach Sedron Harris has big shoes to fill and he knows it. He is replacing Jamie Kachmarik, who left to take the head coaching position at St. Francis.

Kachmarik was a collegiate coach for 16 years, and in his seven years at Stritch his teams went 132-41, won three Toledo Area Athletic Conference titles, three district titles, one regional title and had one state final appearance. He was also 2018 and 2021 Toledo Area Athletic Conference Coach of the Year and a three-time Alan Miller Jewelers All-Press Coach of the Year.

No problem, says Harris, who coached two years under St. John's coach Mike Schoen. They had a similar issue when taking over there.

"We learned a lot. The biggest thing is we took over after Ed Heintschel had a great career as coach, and one thing I've learned is to do your thing and be consistent at it," Harris said.

"It's tough following up someone in any sport, but also you can make it that much better when you have that. As we tell the players, it is going to be a different journey, but that is part of what makes you a coach and we have to prepare for that."

The only problem for Harris is he has no returning starters.

"With the exchange of leadership, a couple guys transferred out, but the bright spot is we are young. We are very competitive. It looks like we'll start probably two sophomores and three juniors," Harris said.

The Cardinals opened the season with a 75-74 overtime victory over Leipsic. Harris says this team had already proven itself in the offseason.

"Most of these guys have played through the summer, played in AAU programs whether it is through us or other programs, so they've seen (NCAA) D-I, D-II talent from the AAU experience coming in. We have eight to nine guys already playing summer basketball and they have been competing down at Cedar Point in the varsity showcase there, so I don't think they will have any problems. The biggest thing



Sedron Harris. (Press photo by Doug Karns/www. DougKarns.smugmug.com)

is they will have to gel in the right spots and that we are patient when games are very close," Harris said.

The TAAC, which has proven itself to be one of the best small school leagues in Northwest Ohio, may be turned upside down with Emmanuel Christian one of the favorites.

"I think a lot of people are picking Emmanuel to win the TAAC. But its the fact that Toledo Christian is always competitive, and coach (Dave) McWhinnie has been there 25 years," Harris said.

"Maumee Valley has a new head coach taking over that program and that will be a little bit of a rebuild, and he's been at TC as an assistant so he'll definitely have a lot of things that will look a little different. TC is always good, they scout well, they are very competitive, and they shoot well."

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Asia Brown. (Press photo by Doug Karns/www.DougKarns.smugmug.com)



Linnea Hughes. (Press photo by Doug Karns/www.DougKarns.smugmug.com)

Stritch has aspiring Brown, Hughes, and 'X-factor'

By J. Patrick Eaken
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Cardinal Stritch girls basketball coach Brad Hohenberger believes this could be the year the Cardinals have something to say about how the Toledo Area Athletic Conference girls basketball race finishes.

Backing him up is sophomore guard Linnea Hughes, sophomore center Asia Brown, junior point guard Sydney Payeff, junior forward Analise Quiroga, junior guard Emi Castillo and senior guard Keera Garmon.

Hughes, as a freshman, scored in double digits last year, but one of his key players did not get playing time because of an injury. That adds further to the mystery of "How good will Stritch really be this year."

"Emi Castillo is coming off an injury that kept her out for the entire year last season. She played varsity minutes as a freshman and now coming back as a junior I expect her to help us with her ability to shoot and stretch the floor, as well as give us another ball handler."

"Both Asia Brown and Linnea Hughes have the ability and aspirations to play at

the next level. I think for both of them, this sophomore season will be key in setting them up to achieve those goals."

"Asia Brown has taken things to a new level last year. She started to come on and play more at the end of the year last season, but this season I truly feel she will be a huge contributor for us. Asia Brown is a name everyone will know by the end of the season, I think. She has come so far in terms of her development over the last year. She is 6-1 and a force down low. She finishes well around the rim and is strong enough to get position on anyone we play. She will have a huge year and should be a key scorer and rebounder for us this season.

