



SPIRIT

High School Basketball

Right out of the gate

New Haven's tough non-league schedule begins in earnest Tuesday as the Rockets host Flint Beecher.

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MEMPHIS

League: North Central Thumb League

Coach: Kip Jones (2nd season)
2003-04 Record: 9-9 NCTL; 9-12 overall; lost in Class C district quarterfinal

Overview: Two starters return to the Yellowjackets' lineup — seniors Bobby Jock (5-10, point guard) and Josh Thomson (6-3, forward).

Nick Arnold (5-10, guard), Jake Hanley (6-0, forward) and Cody McIlargie (6-5, center) should round out the Memphis line. Steve Potter (5-9, guard) and D.J. Ponder (6-3, forward) will also see considerable playing time.

The Yellowjackets will again try to run as much as possible on teams, they'll just have to learn when it's the right time to do so.

"We have the concept down," said Kip Jones, who'll look to guide the team to its first winning record since going 10-9 in the 1998-99 season. "We're just pushing it up way too much right now.

"We don't have any pure jump shooters," Jones added. "We're going to have to run offenses, work off screens to get good shots. We're not going to sit on the 3-point line and knock down bombs all night long."

Jones does feel he's got a well balanced team.

"We don't have anyone that'll score 20-25 points on a consistent basis," he said. "We do have a bunch of players that'll score 10-12 points a game."

Jones is also happy with his team chemistry.

"They all get along," he said. "Last year, we had some problems on the court with kids bickering back and forth."

Jones feels his squad will be able to compete for the league title with favorites Kingston and Carsonville Port-Sanilac.

MOUNT CLEMENS

League: MAC Gold
Coach: David Flowers (3rd season)

2003-04 Record: 6-8 MAC Blue (fourth); 9-14 overall; reached Class B district final

Overview: Six players return for the Bathers, who move into the MAC Gold this season after a stint in the MAC Blue.

"We're just really excited about the whole group," Mount Clemens coach David Flowers said. "We're excited about the season."

Part of that excitement comes from a pair of returning starts, senior forward Antione Turner and junior guard Terrell Arnold.

The 6-5 Turner is a "tremendous rebounder; tremendous post player," Flowers said. "Just a force inside." The 6-1 Arnold can play either backcourt spot.

Flowers also expects contributions from senior forward Jeffrey Wynes and senior guard Kodi Saxton.

"We're excited," Flowers said. "I like our chances."

Mount Clemens' schedule includes games at Southfield-Lathrup on Dec. 10, a home game with Flint Beecher during the Christmas break and a game at Country Day in January.

The Bathers host Marysville in their season-opener on Dec. 8.

NEW HAVEN

League: MAC Gold
Coach: Sean Lively (1st season)

2003-04 Record: 13-8 overall; lost in Class C district semifinal

Overview: New coach Sean Lively takes over a New Haven team that returns four starters and eight players total from last season.

Things should be lively — pardon the pun — for the Rockets this season. "We're extremely athletic," Lively said. "D.D. Hardy

and Ed Sims are really quick. Our fast break is going to be tough. Those kids can ad-lib."

The returning starters are junior guard Demetrius Hardy; se-



HARDY

Macomb Area Conference Realignment for 2004-05 through 2005-06 seasons

RED

Chippewa Valley
Eisenhower
Grosse Pointe North
L'Anse Creuse
Port Huron Northern
Romeo
Utica

WHITE

Dakota
Fitzgerald
Ford
Grosse Pointe South
L'Anse Creuse North
Port Huron
Stevenson

BLUE

Anchor Bay
Cousino
East Detroit
Fraser
Roseville
Sterling Heights
Warren-Mott

GOLD

Madison
Marine City
Marysville
Mount Clemens
New Haven
St. Clair
South Lake

SILVER

Center Line
Clintondale
Lake Shore
Lakeview
Lamphere
Lincoln
Warren Woods-Tower

nior center Brett Harris (6-6, 220); senior forward Kurt Boden (6-2, 200); and sophomore point guard Ed Sims. Senior Corey Dilbert should man the other forward position with Boden.

"I want to make sure our best strength will be our defense," said the 24-year-old Lively, who played high school basketball at Chippewa Valley under Kevin Voss and who played in college at Saginaw Valley State and St. Mary's.

In addition to a coaching change, New Haven is also making a change to a new league.

The Rockets move into the MAC Gold after two seasons competing as an independent.

"I'm excited about it," Lively said. "We can start to create rivalries."

RICHMOND

League: Blue Water Area Conference

Coach: Jim Barnes (1st season)

2003-04 Record: 7-7 BWAC; 12-9 overall; lost in Class B district quarterfinal

Overview: Like most every team that gets a new coach, it takes awhile for the new system to sink in with the kids. That'll again be the case with the Blue Devils, who get their third coach in the last four years.

"I'll take some time for players to assimilate new coaches and system," said Jim Barnes, who coached the last four seasons at Yale and before that spent four years at Cousino. "We do have chemistry. We're athletic. We hope to build on the winning tradition other sports at Richmond have reached."