"Lillian Hugill will also be in the mix in the post. She is developing her game around the basket and has the ability to step out and hit the three. She is also a naturally gifted shot blocker and should help us defensively."

As a result, the Cardinals expect to pick up the pace a bit, but it depends on the situation, says the coach.

"We always want to get out and play up tempo. That is my style and will continue to be so. However, this year with the emergence of our sophomore post players

we have the ability to better play in the half court when we need to," Hohenberger said.

Castillo's return along with some new varsity players could add to the mix.

"The sleeper or possible X-factor for us this year is the return of Emi Castillo. She hit some big shots as a freshman on varsity and was the leading scorer for the JV team as a freshman as well. Her coming back from injury this year will make us a much better team and I am excited to see what she will do," Hohenberger said.

"I also have two freshman guards who could see some varsity time this year in Kenzie Kinnie and Jean Simpson. I am excited to see where both of them can plug in and contribute as the season goes on. Both have a very bright future."

As a result, the Cardinals believe they can find their way back into contention in the TAAC.

"I think we can be in the top two of the league," Hohenberger said. "I think this year we have all the pieces to be a very good team. There is a lot of turnover in our league with key seniors graduating at other schools. Whereas I return my core group who all have another year of experience and are ready to take the next step and start

really winning a lot of games.

"Toledo Christian should be an absolute juggernaut this season. They have all the pieces for a state run! Sean Mercer at Ottawa Hills is one of the best coaches in Ohio, who always has his teams ready to play, Randi Wilson at Northwood is a dominant player and should lead them this year.

"Even with the coaching changes Maumee Valley should have a very talented group this year as well, and Emmanuel Christian's junior high team was very good last year so their future is bright. There are no off days in our league. You have to come and compete every single game. That in and of itself makes me excited. I think my group this year is as competitive as I have had in three years and they are up for the challenge."

Hohenberger has a history at Stritch — he was an assistant under Jamie Kachmarik when the boys team qualified for the Division III state final four. Prior to that, he was a varsity boys assistant coach and head freshman boys coach at McLean High School in Virginia for five years, a boys varsity and JV assistant at Perrysburg for one year, and the head boys freshman coach at Stritch for two years.

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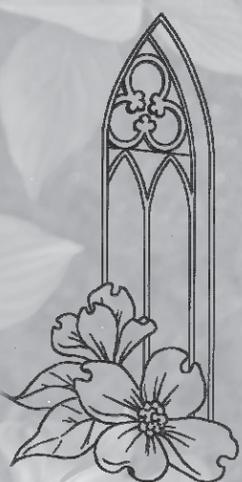


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Northwood's depth extends through all four classes

By J. Patrick Eaken
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While Northwood girls basketball expects to be in the mix in the TAAC, getting past Toledo Christian will be the challenge.

"Until we can beat TC and Ottawa Hills it doesn't matter. We've been the third best team the past two years and that's what we need to change," coach Andy Dickey said.

"I have nothing but great things to say about our league. Obviously, TC will be the favorite to win the league, but the competition will be fierce. We're lucky to be in a small league with great coaches and athletes all around."

Northwood (2-0) is off to a good start, defeating Ottawa Hills 54-31 on Tuesday.

Dickey says there are a few elements his team is built around that could help.

"Our biggest strength is the bond we have to have as a team. The girls that play for the Rangers just know each other and want to play with each other," Dickey said.

"My junior and seniors have been playing sports together since the sixth grade and my sophomores have been playing together since they were in diapers. Even my freshmen have told me how open the team is which makes it easier for coaches to get started building a team when people feel comfortable about being a part of the team. The girls just have a special bond with each other that is infectious and fun.

"Secondly, we are fortunate to have a lot of naturally athletic young women on the team. Almost all the girls in the program are multi-sport varsity caliber athletes. When you have a group of girls that are physically able to stand up to the physical demand of a sport like basketball it also helps the overall team play. You mix natural talent with girls that also know how to play ball and you have the opportunity for a special opportunity for success."

Dickey is optimistic because the Rangers return 5-foot-11 senior guard/wing Randi Wilson, 5-6 senior guard Meiah Smith, 5-8 senior forward Bethany Gillespie, 5-7 junior forward Zoe Turner, and two sophomores, 5-7 Natalie Thompson and 5-8 Autumn Schroeder.

But, it does not end there. The depth continues into his youngest players, boding well for this year and beyond.

"Lexi Haas, as a freshman she moved from being a wing player that rarely handled the ball to being the JV point guard.



Northwood 5-foot-8 sophomore Autumn Schroeder. (Press photo by Don Thompson/Facebook.com/DNRSport)



Northwood 5-foot-8 senior forward Bethany Gillespie. (Press photo by Don Thompson/Facebook.com/DNRSport)

This year she could be contending to be our 6th girl on the floor both for her ball handling and defensive skills," Dickey said.

Gillespie adds an element in the paint, but she is not the only one.

"Gillespie is another wonderful surprise during our summer league. Bethany showed us that she can be a dominant presence under the basket for rebounding and a great screener. Beth was also a gym rat this summer working on her b-ball skills and weight training," Dickey said.

"Bethany Gillespie worked her butt off this off-season to become stronger and a better post. She knows this is her last year and wants to prove herself.

"(Sophomore) Bree Bolden — she's tall, she strong, she can shoot the ball from the bleachers. Being a sophomore with not a lot of basketball experience she spent some great time in the gym learning her post moves and lifting weights. (Junior) Mikayla Hanely has some of the best court vision I've seen. She also is gritty under the

basket and fights for the ball.

"Hanley and Bolden — we're not sure which of these two could have the biggest impact under the basket but it will be fun watching them battle for that spot."

Thanks to a deep bench, it's all hands-on deck for the Rangers this season.

"We're planning on a fast-paced simplified offense this year," Dickey said. "We have one thing in mind — score any chance we can. Defensively we want to continue to build on our skills and become a 'gritty woman in your face' kind of defense.

"I really hope that we have a defensive team this year instead of one or two players. If we can do what I'd like to see, we'll need five girls on the floor all at their

defensive best."

Plus, if that is not enough to put on the court, there are even more who can contribute. We're not talking eight, nine deep, we're talking playing every rostered varsity player, and depth is so important, especially at tournament time.

"(Junior) Regan Grant is the fastest player on the team and has a lot of skills that make her a huge threat. If we can focus her in the right direction. She could be dangerous," Dickey said.

"(Sophomore) Cassidy Genson, like Haas, she moved into a new position last year. And she has an even head, great defensive skills and when she's settled has a knockdown shot."

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ACCREDITED BUSINESS

Lake coach Joe Nowak on track to get 100 career wins

By J. Patrick Eaken and Yaneek Smith sports@presspublications.com

Once again, Lake girls basketball plans to use coach Joe Nowak's style of applying defensive pressure on their opponents.

In his first six-plus years at Lake, his teams are a combined 93-51, and including two years at Seneca East, he is 96-91. He is on track to getting his 100th career win. The Flyers opened the season 3-0 with wins over Evergreen (68-54), Swanton (68-38) and Rossford (68-22). Scoring is no problem for Lake, but it all starts with the defense.

"Our focus has always been at the defensive side of the ball, but in the last couple years we haven't executed that quite as well as we were capable of," Nowak said.

"So, we will look to get back to being a physical and disruptive team. On the offensive side of the ball, we will really look to create and take advantage of early scoring opportunities.

"Being very guard-heavy we will look to our returning guards in Ava Ayers, Kelsie Gladieux and Elise Staczek to provide the much-needed defensive edge for us. But like the offensive side of the ball, we have several players who we will look to build on the edge the others set for us."

Nowak believes his team will be better prepared because they were able to get into a rhythm during the offseason.

"Being able to finally get back into a somewhat normal setting over the summer showed a lot of growth in many different players," Nowak said. "The coaching staff has been impressed with the players' ability to keep improving during the offseason."