One thing going for Richmond is the fact that its coming off its first winning season since going 16-6 in the 1994-95 season.

Four starters return for Blue Devils — senior Donnie Kidman (5-6, guard), senior Tim Kaminski (6-0, guard), senior Ken Pozolo (6-5, forward) and junior Travis Pietrykowski (6-3, forward).

"We're still figuring out starting roles," Barnes said. "We've got a number of kids that will have the opportunity to start."

Senior Kyle Brohl (5-11, guard), senior Scott Herrick (5-9, guard) and sophomore Jake Stark (6-2, forward) will also be in the starting mix.

"I really like our team" Barnes said. "We'll have a chance to win every night."

Barnes sees Crosswell-Lexington and Inlay City as the teams to beat in the BWAC.

ROMEO

League: MAC Red
Coach: Dale Teller (6th season)

2003-04 Record: 8-6 MAC White (4th); 14-9 overall; reached Class A district final

Overview: The Bulldogs lost eight seniors off last winter's squad. Back, however, are a pair of players who saw significant minutes at juniors last season — forward/center Buddy Scarborough and guard Ken Hirschmann.

Scarborough was a starter inside, averaging 12 points and 8 rebounds per game in earning honorable mention to the all-MAC White team.

Sophomore Skyler Hake will see time at forward as will junior Josh Volpe.

The Bulldogs are back in the MAC Red for the first time since 1997-98.

"This year, we're taking the next step," said coach Dale Teller. "I hope we're ready."

In Teller's five seasons at the helm, Romeo has posted a record of 84-26. During that run, the Bulldogs have averaged 65 points scored per game.

ROSEVILLE

League: MAC Blue
Coach: Jeff Verkeyn (1st season)

2003-04 Record: 5-9 MAC



Macomb Daily staff photo by Ray J. Skowronek

Buddy Scarborough (50) returns for Romeo this season.

Blue (6th); 8-13 overall; lost in Class A district semifinal

Overview: First-year coach Jeff Verkeyn doesn't have any returning starters from a program that posted its second consecutive 8-13 season last winter.

Players who should see significant time this year include senior point guard Tim Meneghin, senior center Rich Chilinski (6-5), senior forward Nick Martin and senior Chris Thiel. Sophomore center Brad Balkema (6-4) will also be in the rotation.

"Although the team will be inexperienced this season and the players are learning a new system, we feel we are going to be a tough team to beat because of the great attitude and effort our players are developing," said Verkeyn.

Verkeyn is a 1996 graduate of Fraser High. As a senior, he helped the Ramblers to MAC White and Class A district titles. Verkeyn was an assistant coach and JV head coach at Fraser before coming to Roseville.

ST. CLEMENT

League: Catholic League CD-East

Coach: Jim Barker (1st season, after 32 years at Ford)

2003-04 Record: 8-2 Catholic League CD-East (1st); 15-9 overall; reached Class D regional semifinal

Overview: Jim Barker won more than 500 games at Ford, but even he has a tough act to follow at one of Macomb County's smaller schools. The Crusaders are accustomed to winning, having posted three consecutive Class D district titles, four consecutive Catholic League CD-East Division championships and two 20-win seasons in the last three years. All of that was accomplished under Barker's predecessor, David Feldman.

"Dave did a great job," Barker said. "I hope to continue what he started. It's a matter of me learning the kids and a new league."

Barker was hired relatively late at St. Clement, meaning he didn't have an opportunity to observe any of the Crusaders' summer play.

"We're so far behind," he said. "After Christmas we might be a pretty good team. The kids have been very receptive to what I've been telling them."

Seniors C.J. Sulek and Eric Rapske are a 2-year starters and two of Barker's building blocks.

Senior Driton Tomaj, sophomore Ju Wan Shakespear and 6-0 senior Alex Karnick are others working into the mix.

lions will rely on a pair of juniors and a trio of sophomores to play important roles. That will make the leadership of seniors like Mark Camaj, Brandon Hattaway and Tom Turchetti critical. Camaj and Hattaway are both returning starters to the forward position.

Junior guard Lamont Calhoun is a 5-8 leaper who can dunk with two hands. "Lamont is very quick and talented," said coach Mike Griffin.

Sophomore guard Ronald Wilson has a "great upside" according to Griffin.

The Stallions are looking to reverse the trend of two straight sub-500 seasons.

STEVENSON

League: MAC White
Coach: Bill Lerch (3rd season)

2003-04 Record: 3-11 MAC White (seventh); 4-17 overall; lost in Class A district quarterfinal

Overview: Patience could be a virtue for Stevenson.

There's been little time together for the full Titans' squad with four key players — Matt Delekta, Kevin Kilgo, L.J. Robertson and Danny Stiefel — missing much of preseason practice because of the football team's run to the Division 1 state championship game.

"They have a lot of catching up to do," coach Bill Lerch said.