Nowak believes the NBC will be tougher than ever this year.

"Every year, it's been a common goal to compete for a conference championship and this season is no different," Nowak said.

"That goal has typically been player driven, but as coaches we have always pushed them to make sure that the work they put in lines up with that expectation, and we've been fortunate to have players



Lake girls basketball coach Joe Nowak. (courtesy Nowak family)

who have been receptive to that level of demand.

"The NBC should be pretty competitive again this season. It always has been a league where anyone can compete on any given night, and I think we definitely have certain games on the schedule that we look at as being a good opportunity to measure where we are."

'Cats start to reload

Woodmore had a great run over the last three years. The senior class, which was led by Alan Miller Jewelers All-Press Player of the Year Brooke Allen, won 57 games over the last three seasons, claimed the first league title for the program in 24

years and advanced to the district finals twice. Meanwhile, Allen is already getting significant playing time as a freshman at Ohio Northern University.

Woodmore coach Kyle Clair acknowledges the past but is hopeful about what the season holds behind 5-4 junior guard Macey Bauder, 5-8 senior wing Sophie Blausey, 5-5 junior guard Alayna Hahn, 6-1 senior post Camryn Ivy and 5-8 junior guard Jordan Beam. It looks like they are on track, opening at 2-0 with a 67-28 win over Gibsonburg and 66-7 rout over a young Otsego team

"Those kids that graduated had a pretty strong legacy. They set really good examples as far as practice goes. The girls know that,

they've experienced it. A lot of players that we have returning experienced that," said Clair. "They're in the boat where they're taking some of the younger kids under their wing. Macey and Jordan just had sisters graduate who were part of that group. We expect them to keep pushing that legacy that was left."

Comets, Rockets "progressing"

Genoa also started strong under first-year coach Glenn Black, defeating Maumee 52-32 and Oak Harbor 53-33, but losing to a much-improved Fostoria squad, 59-47.

More than anything, Black just wants to see his team make gradual progress.

"The girls have been working really hard and get along well with each other. We have six seniors, and we have good leadership. We're excited for the year, and we're excited to keep getting better."

At Oak Harbor, coach Adam Steinbrick is trying to jump start the program with seniors Ryann Steinbrick (5-10 guard/wing) and Riley Steinbrick (5-9 point guard). The Rockets were 5-16 last year, including 2-8 in the Sandusky Bay Conference Bay Division.

"When you are trying to put a program together, it takes some time, and I can see where it's starting to click," coach Steinbrick said.

Also key to the Rockets' success is 5-8 sophomore guard Holly Robinson, 5-9 senior wing/post Katie May, 5-7 sophomore post Nora Schmidt and 5-9 junior wing/post Emma Hand. Other players that could see some playing time are 5-7 sophomore Megan Rife, 5-8 junior Jaelyn Cory, 5-5 sophomore Molly Downs.

Steinbrick expects Margareta to be the top team in the Bay Division.

"You always have Margareta, they're extremely athletic and well-coached, and have developed a great program. After that, I think there's been a big change throughout the league — you take the rest of them, and it's kind of a crapshoot," he said. "Hopefully we can make those games against Margareta more meaningful by taking care of business in the other ones. On any given night, you can beat someone or get beat."

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Despite 0-2 start, don't count out Eastwood girls in NBC

By J. Patrick Eaken
Press Sports Editor
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Eastwood girls basketball has had a rough start to its season, but that's because they faced off with two of the toughest opponents Northwest Ohio can offer.

First, the Eagles traveled to western Fulton County, where they fell to Archbold, 42-28. Then, Elmwood six-foot senior wing Brooklyn Thrash accumulated 32 points, 11 rebounds, and 10 steals in leading the visiting Royals to a 58-49 win over Eastwood in both team's Northern Buckeye Conference opener.

It can only get easier from there, even though the Eagles fell to the NBC preseason favorites they gave the Royals a battle, trailing by just three with 3:10 remaining.

"I like our team's ability to score the ball via the quick strike or running through our offense," coach Nick Schmeltz said.

The Eagles backcourt was supposed to be led by 5-foot-6 senior wing Makenna Souder and 5-7 sophomore guard Kayla Buehler. However, Souder is already out for the year after suffering an injury during soccer season.

"Kayla will be our primary ball handler and has experience in the position from previous seasons," Schmeltz said. "Kayla did a wonderful job this summer running our offense and has the ability to score from the position as well."

"Kayla took on primary point guard responsibilities this summer while Kenna Souder was gone with her club soccer team. She has improved immensely with her confidence and that has allowed her to play with more freedom and aggression. She can take care of the ball for us and is a good passer, but she is also capable of being a double-digit scorer for us night in and night out."

At the forward positions are 5-8 senior guard Aubrey Haas and 5-8 senior guard/forward Kaitlyn Luidhardt. Haas was a first team All-NBC and All-District 7, second team Northwest District and honorable mention Division III All-Ohioan last year after averaging 19.2 points, 5.1 rebounds, four steals and 2.4 assists and she is the



In 2020-21, Lake guard Ava Ayers and Eastwood center Brenna Moenter, both returning this season, go airborne. (Press file photo by Lee Welch/FamilyPhotoGroup.com)

only athlete at Eastwood to score 1,000 career basketball points 100 career goals in soccer. Luidhardt averaged 6.5 points, 2.8 rebounds, 1.4 steals and 1.2 assists.

"Kaitlyn is a smart and skilled forward that has the ability to finish at the rim but also step outside and knockdown shots beyond the arc," Schmeltz said. "We will need her to have her best year yet as a senior for our team to reach its full potential."

"Kaitlyn has had a great fall with the volleyball team, and we hope that will carry over to basketball."

"She, too, is playing with improved

confidence, and she is fully recovered from an ACL injury now. She is moving well and gives versatility as she can play inside and outside for us."

Schmeltz has players who can excel on the defensive side of the ball, too.

"Sophomores Amelia Ward, Reilly Might, and Saylor King will all see significant time. Those three will be tasked with guarding the opposing teams point guard and we will use them at the front of our press to create pressure and disruption," Schmeltz said.

"Those three all come with great ath-

leticism, speed, and quickness. Ward also provides some added height and length at the position too.

"Saylor and Reilly saw some action last year as freshmen and now will be counted on as full-time varsity players. They will play extremely hard for us and will improve each day as the season goes on," Schmeltz added.

Others likely to contribute include Sarah Spradling, Grace Kingery and Audrey Sandberg.

"Spradling and Kingery are juniors who will get a chance to prove themselves this year at the varsity level. Spradling gives us size inside at 5-10. Sandberg, a senior, has dedicated herself this summer and fall to basketball and will get her chance as a senior to have a role on our team."

Schmeltz sees the top four in the NBC battling it out for a title, just like last year.

"The NBC will be very good, especially the top four teams. I hope to be able to finish somewhere in that top four with Elmwood, Lake, and Woodmore," Schmeltz said.

"Rossford and Fostoria will be improved this year as well giving our conference increased depth. You will have to come prepared to play every night in the NBC. Last season we had two teams from our conference in district finals and I can see that as a likely scenario again this year."

Schmeltz's teams are a combined 90-52, won back-to-back league championships in 2017-18 and 2018-19, and he was District 7 Coach of the Year in 2019.

Schmeltz had at least two players injured on volleyball and soccer teams this fall, plus the soccer team had a deep tournament run, reaching the regional final only to lose 4-2 to eventual state runner-up Ottawa Glandorf.

Schmeltz said that could factor in what style his team uses early on, but his teams have always been up-tempo with full court pressure.

"I would expect us to be a work in progress early on. Many teams had a two-to-three-week head start on us as we waited for our soccer and volleyball players to return from their fall tournament runs. Twelve of our 21 rostered players were on either the volleyball or soccer team."

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