But Lerch hopes the gridiron success eventually pays dividends on the hardwood.

"I think it will," Lerch said. "The new attitude throughout the whole school is they expect to succeed."

There are plenty of new faces for the Titans.

Stiefel, a junior guard who quarterbacked the football team, is a transfer from Capac. Chris Czubak, a 6-foot-7 center, is a transfer from Zoe Christian.

Kilgo, a senior forward, played as a sophomore, but he missed all of last season with a knee injury. He returned for the football season, starting at tight end and defensive end, and Lerch hopes he can make an impact up front for Stevenson's basketball team.

Lerch hopes the chemistry, quickness and depth becomes assets for the Titans.

"I would prefer to not single out any one individual," Lerch said. "If we are to be competitive or successful, it will depend on this young team to play some very good defense, to out-rebound our opponents and minimize the area we struggled with last year, which was turnovers."

UTICA

League: MAC Red
Coach: Gerry Kraemer (6th season)

2003-04 Record: 2-12 MAC Red (7th); 4-17 overall; lost in Class A district semifinal

Overview: Sewing the seeds of youth last year, the Chieftains hope to reap a harvest of victories.

Two Utica players are back who averaged double-digit scoring last winter — Jason VanFleteren and Dex Battista.

VanFleteren, a 6-4 senior swingman, tallied 12.5 points and 7.5 rebounds per game before missing the final six games of the season because of injury. VanFleteren returned for district play, scoring 14 points in semifinal action.

Battista (6-8) is a junior forward who averaged 10 points and 6 rebounds per game as a sophomore.

"We played a lot of underclassmen last year," said coach Gerry Kraemer. "We hope they have learned some valuable lessons. We have a very hard working group of players who are competing for minutes."

The Chieftains have been playing in the MAC Red for the past

STERLING HEIGHTS

League: MAC Blue
Coach: Mike Griffin (1st season)

2003-04 Record: 5-9 MAC Blue (6th); 7-14 overall; lost in Class A district quarterfinal

Overview: The young Stallions

four seasons. Last year was the first that they didn't have a .500 division record or play in a district championship game.

WARREN-MOTT

League: MAC Blue
Coach: Steve Spybrook (5th season)

2003-04 Record: 6-8 MAC Blue (4th); 10-12 overall; reached Class A district semifinal

Overview: "Defense and rebounding will be the keys to our success this year," said coach Steve Spybrook.

The Marauders bring back senior swingman T.J. Webber, who had four double-doubles as a junior.

Also back are senior guards Zach Hillman and Mike Lubeck and senior forward/center Steve Herzog.

WARREN WOODS-TOWER

League: MAC Silver
Coach: Bob Jolet

2003-04 Record: 2-12 MAC Gold (8th); 5-16 overall; lost in Class B district quarterfinal

Overview: Seniors Derek Dycio and Donnie Wood are the foundation as Warren Woods-Tower seeks its first winning season since 1999-2000. The 6-2 Dycio, an All-Macomb County football player as a defensive back, averaged 6 points and the 6-2 Wood averaged 9 last season as each earned occasional starting assignments on a senior-dominated team.

Help comes from 6-1 senior transfer Toriano Madison and sophomore swingman Steve Grabowski, who stands 6-0.

Others to watch include Ryne MacMillan, Stew Mayer, Justin Moorefield and Matt Crudder, who shares the team captaincy with Dycio. Junior Brian McVeigh is recovering from surgery.

"This team is quick and athletic but not very big," coach Bob Jolet said.

ZOE CHRISTIAN

League: MIAC Blue
Coach: Greg Lathrop (4th season)

2003-04 Record: 10-0 MIAC Red (1st); 19-2 overall; reached Class D district final

Overview: After winning the last two championships in the Michigan Independent Athletic Conference Red Division, the Warriors have been "kicked upstairs" to the Blue. "It's going to be a whole new level of competition," coach Greg Lathrop said. "Usually there's a state-ranked team or two in the Blue Division. We're going in with six of our top seven players being seniors, but we lost our top seven players from last year."

That means Lathrop isn't sure what to expect in Zoe Christian's first Blue season.

"I think," he said, "we'll be competitive, but I don't know if I'd call us a contender yet."

Senior point guard Caleb Diehl, senior forward Jordan Robinet, senior shooting guard Jeff True and senior forward Tommy Marquardt have the most experience on the Warriors' roster.

Zoe Christian won't be as potent on offense as last year when it averaged 60.2 points, Lathrop said.

"But," Lathrop said, "we're more team oriented. We have less individuality. There's more camaraderie."

Lathrop said the move to the Blue Division has benefits.

"The kids are proud that we moved up," he said. "We won the (Red) division two years in a row and this shows that our program is getting respect. It's going to help us as a coaching staff. We're going to play better competition and that's going to help us come tournament time."

Team effort

Macomb County basketball previews were written by sports writers John Hetzler, Bruce MacLeod, Chuck Pleiness and George Pohly of The Macomb Daily.